

▶ **ILO-UNHCR seminar
on business and inclusion of refugees
in the labour market**

11 May 2021, 10:00–12:00



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The context

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of people forcibly displaced due to war, persecution, human rights violation, and events seriously disturbing public order has nearly doubled over the past decade: from 41 million in 2010 to 80 million in 2020. Around 46 million of them are internally displaced, while nearly 30 million are displaced across borders.¹ According to UNHCR estimates, around 207,000 refugees currently live in Italy.² In 2020, more than 34,000 refugees and migrants coming mainly from Tunisia, Bangladesh, Libya and Côte d'Ivoire arrived in Italy by sea – a significant increase compared to the 11,471 recorded in 2019, while 4,100 arrived by land.³

Despite nearly half of the refugees worldwide (or 43 per cent) are in the working age⁴, their access to formal employment can be hindered due to a variety of reasons, including socio-economic conditions of the host country and/or difficulties in exercising the right to education and work. As a result, refugees often find themselves in precarious and vulnerable situations that prevent them to enjoy fundamental principles and other rights at work. Enabling refugees to participate in and contribute to the economies and societies of the host countries through decent work is an essential to promote their socio-economic inclusion and reduce reliance on humanitarian assistance.

The United Nations' [Global Compact on Refugees \(GCR\)](#) and the ILO's [Recommendation No. 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience](#) highlight the pivotal role played by the private sector plays in the promotion of access of refugees to the labour market. Together with the [Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market](#), these frameworks suggest what employer organizations can do to support the inclusion of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons into work and society. These organizations can encourage their members to provide job opportunities, internships and apprenticeships for refugees; share knowledge and good practice (e.g. on recruitment, recognition of prior learning, inclusive workplaces); and facilitate collaboration with other actors on socio-economic inclusion of refugees.⁵ Together with government authorities and trade unions, employer organizations can support the development and implementation of policies and strategies for decent work of refugees.

Recognizing the potential of the private sector's involvement in the inclusion of refugees in the Italian society, the UNHCR launched in 2016 the project "[Welcome. Working for Refugee Integration](#)". The purpose of this project is to advance job and training opportunities for refugees through the promotion of an inclusive society. Based on a multi-stakeholder partnership involving the Ministry of Labour and Social Policies, the employer organization

¹ Unless otherwise stated, "people displaced across borders" refer to refugees under UNHCR's mandate, persons in a refugee-like situation and Venezuelans displaced abroad. It excludes Palestine refugees under the mandate of UNRWA.

² UNHCR. (2020). [Global Trends. Forced displacement in 2019](#).

³ UNHCR. (2020). [Italy Fact Sheet/ December 2020](#).

⁴ UNHCR. (2020). [Global Trends. Forced displacement in 2019](#).

⁵For additional information please see the EU Commission initiative "Employers together for integration" https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/what-we-do/policies/legal-migration/european-dialogue-skills-and-migration/integration-pact_en

Confindustria, the Tent partnership for refugees, and the UN Global Compact Network Italy, the project promoted the integration of refugees in the labour market by: (i) supporting companies interested in developing labour market integration initiatives; (ii) facilitating the sharing of information and good practice on refugee integration through work; (iii) building capacity of the private sector on issues related to international protection; (iv) celebrating the commitment of companies that recruit refugees through the attribution of a special logo. With around 5.000 job placements between 2018 and 2019 – 80 per cent of which converted into permanent jobs – and with over 100 companies receiving an award every year, the Welcome project gained special attention of the European Commission and various international organizations.

In light of the long-lasting experience and collaboration by the ILO and UNHCR in addressing refugee crisis and supporting the inclusion of refugees in the labour markets around the world, these two UN organizations are planning to join efforts in the promotion of decent work for refugees in Italy through the expansion of the Welcome initiative.⁶

Objectives of the seminar

The seminar aims to discussing the role of employer organizations in devising strategies and approaches that promote employment opportunities and decent work for refugees. More specifically, it will:

- Highlight the role of employer organizations and the private sector in the promotion of decent jobs for refugees as indicated in the international frameworks;
- Illustrate the achievements of the Welcome project and describe the central role played by the private sector;
- Explore the opportunities for building innovative partnerships for the development and implementation of initiatives that promote labour market access to refugees in the context of the Welcome project in Italy.

Participants

The discussion will involve representatives and experts of Italian organizations and employer associations.

Venue and date

The seminar will be conducted online on 11 May 2021 from 10h00 to 12h00.

⁶ See for instance the ILO and UNHCR [Approach to Inclusive Market systems \(AIMS\)](#) and the [2017 Guide to market-based livelihood interventions for refugees](#). See also ILO (2020), [Employment and decent work in refugee and other forced displacement contexts: Compendium of ILO's lessons learned, emerging good practices and policy guidance](#) and ILO (2019), [Refugees and decent work: Lessons learned from recent refugee jobs compacts](#).

Information on how to join the meeting

Below please find the information and link to participate in the event.

- Connect to ILO Zoom by using the following link:

<https://ilo-org.zoom.us/j/92943961095?pwd=bHZsTUNSVWlXMDJaZmFjYUJFbThXQT09>

- The meeting ID is **929 4396 1095**
- The passcode is **518073**

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AGENDA

- 10:00 Introductory remarks
- 10:20 International instruments on access of refugees to the
labour market: private sector initiatives
- 10.40 The Welcome project: origins and prospects for
development
- 11:00 The experience of employer organizations and companies
and of beneficiaries
- 11:30 Discussion on possible partnerships for promoting access to
decent work for refugees
- 12:00 Conclusions

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