

Challenges and opportunities for the employment of refugees in late industrialising countries

Report developed from discussions in [International Workshop on Refugees' Employment and Integration](#), 16th June 2023, Loughborough University London

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Table of Contents

Summary	2
Introduction	3
Causes of refugees' employment in precarious jobs	4
Initiatives for improving refugees' employment conditions	9
Recommendations for enabling access to better jobs for refugees.....	14

Summary

On 16th June 2023, Loughborough University London hosted the **International Workshop on Refugees' Employment and Integration**. This workshop aimed to address the challenges and opportunities related to the employment of refugees, particularly in late industrialising countries (LICs). Merve Sancak, Nicola Chelotti, and Massimo D'Angelo served as the conveners, bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, including NGOs, business representatives, refugee representatives, policy institutions, think-tanks, and academics from different countries.

The workshop acknowledged the increasing number of international migrants, with the UNHCR reporting over 100 million forcibly displaced people in 2021. LICs, traditionally known as emigration destinations, have now become hosts for immigrants and refugees. LICs such as Turkey and Colombia, currently host the largest number of refugees worldwide. Many of these refugees join the labour market and contribute significantly to the host economies. However, the majority find employment in the informal economy, facing precarious conditions.

The workshop aimed to understand why refugees often end up in labour-intensive jobs prone to exploitation and explore strategies to improve their employment conditions. It specifically focused on the case of Syrian refugees in Turkey, given their large population and Turkey's significant refugee influx. However, the event also facilitated knowledge exchange among stakeholders working with refugee populations in other countries. The workshop aimed to provide a platform for stakeholders to come together and explore the challenges and opportunities associated with the employment of refugees, particularly in late industrialising countries. By addressing critical questions and fostering collaboration among diverse actors, the workshop aimed to contribute to the improvement of refugees' employment conditions and their integration into host societies.

This report summarises the main discussions addressed during the workshop. The details of the full workshop programme and speakers can be found [here](#). This workshop was organised in scope of the British Academy-funded [research project](#) led by Merve Sancak, and was financed by Joint Fund at Loughborough University London.

Introduction

1. **On 16th June 2023, Loughborough University London hosted the International Workshop on Refugees' Employment and Integration.** This workshop aimed to address the challenges and opportunities related to the employment of refugees, particularly in late industrialising countries (LICs) through bringing together a diverse group of stakeholders, including non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations (IOs), business representatives, refugee representatives, policy institutions, think-tanks, and academics from different countries.
2. **Many LICs have become host locations for refugees¹⁹ coming from low-income regions and conflict zones.** Currently, more than 30 per cent of world's migrants are in LICs while more than 85 per cent of the refugees are currently in low and middle-income countries. Three LICs – Turkey, Colombia and Pakistan – [host the largest number of refugees worldwide](#).

Table 1: Top-5 countries hosting refugees

COUNTRY	NUMBER OF REFUGEES
Turkey	3.6 million
Islamic Republic of Iran	3.4 million
Colombia	2.5 million
Germany	2.1 million
Pakistan	1.7 million

Source: UNHCR (2022)²⁰

3. **Most of the refugees are employed in the informal economy under precarious conditions.** Most of the displaced people are at working age and join the labour market and have become an important workforce in their host economies. The governments of countries hosting the refugees and international organisations have been developing programmes for improving the integration of refugees in labour markets. However, most of these have remained inadequate to provide decent work to forcibly displaced workers.

¹⁹ The term 'refugee' is a contested one because definition of 'refugee' is itself very limiting. This is because, firstly, 'refugee' status is defined by international agreements, and many late industrialisers are either not part of these agreements or apply geographical restrictions for giving a legal refugee status to forcibly displaced populations. Secondly, the term 'refugee' does not directly apply to the forcibly displaced populations from Venezuela since Venezuelans are not moving because of civil war, ethnic cleansing or a disaster, but because of the dire economic conditions. In order to avoid confusion due to legal definitions and for practical reasons, we adopt the definition of 'refugee' by [Eun Su Lee and colleagues](#), which refer to forcibly displaced individuals, "regardless of their legal status, who have fled their home country to seek protection and security in another country, and cannot safely return due to a well-founded fear of the prevailing circumstances in their country of origin". This helps to involve a broader group of people under the term 'refugee' compared to its legal definition by national governments and international organisations.

