UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

A guide for employers

In Hungary

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WORK REBUILDS LIVES

After fleeing war or persecution, refugees look for ways to rebuild their lives in peace and dignity. Being able to work and earn a living makes all the difference, as meaningful employment is one of the keys to their inclusion in society.

HIRING REFUGEES IN HUNGARY

This guide is intended to help local and multinational businesses in Hungary employ refugees. UNHCR outlines the profiles of the refugees residing in the country, demonstrates why adopting refugee-friendly employment practices is “good business,” and gives information on how to hire refugees and where to turn for help.

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FOREWORD

After fleeing war or persecution, refugees look for ways to rebuild their lives in peace and dignity. Being able to work and earn a living makes all the difference, as meaningful employment is one of the keys to their inclusion in society. A job means self-sufficiency and social connections, allowing refugees to use their skills and experience in a new context. Yet many refugees struggle to gain employment or find work that matches their qualifications and experience.

This guide is intended to help local and multinational businesses in Hungary employ refugees. UNHCR outlines the profiles of the refugees residing in the country, demonstrates why adopting refugee-friendly employment practices is "good business," and gives information on how to hire refugees and where to turn for help.

While many businesses have successfully employed refugees in Hungary, there is room to help more displaced people to find a suitable job-match for their skills, experience, and qualifications. By clarifying some of the legal and administrative aspects of employing refugees, this guide aims to raise awareness and help more refugees find meaningful work.

I hope you will read it with interest and share your feedback on employing refugees. This is an invitation for further collaboration. On behalf of the UN Refugee Agency, I thank you for your interest in supporting employment opportunities for refugees in Hungary.

March 2025
Nicole Epting, Representative for Central Europe

1. DEFINITIONS AND DATA

WHO ARE REFUGEES? HOW MANY ARE THERE, AND WHERE CAN EMPLOYERS FIND THEM?

WHO ARE REFUGEES?

Although it is common to see the terms 'refugee' and 'migrant' used interchangeably, there is a crucial difference between the two. Refugees are people who cannot return to their countries of origin due to a well-founded fear of persecution, and are protected as such under international, EU and Hungarian law.[1] Conversely, migrants choose to move, not because of a direct threat of persecution or death, but mainly to improve their lives through work opportunities, education, family reunification or other reasons. Each country accepts migrants under their own immigration laws and processes as they are not protected under international law.

TERMINOLOGY

This guide focuses on people who were forced to flee their own country and who have sought safety in Hungary. In Hungary this includes **asylum-seekers**,[2] beneficiaries of international protection[3] (**refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection**) **tolerated status holders**,[4] **beneficiaries of temporary protection**[5] as well as **stateless persons**.[6]

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[1] Article XIV. (4) of the Fundamental Law of Hungary, available in Hungarian here https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2011-4301-02-00; Directive 2013/32/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 on common procedures for granting and withdrawing international protection (recast), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32013L0032.

[2] An asylum-seeker is someone who has applied for international protection but has not yet received a final decision on their application.

[3] Beneficiaries of international protection cover refugees ('menekült') and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection ('oltalmazott') recognized based on Articles 6-7 and 12-13 of Act LXXX of 2007 on asylum, available here in Hungarian https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2007-80-00-00

[4] Tolerated status ('befogadott') is a form of non-EU harmonized national level protection against refoulement, which may be granted within the asylum or the aliens policing procedure pursuant to Articles 25/A and 25/B of Act LXXX of 2007 on asylum.

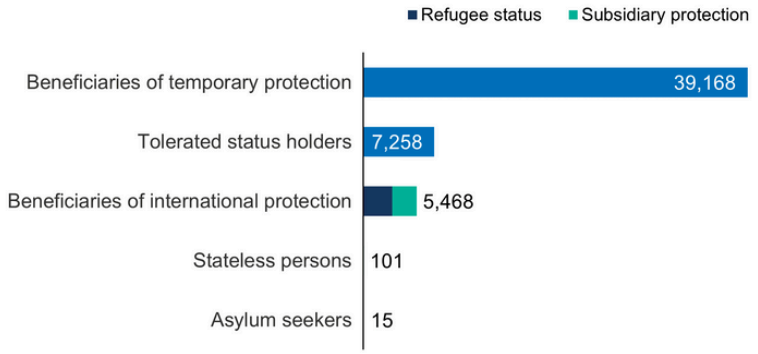
[5] Council Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001L0055&qid=1648223587338; see also Articles 19-25 of Act LXXX of 2007 on asylum and Government Decree 86/2022 of 7 March on the state of danger regulations regarding persons entitled to temporary protection, furthermore about the divergent application of the rules of the Act CVI of 2011 on public work, and the amendment of other laws in relation to public work, available here in Hungarian https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2011-106-00-00

