



LABHO  
OBSERVATOIRE  
DES HOMMES  
ET DES  
ORGANISATIONS

# How can we welcome refugees a different way ?

Professional assimilation  
at the heart of integration

Executive summary

|| Prendre  
de la  
hauteur  
pour  
éclairer  
l'action ||



## Lab'Ho Study – Executive Summary

# How can we welcome refugees a different way?

## Professional assimilation at the heart of integration

This operational white paper on the professional insertion of refugees in France in 2018 has been written by Lab'Ho, with the support of The Adecco Group Foundation, in partnership with:

- Humando, which is a subsidiary of The Adecco Group specialising in insertion by economic means
- The Temporary Work Training and Insurance Fund (FAF.TT)
- The National Agency for the Professional Training of Adults (Afp) (Afpa)
- The Movement of the Enterprises of France (Medef)
- The Accenture Foundation
- L'Oréal France

The enquiry was carried out over a number of months in early 2018, with observation phases out in the field and over 40 interviews with people involved in this issue.

### **Part 1: Making professional assimilation the focus of integration**

The means of achieving this are poorly understood – by those involved from a social, employment and professional training perspective. The lack of visibility of the current possibilities works against refugees. Those involved from an employment and a social perspective pass the buck, with no-one sufficiently prepared or informed to efficiently take charge of supporting refugees in their search for employment.

What is at stake for refugees goes beyond the primary aspect of work as a source of income. Finding employment puts an end to the waiting period that is involved when seeking asylum. In this context, a professional activity marks the beginning of getting one's life back under control. Working means getting out and about, leaving the four walls you occupy and clearing your head, not to mention the symbolic and cultural significance of work in France which makes professional insertion a crucial step in any successful integration process. A profession helps an individual to find a status and a place in society, while work enables them to become part of society.

### **Part 2: (Re)building refugees' employability**

There are three conditions for the professional insertion of refugees: having the right to work, job offers and the appropriate skills. Working on the employability of refugees involves equipping them as best as possible to correspond to job offers and thus to develop the appropriate competencies. In this respect, refugees have specific needs.

The first competency to be appropriated is the language, but to acquire linguistic skills, you already have to know how to learn.

The other competencies to master are those which correspond to trades which can be carried out in France – either sectors with shortages or one that are expanding, such as the digital sector. The training offered in both cases fails to take into account the competencies already acquired by refugees, which leads either to situations where the refugees have to go down the professional ladder or ply a different trade. In the job training sector, refugees are often seen as needing to "learn a trade" as opposed to updating/adapting their knowledge and expertise.

Lastly, refugees cannot spontaneously call upon their soft skills. They need to be steered in how to identify them, as they are inherently cultural.

### **Part 3: Be in a position to apply**



Successful professional insertion does not depend solely on the employability of the candidate but also on their current and potential living conditions. Outside obstacles to the job such as housing, geographical mobility or psychological issues should no longer be considered as extraneous but instead be the subject of social efforts that at the very least aim to diminish their impact. Successful professional insertion also requires knowing how to write a CV, which is the main job-seeking tool, as well as all the inherently cultural codes that apply to the job market in France.

#### **Part 4: Have employment opportunities**

The genuine professional insertion of refugees requires access to jobs that ideally are long-term. Training and support for applications are only useful if they enable those who benefit from them to find a job – and this is a far from simple task.

The first reason for this is that the job market in France is very specific. Co-opting and networking play a major role and are of great benefit to insiders. Interim employment therefore is one of the rare intermediaries available to the masses, and temporary employment insertion agencies can take the specific qualities of refugees into account. The job market is not yet easy to read or interpret for companies looking to enable refugees to apply for the jobs that they are offering. Neither is it easy to read or interpret for refugees who would like to apply, and they therefore end up opting more for temporary and entrepreneurial work.

Companies meanwhile are developing strategies to overcome the weaknesses of people applying but leave the final decision on recruitment to the local managers, among whom they are trying to create awareness and foster a sense of commitment, both in order to provide fair and equal treatment and also out of a need to guarantee recruitment profiles via intermediaries.

The difficulty resides in the balance between measures to help candidates get a foot on the ladder and the absence of job creation or statistical recruitment targets for them, whilst all the time being required to remain within a legal and ethical framework which is opposed to positive discrimination.