²⁰ <https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/>

4. **The workshop aimed to understand why refugees end up in labour-intensive jobs prone to exploitation and explore strategies to improve their employment conditions.** It specifically focused on the case of Syrians in Turkey, given that Syrians constitute the largest refugee group, and Turkey hosts the highest number of refugees worldwide. The event also facilitated knowledge exchange among stakeholders working with refugee populations in other countries such as the Ukrainian and Venezuelan refugees in the UK, Austria, and Colombia.
5. **The workshop provided a common platform for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to share insights and discuss the challenges and opportunities associated with refugee integration in different contexts.** For this, it featured a range of presentations that shed light on various aspects of this complex issue including the impact of national institutions and regulations on the employment of refugees; the role of business demand and practices for refugees' employment, including refugee entrepreneurship; a discussion about the education, training, and labour market integration programmes for refugees and their implications for refugees' employment; and a debate about how international relations and multilateral governance affect refugee integration in host countries.

Causes of refugees' employment in precarious jobs

6. **The main dynamics affecting refugees' employment in informal and precarious jobs, business demand and practices, legal and institutional environment in the host countries, and the obstacles stemming from refugees' vulnerable position in their host economies.**
7. **Despite the technological advancements and improvements in AI, manual labour is still highly demanded and foreign workers, including refugees and migrants, are more likely to be employed in these jobs.** The rising levels of education amongst the native-born working age population results in higher expectations amongst these groups regarding the salary and quality of work. In contrast to natives, foreign workers are more likely to accept low salary and jobs without decent conditions.
 - a. **Migrant and refugee workers become particularly significant in labour markets with large numbers of low paid, low skilled jobs.** This involves countries that rely more on labour-intensive industries with low labour protection. In Europe, these are the countries with large service industries and those with limited welfare protection. Since labour-intensive production is prevalent in many LICs, and many of these countries have weak welfare systems, low paid and low skilled industries become the main employer for refugees and immigrants in these countries.
 - b. **The large size of the informal economy in Turkey makes the informal economy an important employer for refugee workers.** Several key industries in the Turkish economy, including retail, textile and garment manufacturing, and agriculture, allow the operation of and are dependent upon the informal economy. These industries rely on low-cost labour and long and unpredictable working hours. Native workers are less likely to accept jobs in these conditions as they often 'disdain' these jobs, leading to 'labour shortages' in labour-intensive industries. Employers see Syrian refugees as a key workforce for these jobs, as refugees 'demand less', 'do not complain' and 'praise' these jobs.
 - c. **Informal employment is an important factor rendering migrant and refugee workers vulnerable to abuse.** When refugees' access to work permits are restricted, they are

more vulnerable to labour rights violations, including wage theft (such as the underpayment or late payment of wages), excessive overtime, and unsafe work environments. A lack of work permits also restricts refugees' ability to raise complaints and gain remedy following abuse.

- d. **The purchasing practices of European multinational companies representing well-known high-street brands constitute a key reason for refugees' exploitative employment in global industries such as the garment industry.** The Business and Human Rights Resource Centre conducted research in Turkey between 2015 and 2019 on the employment of refugees in the supply chains of major garment brands. The series of reports produced from this research evidenced the labour rights abuse of Syrian refugees working in factories supplying to these brands. This abuse included wage theft and poverty wages, with some workers paid between 43% to 67% of the minimum wage, occupational health and safety issues, arbitrary dismissal, and child labour. The Resource Centre found a key driver of this abuse was the poor purchasing practices of high street garment brands. The acute power differential between buyers and suppliers enables the former to dictate unfair terms and conditions, including pressures to reduce prices, unrealistic turnaround times, short-term relationships, and financial penalties for delays. These conditions led to wage cuts for workers, excessive overtime, subcontracting, and the employment of informal, casual workers.
 - e. **The employment of refugees varies across businesses.** Mostly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employ refugees while large corporations are less likely to employ refugees. An important reason for this is (un)predictability of refugee workers due to their status in the host country. The continuity of refugees' work with an employer is often problematic due to their legal status, temporariness, and unknown prospects for their future. Therefore, large employers, which prefer longer-term employment and predictability, are less likely to employ such workers. In contrast, the short-term employment patterns can sometimes be beneficial for smaller employers, whose operations can significantly vary due to fluctuations in demand. There is also variation across industries: refugee labour is more common in labour-intensive industries that are reliant on cheap labour, such as construction and hospitality, where businesses pass on the risk of uncertainty from themselves to workers through employing refugees.
8. **The national institutions and regulations constitute another major factor that affect refugees' precarious employment in informal and precarious jobs.** There are two main components of this: (a) labour market regulations and their implementation, and (b) regulations regarding the status of refugees in host countries.
- a. **Labour market regulations and their implementation define the types of jobs available for citizens and refugees.** Low paid and low skilled jobs, which become the main employment source for refugees, are more likely to exist in countries with weak labour market regulations and/or with weak compliance systems.
 - b. **While many LICs may have strong labour market regulations, the compliance for these regulations is often weak, leading to a large informal economy.** For example, according to the [OECD data](#), Turkey has the fifth strictest employment protection regulations amongst 42 OECD countries. However, the implementation of the regulations is problematic, leading to the large informal economy. The large informal

