



UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les réfugiés



Additional Pathways for Refugees: Exploring the Potential and Addressing Barriers

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and
The Migration Policy Institute Europe

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Ghent Marriot Hotel, Korenlei 10, 9000 Ghent, Belgium

KEY SUMMARY POINTS

From February 11th to February 12th 2016, the high level roundtable ***Additional Pathways for Refugees: Exploring Potential and Addressing Barriers*** saw an exploration of ways in which pathways to protection and self-reliance might be strengthened and expanded. It examined the possibilities for (a) creating or establishing **new pathways** for migration and mobility; (b) expanding the scope and strengthening the protection component of **existing pathways** for migration and mobility, and (c) facilitating access to **secure status** for refugees through existing programmes and visa categories within countries of first asylum.

Areas in which work might be undertaken to increase the viability and protection guarantees of alternative pathways – whether in countries of first asylum or through mobility – can be divided into labour, study, and family categories. Steps can also be taken to strengthen links between measures, thereby building new, tailored pathways.

Labour

- To develop temporary labour migration as a viable pathway, countries of first asylum can issue recognised refugees **machine-readable convention travel documents** with global validity, while also creating conditions in which they can guarantee a **country of return** when contracts end.
- The rules governing access to **skilled migration channels** could be reviewed for undue obstructions to access, and quotas could be relaxed or removed for skilled refugees.
- Alternative measures for the **recognition of skills and qualifications** could be developed at scale to provide small and medium enterprises (SMEs) with access to talent. **Online competency tests** may be appropriate for certain professions.
- States can **cover certain recruitment costs** where the private sector sees investing in refugee recruitment as too unpredictable. A nationally centralised **skills mapping and labour demand** tool could underpin new **job-matching** tools.
- International and other specialised institutions, such as trade unions, can help adapt existing **tools for protection** against migrant labour exploitation to refugee labour exploitation, taking into account special vulnerabilities.
- Employers' associations can develop early interventions to promote successful integration and emphasise the **"refugee premium"** – the combination of unique hard language and soft skills, and longer-term commitment to employers, that refugees often bring to employers in new countries.

Study

- Measures can be taken to both increase access to existing **scholarships** and expand access to existing opportunities. States can **reduce visa fees or waive country of**

return requirements; government can incorporate universities into **private sponsorship** models, to which access can be improved through alternative methods for **credential recognition**.

- A “**clearing house system**” can help students apply to multiple universities and universities to pool efforts in assessment and processing and ultimately reduce costs and achieve savings, including through economies of scale.
- **Preparatory/foundation courses** can aid prospective students attain the academic and language skills necessary for mainstream admission. **Distance/online learning** can fill this function and/or offer direct opportunities for accredited qualifications.
- The establishment of **vocational training colleges** in countries of first asylum can promote labour market-relevant skills for host populations and refugees. They might be developed with **private sector partners** that can help forge a pathway from education to employment for refugees and hosts.
- **Student mobility schemes** can be expanded and developed in new regions to enable temporary placements.

Family

- States can **expand the categories** of eligible family member and create **accelerated or automatic/concurrent procedures** for reunification, where family members are processed even before the sponsor has established refugee status. This approach can form the foundation for **orderly departure** from countries of first asylum.
- States can **waive or reduce pre-requisites**, including fees and minimum income requirements, and incorporate family reunion into private sponsorship models.
- States might seek the **harmonisation of family reunion** rules to temper the emergence of “preferred” destinations.
- Where children are born in countries of (first) asylum, states can develop legal frameworks for **citizenship** acquisition, to avoid statelessness in the next generation.

Other Pathways

- **Existing resettlement** countries can expand numbers and categories resettled, while international institutions can offer technical and other forms of support to pursue the possibility of new resettlement programmes in other countries.
- States can explore the multiple channels available through **private sponsorship** and develop models in partnership with civil society, religious organisations, diaspora groups, and private and education sectors.
- In assessing **costs and benefits**, states should incorporate the excellent **integration outcomes** associated with privately sponsored new arrivals.
- States and regional organisations can work to remove remaining legal and practical obstacles preventing **regional mobility frameworks** from providing wider protection, for instance by removing the ability of member states to unilaterally declare exceptions to free movement rules, and making residency affordable and accessible where the law allows.
- States can also work with international institutions to further develop **mobility opportunities within regional frameworks**, and (simplified) pathways to **regularisation or naturalisation** for those already living outside of the country of asylum.
- States, international institutions and other bodies can invest more deeply in understanding why schemes “fail” – namely the wasted opportunity of **unfilled family reunion or resettlement quotas** or low take-up of other initiatives. This might help inform decisions of where to strategically invest scarce resources, and which areas would best be targeted for capacity building.