#### **Part 5: Removing the prejudices which go along with every stage of the insertion process**

The final challenges, which are every bit as essential to combat, are the prejudices and attitudes of part of the population which make the successful professional insertion of refugees an even more complex and random process. Certain people will indeed always be faced with situations and other people who are reticent about helping their integration, while on the other hand, there will be people who find that they are given support, be it to open a bank account, find a job within their company or recognise their independence by treating them as equals.

#### **Humando's commitment to the Horizons and Hope experiments: 168 people supported, with another 24 in the future**

Humando is committed to the insertion of refugees, in particular via the Horizons and subsequent Hope programmes which are designed to facilitate the professional and social integration of people with refugee status from Sudan, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia.

With the Horizons programme, the aim of Humando, in partnership with the Prefecture of Ile-de-France, the AFPA and the FAF.TT, was to offer a range of innovative measures combining all of the conditions necessary for the successful assimilation of refugees, including welcoming, accommodation, training, and social and professional support, and then employment placement and follow-up. It was intended that the public, collectives and companies could all rely on these measures which ended up providing a new solution to meet recruitment needs.

After the success of Horizons, it was clear that Humando should continue with its commitment to the assimilation of refugees by responding to the call for projects which led to project HOPE, and this was



the aim behind the Adecco Group launching the second edition of its programme. These two experiments saw 110 participants with refugee status given support by Humando in their social and professional integration, with various non-qualified and qualified (minimum four years of tertiary education) trades involved, via different agencies and training centres throughout France (Chartres, Nantes, Beauvais, Le Havre, Ile-de-France etc.). A second stage – HOPE 2 – is currently under way providing support to 58 people, with HOPE 3 set to follow and help another 24 new refugees by the end of 2018.

## **21 suggestions**

### **to make professional assimilation the focus of refugee integration**

#### **Three solutions to change the current lack of clarity**

**SUGGESTION 1:** have a portal with an inventory of existing aid and guidance measures for "Pôle emploi" (employment centre) social workers and advisers.

**SUGGESTION 2:** create awareness among social and community workers of the business world by integrating units into initial and continuous training.

**SUGGESTION 3:** begin the procedure as soon as asylum has been requested (learning French, pre-orientation, introduction to local geography etc ...) to reduce the negative impact of the waiting period and smoothe the transition process to refugee status.

#### **Four ways of giving refugees the tools to acquire appropriate competencies**

**SUGGESTION 4:** combine job training with language lessons and workshops to leverage soft skills.

**SUGGESTION 5:** provide training in identified transferable competencies such as those in the training process.

**SUGGESTION 6:** define several typical job training paths to take the skill groups that the refugee person already has into account.

**SUGGESTION 7:** organise speaking coaching.

#### **Four solutions to make refugees' applications viable**

**SUGGESTION 8:** include how to obtain an A or B permit in professional training.

**SUGGESTION 9:** implement partnerships on a national level with vehicle hire companies.

**SUGGESTION 10:** provide insights into regions and accommodation possibilities in France.

**SUGGESTION 11:** create a system of employee-refugee pairings and create bridges between people in employment and those looking for work for them to acquire the codes of business culture.

#### **Solutions to explore and suggestions for the organisation of the job market**



**SUGGESTION 12:** Stabilise HOPE-style experiments over the long term.

**SUGGESTION 13:** Genuinely integrate refugees in the targets of social clauses in the markets.

**SUGGESTION 14:** Allow for mutualised financing to promote training to help people to adapt to trades and company practices.

**SUGGESTION 15:** Suggest that actions to help refugees should be given greater value in companies' CSR policies.

**SUGGESTION 16:** Increase the financial means of the SIAEs (structures for integration through work) with statistical targets in terms of refugees.

**SUGGESTION 17:** develop an on-line question-and-answer service for employers on issues linked to the status of refugees.

**SUGGESTION 18:** Create a national steering body for the employment of refugees.

**SUGGESTION 19:** Develop the usage of apprenticeships and alternating work/training after periods of training.

#### **Two ways for companies to fight prejudice**

**SUGGESTION 20:** Initiate a change in the dialogue and imagery surrounding refugees.

**SUGGESTION 21:** Train the educators, monitors and future managers in the advantages of decentralisation.

## **About Lab'Ho**

*Lab'Ho is a monitoring centre for people and organisations created as an initiative of The Adecco Group. Its aim is to find innovative and prospective ways to shine a light on societal issues linked to employment and professional pathways. It is a collaborative, independent think-tank which works in conjunction with partner companies and representatives of academia, associations and institutions. For more information, see: [www.labho.fr](http://www.labho.fr)*