economy that stems from weak compliance becomes a key employer for refugee workers. In contrast, the majority of native workers concentrate on the formal economy and the share of informal employment amongst domestic population has been decreasing.

- c. **The legal status of refugees in the host country, and the processes followed in this regard constitute a significant element shaping refugees' higher probability of employment in informal and precarious jobs**, particularly in LICs like Turkey.
- d. **Syrian refugees in Turkey, similar to Venezuelans in Colombia, do not have the status of a 'refugee' as it is defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol.** Although Turkey is a party to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol, it has maintained the geographical limitation to the 1951 Convention, which restricted refugee status to only those arriving from Europe.
- e. **Uncertainty about the longevity of refugees' presence in host countries causes delays in host country governments' response to the refugee influx.** In Turkey, the war in Syria was expected to end soon after the first refugees arrived in 2011, causing the lack of response by the Turkish government in the first five years. In 2016, there was the realisation that this population may not be going back. Further, from 2015 European brands used their leverage to pressure the government to allow Syrian refugees to work formally, leading to the development of work permit legislation, although access to work permits remained restricted in practice. Similarly, the arrival of Ukrainian refugees in European countries such as Austria was first seen as temporary, leading to delayed responses regarding the integration of these groups in home country labour markets. Furthermore, in the UK, refugees do not have any work permit while waiting for approval of their asylum status, which can take years, leaving these refugees without a source of proper income for too long. Consequently, many of these refugees seek employment in the informal economy.
- f. **Despite the introduction of new regulations for refugees' legal employment, such as the work permits in Turkey, the majority of refugees continue to work in the informal economy.** In 2021, only 91 thousand work permits were issued, amongst about 1 million who were in the labour force the same year. There are three main reasons for this.
 - i. **The onerous process of getting a work permit.** In Turkey, getting a work permit involves a requirement to wait for six months after registering under the temporary protection status. Moreover, refugees need to have employer support to receive a work permit. However, employers are often not incentivised to do this, particularly as they would have to pay the worker the minimum wage which would lead to an increase in their labour costs.
 - ii. **The restrictions for getting a work permit.** The refugees can get work permits to work only in the areas they are first registered. These are mostly the border regions with a higher share of the informal economy, such as agriculture, and offer more limited opportunities for formal employment. There are also quota limits on the number of Syrians who could be employed by a company.
 - iii. **Social assistance tied to refugee status.** The refugees in Turkey receive cash support in scope of the Emergency Social Safety Net (ESSN), which was

launched in 2016 and funded by the EU. Having a formal employment means the cut of the ESSN benefits, which discourages many refugees to get a work permit.

- g. **Restrictive immigration policies, limited work permits, and uncertain legal status often push refugees into informal and labour-intensive jobs, making them susceptible to exploitation.** Syrian refugees in Turkey are under the temporary protection regime, which puts several restrictions on their location of residency and employment. A lack of legal employment meant these workers received no social security, could be paid below the minimum wage, and were less able to bargain collectively for improved working conditions.
 - h. **Examples from both Turkey and other countries show that ensuring legal employment is still not sufficient for refugees to access good jobs.** This is due to a variety of reasons including racism and xenophobia and the refugees' lack of knowledge about their rights. Although language skills are important, they cannot explain the unfair treatment of refugees such as overtime and underpayment, particularly when the case of Venezuelan refugees across Latin America is considered.
 - i. **Underemployment is more likely amongst women.** For example, many of the Ukrainian refugees in Austria, especially women, had a high level of education and held positions of authority in Ukraine. However, their future employment prospects in Austria remained uncertain. An important reason for this is the previous experiences and qualifications are not often recognised in the host country, leading to refugees' employment in jobs they are overqualified for.
9. **Refugees' vulnerabilities stemming from their background form another major reason for their employment in the informal economy and precarious jobs, and the lack of access to better jobs.** Barriers to labour market progression include lack of understanding about employment rights, job search processes, workplace culture, and language proficiency.
- a. **Short-term prospects and uncertainty about the future significantly restrict refugees' employment opportunities and motivation.** Refugees' situation in the host country is often unpredictable due to the lack of legal status. The unpredictability is even higher for refugees in LICs, who aim to move to richer countries such as those in Europe or the US. Due to short-termism and their need for survival, refugees mostly focus on making it through the day. This has important implications for their employment, such as acceptance of low pay, unfair conditions, underemployment, and limits their access to education and training, which require longer term planning for both refugees, employers, and governments.
 - b. **Refugees' social networks constitute the main method of job search, which can limit their access to only certain types of jobs.** Since these groups have limited networks compared to natives, as well as due to their limited language capabilities and knowledge about the job market in the host country, their access to better jobs is limited. Those refugees with more established and extensive networks may have higher chances for finding better employment.
 - c. **The refugee groups who arrived earlier and those arriving recently have access to different types of jobs because of their varying networks.** The refugees who have arrived in the host country earlier may have longer time to develop networks that can

facilitate access to better jobs. However, the new arrivals do not often have such networks and are more likely to end up in worse, more precarious jobs. For example, some of the Syrians who have been in Turkey since 2011 started to move to better jobs while Afghan refugees, who arrived recently are the ones being employed in the worst conditions.

- d. **Language becomes an important barrier for refugees' access to better jobs.** Many refugees do not speak the language of their host country. This limits their opportunities for good jobs firstly because better jobs require higher language proficiency, such as those requiring more analytical skills rather than manual skills. Secondly, learning the local language can help refugees to be informed about opportunities outside their networks as well as their rights. However, it is important to note that language is not sufficient for accessing better jobs, as the case of Venezuelan refugees across Latin American countries demonstrates.
- e. **The previous work and living experiences of refugees affect their employment opportunities in the host countries.** For example, refugees with certain skills, such as those with vocational skills, can find employment in such jobs in the host countries, although they may struggle to rectify these skills in host locations as they often lack certificates. In contrast, refugees coming from rural areas and those with limited literacy skills struggle to live and find employment in urban environments, and are more likely to work in exploitative jobs.
- f. **Women are more likely to be in precarious and exploitative employment due to their multiple vulnerabilities.** Refugee women often have additional responsibilities such as childcare as most women arrive in the host country with minors. This further limits their access to higher paying and more secure jobs when compared to refugee men. Consequently, women are most likely to be in informal employment and are paid less compared to men.

Initiatives for improving refugees' employment conditions

10. **Several initiatives were mentioned throughout the workshop which may help to improve refugees' employment conditions.** These involve (a) projects and programmes developed by governments and national and international organisations, (b) refugee entrepreneurship, (c) corporate social responsibility and auditing conducted by multinational corporations, and (d) social enterprises.
11. **Governments, IOs, NGOs and social enterprises carry out advocacy, policy development, capacity building activities to facilitate refugee integration and employment.** These programmes have a wide-ranging focus involving cash transfers, healthcare benefits, integration of children to the education system, women's empowerment, and integration of workers to the labour market.
 - a. **The refugee integration programmes in LICs have been predominantly funded by national governments and IOs.** Particularly the EU has been the main funder of the refugee integration programmes in Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon. Unlike other LICs, Colombia has not yet received sufficient financial support for its refugee integration programmes.
 - b. **The programmes for Syrians in Turkey initially focused on passive policies while the government, IOs and NGOs started shifting towards more active labour market policies (ALMPs) since 2018.** Passive policies are the main source of support provided to refugees across LICs and provide income support to all refugees such as cash transfers. In contrast, active policies offer tailored services to job seekers and aim to support refugees' access to employment. Some examples of active policies involve job search assistance, vocational training, apprenticeships, wage subsidies, and entrepreneurship support. They also try to address social and cultural barriers to employment for refugees, such as language and cultural training.
 - c. **Vocational education and training (VET) comes to the fore as a key ALMP, and a method for refugees' employment.** VET is seen as crucial for refugees' participation in the labour market and integration into their host country's social life. It is seen as an opportunity for refugees to gain employable skills and access job opportunities that align with their skills and interests; cope with post-war trauma and reintegrate into society.
 - d. **Despite their extensive budgets and involvement of several key actors at international, national, and local level, the programmes and projects for the integration of refugees have not been successful for improving refugees' employment conditions or increasing their access to better jobs.** This is the case for both passive and active policies aiming refugees' integration. The conveners of the workshop highlighted several problems related to these programmes and projects.
 - i. **The programmes are usually short-term, patchwork and do not propose long term solutions.** These are done as projects (by NGOs and IOs) in a very short period of time, which prevents long-term solutions. Many of the projects heavily rely on NGOs and international organisations, with limited

involvement from national governments who do not have long-term and nation-level labour market integration policy for refugees.

- ii. **The support in the programmes and projects often have short-term goals such as enhancing refugees' labour market entry while they do not consider long-term implications of these such as refugees' future progression in the job market.** Consequently, many refugees become resettled but not integrated.
 - iii. **There are not sufficient initiatives to evaluate the effectiveness of these programmes on refugees, leading to the continuation of similar programmes causing waste of resources.**
 - iv. **There are several overlapping programmes competing with one another for resources.** As a result, there is multiplication of programmes with limited resources. There is also a lack of cooperation between the programmes, leading to fragmented responses to similar issues, which can cause problems regarding connecting the refugees who need the support with these programmes. In fact, many refugees are not aware of the support available, such as those through VET.
 - v. **Most integration programmes involve local, national, and international actors which may cause the loss of accountability leading to inefficiency of those programmes.** Multilevel redistribution of responsibilities of refugee integration creates vague and opaque governance mechanisms. The different actors involved in the programmes 'pass the bucket' to the actor they are carrying out these programmes with, through which they aim to avoid responsibility and accountability. This causes the individualisation of responsibilities and loss of accountability, consequently putting the refugees and their integration at risk.
- e. **ALMPs such as VET have not been sufficient to improve refugees' employment opportunities because of a variety of reasons but mostly because these programmes are not aligned with the needs of employers.**
- i. **The economies of many LICs rely on labour-intensive industries such as services, low-skill manufacturing, and agriculture.** The need for low-skill cheap labour is higher even in the regions where the refugees are mostly located, such as border towns. However, the VET programmes in these areas focus on providing skills that are not in demand in these regions, making these VET courses obsolete.
 - ii. **There are several problems regarding the organisation and management of VET courses.** For instance, because participating in a course can mean loss of the cash benefits for refugees, such as the ESN for Syrian refugees in Turkey, they may prefer to continue informal employment and maintain the cash benefit instead of attending VET courses. Furthermore, most of the VET programmes are provided in locations that are difficult to access for refugees, which reduces their participation in those programmes.

- iii. **Lack of information about VET programmes by the refugees and racism and xenophobia towards the refugees by the administrators of these programmes further limit refugees' participation in them.**
 - iv. **Apprenticeship has been an important strategy for governments, IOs and NGOs but it can cause exploitation of child labour.** While hiring young workers (those below 15) is not legal in Turkey, they can be employed as apprentices as long as they are 'learning' in the workplace. However, it is possible for employers to register children as apprentices for the exploitation of child labour.
 - v. **The courses targeted for women and men facilitate gender stereotypes and limit women's access to good jobs.** Most courses directed towards women involve skills associated with 'female jobs' such as hairdressing and skincare. While these can be helpful to get women out of homes, and empower them, they do not create employment or improve employment prospects for these women.
- f. **There are implementation problems in the programmes for refugees' employment due to the lack of capacity.** The LICs hosting refugees are dealing with an extremely high number of population who suddenly ended up within their borders. Although there is a substantial amount of funding and the capacity of institutions has been expanded, this is still insufficient for the number of people. The lack of data on refugees' educational and professional background is also a key problem in this regard.
- g. **Western states' policymaking on aid makes host states of first asylum more dependent on donor countries, and encourages the use of refugees for material rewards in migration diplomacy.** This dependency on foreign aid also limits the scope of local programmes and encourages focus on short-term solutions only. It is important to note that in the Colombian case, even when funding for integration programs comes mainly from the national government, solutions are still insufficient and short-term.
- i. **The provision of funding by the Global North countries and IOs, [particularly the EU](#), is done within an "out-of-sight, out-of-mind" approach, which leads to refugee rentier states and commodification of refugees.** The financial aid provided to LICs by IOs such as the EU have several conditionalities, such as the treatment of these groups by the host country. This leads to the development of '[refugee rentier states](#)', where host countries develop rent-seeking strategies may target international organisations or third states for various payments, including direct economic aid or grants, debt relief, preferential trade treatment. These aid programmes can also skew the policies of host countries towards programmes that may not sufficiently benefit the refugees, such as focusing on short-term solutions rather than long-term ones, or prioritising selected groups of refugees over others.
 - ii. **Refugee rent seeking [has been increasing](#) amongst the host countries in the Global South.** The [EU-Turkey Statement](#) is an important example of this. The March 2016 EU-Turkey agreement involved the allocation of €6 billion until

the end of 2018 for Turkey to reinforce its external borders and to accept the return of migrants from Greece. In return, the EU would accelerate the visa liberalisation process to lift the visa requirements for Turkish citizens. In the context of the Syrian refugee crisis, Jordan and Lebanon constitute other examples of refugee rent-seeking states, having negotiated the Jordan Compact between the World Bank and Jordan, and the Lebanon Crisis Response Plan between the EU and Lebanon, respectively.

12. **Entrepreneurship becomes an important option for refugees for both their and other refugees' integration into the economy of host countries.** The refugees who have some business experience in their home countries, such as business owners, and have some international networks often end up starting their own business in host locations. There are also many refugees who want to do entrepreneurship because they do not think they can get decent jobs with good pay in the labour market, and sometimes they move from being an employee to starting their own business. Many refugees also have social motivations such as serving their community when starting and continuing their business in the host country.
- a. **While some of the refugee enterprises are registered, many prefer to remain unregistered due to a variety of reasons.** The difficulties in the procedures for registering their business and lack of monitoring by the host state are some of the reasons for remaining informal. However, it is also possible that remaining informal is more beneficial for them, as some of them operate around camps and formalising can hinder some of their activities around these areas.
 - b. **Entrepreneurship can provide, when registered, important opportunities to the refugee entrepreneurs.** These involve legal and legitimate status in the host country, as well as the possibility for citizenship in the host country. There are currently more than 15,000 registered businesses owned by Syrians in Turkey.
 - c. **Businesses owned by refugees are more likely to employ other refugees, which increases employment of refugees.** The research has shown that especially when the refugee businesses have access to support, such as finance management, consultancy, loans, and when they move from being unregistered to registered, they are more likely to increase their employees and employ refugees. In Turkey, businesses by Syrian entrepreneurs provide employment to more than 500,000 people. Through providing employment, these businesses provide stability to refugee workers. However, it is important to note that these businesses, especially when not registered, can facilitate informal employment of refugees, which can lead to labour rights abuses such as low pay and overtime.
 - d. **Refugee businesses make significant contributions to the economy of their host countries.** In Turkey, the businesses owned by Syrians are concentrated in industries important for the country's economy including shoe industry, textile, food, machinery and packaging. These companies use their external linkages that boost the exports of their host countries. Syrian-owned companies constitute 5 per cent of exports in Gaziantep, which is one of the cities with high population of Syrian refugees in Turkey.
 - e. **There are several factors that create obstacles to refugee businesses, which are not often obstacles for local businesses.** The refugee businesses cannot always access the institutions available to natives such as a bank account, and education and training.

Furthermore, refugees' temporary status in the host country and uncertainty about their future can prevent their long-term planning, which then limits their investments into their own business.

13. **Many leading European brands sourcing from Turkish garment factories have been trying to tackle labour rights issues relating to refugee employment in their supply chains.** While some brands demonstrated proactive measures, the majority failed to effectively prevent labour abuses.
14. **The main strategies adopted by the leading brands involved corporate social responsibility activities (CSR) and multi-stakeholder initiatives (MSI), both of which have not been successful.** Broadly, these strategies fail to prevent abuse due to the fact they do not address the poor purchasing practices that enable brands to amass wealth through the exploitation of those at the bottom of the supply chain. These strategies are predominantly generic policies to prevent labour abuses and discrimination against migrants. Further, CSR and MSI initiatives often rely on ineffective auditing of suppliers, alongside the creation of policies that are voluntary and unenforced.
15. **Through CSR and MSI initiatives, brands used auditing as a method to prevent abuse. Auditing is ineffective at detecting labour rights abuse for a number of reasons.**
 - a. **Brands often only audited first-tier suppliers, rather than second- or third-tier suppliers further down the supply chain.** Refugee employment takes place mostly in lower levels of the supply chain, which is rarely subject to auditing while the first-tier suppliers, which are the large corporations, are less likely to employ refugees.
 - b. **The auditing is often announced beforehand.** This allows suppliers to hide refugee employment or cover exploitation before an audit.
 - c. **Auditing is not sufficient to detect 'hidden subcontracting'.** Company policies and auditing practices are often not sufficient to detect undeclared subcontracting, with many brands citing a reliance on policies banning the practice. Brands do not address the poor purchasing practices that drive undeclared subcontracting, while unannounced audits restricted to first-tier suppliers compounds the risk of subcontracting occurring without the buyer's knowledge.
 - d. **Most companies rely on generic policies regarding discrimination or the treatment of migrant workers, which are insufficient to address specific issues related to Syrian refugees.** While such policies did cover some issues experienced by Syrian refugees (such as the control of passports, denunciation to authorities, or lower wages), they failed to tackle context-specific issues, including subcontracting, a lack of work permits, and wage differences between Syrian men and women. In particular, there was a need for brands to develop specific remediation policies towards Syrian refugees, such as prohibiting the automatic dismissal of refugees found in supply chains without permits.
 - e. **Brands expect certain standards from suppliers but do not offer any assistance to support the financial and human resource costs of attaining those standards.** This is especially difficult for small suppliers with limited capacity, who do not have the sufficient resources to comply with the expectations of brands.

16. **The main issue that is causing the informal and precarious employment of Syrian refugees in the supply chains of big brands, namely the brands' purchasing practices, are not tackled.** Consequently, suppliers continue to subcontract and/or employ refugees often in precarious conditions to meet their clients' demands regarding price and turnover.

Recommendations for enabling access to better jobs for refugees

17. **The various contributions from the speakers brought together diverse perspectives, which helped to develop some recommendations about future policies and programmes for refugees' integration.**
18. **Collaboration and knowledge-sharing among researchers, policymakers, practitioners, IOs, and refugee groups is essential to develop effective strategies for the successful integration of refugees into host societies.** Refugee integration and employment is multifaceted and hence, there is a need for a holistic and coordinated response to refugee employment, involving the different stakeholders approaching the issues from different angles. Furthermore, issues related to refugees' better employment require complex and ambitious interdisciplinary approaches that touch on a range of fields including politics, labour economics, policy, sociology, political economy, international relations and demography. Since these different areas are intertwined, the issue needs to be addressed in a more integrated manner. This workshop was shown as an important example for this, and further collaboration between the different actors is encouraged.
19. **Despite different contexts, the employment and integration of refugees in host societies have similar challenges and responses are also alike, which requires conversation between groups working in different countries.** The workshop involved presentations about refugees' employment and integration across several countries. The presentations showed that the problems and responses regarding this issue have been similar. Therefore, more dialogue between the stakeholders working on refugees in different countries may facilitate learning from one another and develop better responses.
20. **It is essential to change the approach to policies regarding refugees, which has built on the assumption that the refugees are temporary.** The cases of Syrian, Ukrainian, and Venezuelan refugees have shown that the short-term projects and programmes are far from resolving the issues regarding refugees' more precarious employment. Therefore, it is important to encourage acceptance that many of the refugees will stay in the host country on long term permanent basis and develop the policies building on that acceptance.
21. **Economic opportunities are a key part of the integration process.** Given that informal employment and labour-intensive jobs constitute the only type of employment for refugees, it is not possible to improve refugees' employment without addressing the issues around the economic structure of and types of jobs available in the host economies. Therefore, policies and programmes related to refugees' employment and integration to the labour market should not be considered as an afterthought, but be part of the development programmes and industrial policies in the LICs.
22. **Legal barriers to refugees' employment in the formal economy should be lifted.** Although this will not automatically ensure refugees' employment in better jobs, it can help to increase

their access also to other jobs, and not only the labour-intensive, low-paid jobs in the informal economy.

- a. **All barriers preventing refugees' formal employment should be removed.** For this, the administrative hurdles regarding the work permits should be lifted and the asylum processes for asylum seekers should be expedited. Providing the refugees a legal status and work permits can also help to address the issues related to uncertainty and temporariness, which can improve their motivation and have longer-term goals. This then can encourage them looking for better jobs, rather than accepting any job focused on survival.
- b. **Mechanisms to recognise refugees' previous qualifications and work experiences should be developed and existing mechanisms should be simplified.** This will help to not only prevent underemployment and overqualification of refugees for the jobs they are doing, but also address the skill gaps in the host economies. [Mahir Eller Projesi](#) developed by The Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges of Türkiye (TOBB) and Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), and the [European Qualifications Passport for Refugees](#) by the Council of Europe are promising examples. These projects can be evaluated, which can lead to their further improvement and adoption in other contexts.

23. Information sharing and collaboration between the multilevel actors (local actors, NGOs, governments and IOs) concerned with improving refugees' employment and integration is necessary to develop effective strategies. This can help to

- a. a better distribution of resources through preventing the multiplication of (unsuccessful projects).
- b. Longer-term projects and programmes that focus not only refugees' entry to any job, but their employment in better jobs that offer career progression.

24. Clearer responsibility and accountability lines need to be drawn for policies and programmes involving multiple actors at the local, national and international level. The responsibilities of each actor should be clearly defined and distributed in a way that is equitable and promotes local participation.

- a. Funding responsibilities should be fairly distributed across levels. This distribution should neither encourage rent-seeking from national governments nor overwhelm local administrations.
- b. Inclusive governance practices should be promoted. These practices need to simultaneously acknowledge the priorities of local levels and the aspirations of migrants and refugees.
- c. Capacities of implementers need to be strengthened. Local levels and organisations need to receive adequate financial and technical resources as well as culturally-sensitive training for them to adequately enact integration programs.
- d. Integration programs should use a win-win approach. Initiatives that benefit both recipient communities and refugees are more likely to be broadly supported and have greater accountability. This requires a shift from donors' priorities to local goals negotiated between communities.

25. **The programmes developed for refugees' employment and integration should be gender-sensitive, considering the specific vulnerabilities and challenges faced by refugee women.** “fully recognising [the key role of women for the successful integration](#) of migrant families and ensuring that the specific needs of migrant women are duly taken into account in terms of access to sexual and reproductive health, vocational and linguistic training, and independent access to education, while providing the necessary resources and training staff”
26. **Refugees' engagement in civil society should be encouraged.** Because refugees cannot vote, their participation in civil society organisations will enable information about their lived experiences and their engagement in policy development and delivery. Furthermore, participation in the civil society can facilitate information sharing about refugees' rights, integration programmes and job opportunities.
27. **The ALMPs and VET directed towards refugees should not be used to 'keep them busy' but should be comprehensive programmes that go beyond a response to an emergency and addresses broader issues of sustainable and long-term programmes.** This will require a nation-level strategy that can be tailored to the local needs in different regions, and help to develop a contextualised approach, considering the unique challenges and solutions that arise in different contexts, rather than adopting a one-size-fits-all approach.
- a. **These programmes should also be integrated into the development programmes and industrial policy in LICs.** This would require cooperation between different governmental bodies in host countries. For example, for Turkey, the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour and Social Security and the Ministry of Industry and Technology should work together to integrate the industrial, education and training, labour market policies.
 - b. **Businesses, trade unions, NGOs and refugee organisations should be key parties of the programmes** to understand and address the needs of different groups. Particularly the involvement of large corporations in these programmes is important to raise awareness and improve efficiency of the integration programmes. This can promote tailored training, engagement with employers, and coordination between research, policy, and on-the-ground support.
 - c. **These programmes should consider refugees' priorities and offer incentives to increase their participation.** For instance, the loss of ESSN when participating in these programmes can be prevented. Refugees' previous experience and interests should be integrated into the programmes.
 - d. **Workplace VET, rather than those in schools, can help to increase refugees' participation as they involve a salary and are more geared towards speedy joining the labour market.** However, these programmes need to be delicately organised to prevent child labour and labour exploitation.
 - e. **ALMPs and VET should aim not only refugees' entry to the labour market, but also their progression to better jobs.**
28. **Refugee entrepreneurship should be encouraged and the obstacles to refugee entrepreneurship should be lifted.** The legal restrictions to the registration of refugee businesses should be relaxed while refugee entrepreneurs' access to different services, such as finance and consulting, should be improved. Training programmes for refugee

entrepreneurs can help to address problems stemming from lack of knowledge of the regulations and business environment in the host country and their limited business experience.

29. **Multinational companies from Europe and elsewhere should reconsider their purchasing practices if they sincerely want to ensure fair working conditions for refugees across their supply chains.** This involves the price expectations and turnover times as well as the length of contracts with suppliers.
30. **Worker-driven social responsibility (WSR) initiatives enable brands to tackle labour rights abuse in their supply chains.** WSR entails reform through worker participation and legally binding enforcement. It includes workers' leadership in the development of standards; independent auditors who rely on confidential worker interviews; workers' accessing reliable complaint mechanisms and being educated on their rights; and legally-binding agreements that locate enforcement responsibility at the top of the supply chain.
31. **The racial discrimination and xenophobia by employers, administrators of programmes and local population should be prevented, and diversity and inclusion in the workplace should be promoted.** Addressing these challenges requires promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace, providing language support, and raising awareness about the value of refugees' contributions. Efforts should be made to ensure equal opportunities and fair treatment for all refugees in the labour market.

Overall, the feedback from conference attendees highlighted the need for ongoing discussions, the use of interdisciplinary approaches, the identification of practical implications, and continuing collaboration among stakeholders to refine the understanding and developments surrounding refugees' employment and integration.