[6] A stateless person is defined under international law as a person who is not considered a national by any State under the operation of its law. In Hungary it is a status granted following a stateless determination procedure. As defined in Article 1 of the UN Convention Relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, 1954, available in English here https://www.unhcr.org/media/convention-relating-status-stateless-persons

THE NUMBERS

Figure 1

Number of forcibly displaced and stateless persons in Hungary (as of 2024)

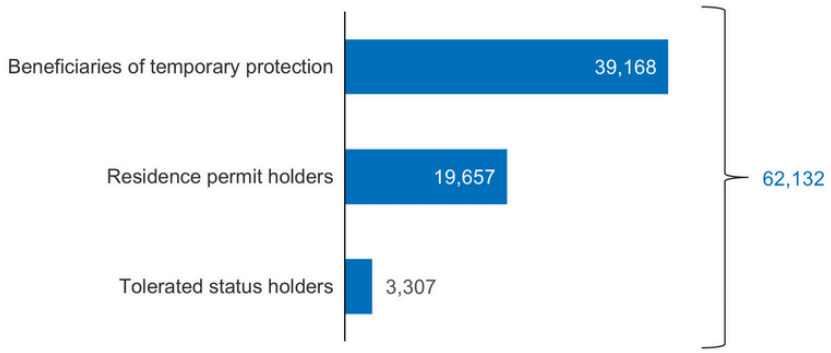


Source: National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (OIF)
Note 1: Data on temporary protection as of December 2024, all other data as of June 2024
Note 2: Beneficiaries of temporary protection includes only those who currently hold the status
Note 3: Tolerated status holders includes those in connection with application for refugee status (3,951) as well as temporary protection (3,307)
Note 4: Beneficiaries of international protection includes refugees (2,995) and subsidiary protection holders (2,473)

Hungary grants temporary protection to Ukrainians and certain other (non-EU) third-country nationals, who were residing in Ukraine and arrived in Hungary on or after 24 February 2022 due to the ongoing conflict. The number of refugees from Ukraine who have received temporary protection is more than 39,000, while another 3,307 received tolerated status (those who do not qualify for temporary protection status but cannot be sent back to their country because it is considered dangerous, see footnote no. 4) as of December 2024.[7] In addition, around 19,000 Ukrainian nationals arrived after the war broke out and acquired residence permits (mostly in order to work) instead of applying for TP status.[8] While it is impossible to be sure how many beneficiaries of TP have remained in the country, we can deduce from these figures that around 62,000 Ukrainian refugees are currently in Hungary.[9]

Figure 2

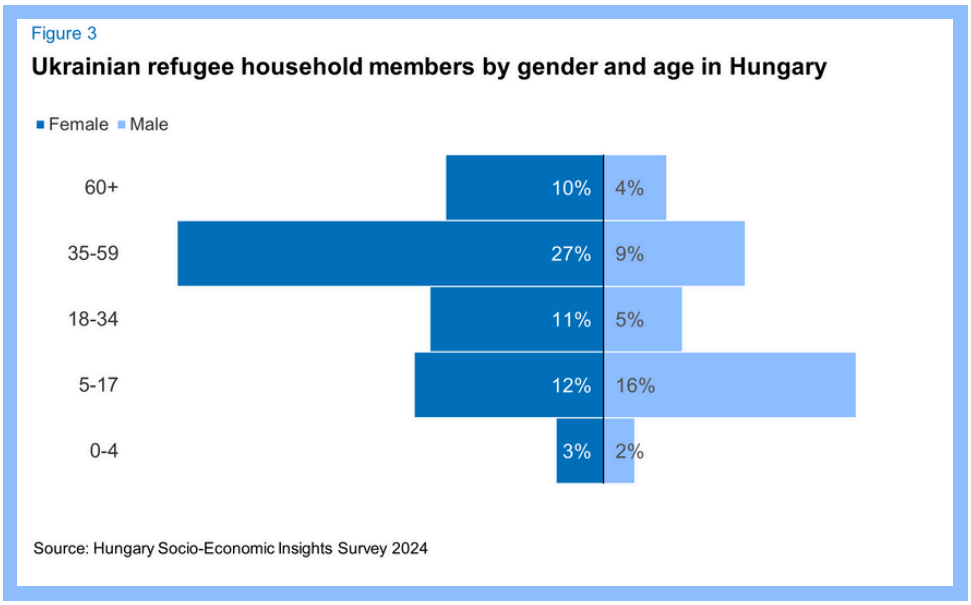
Refugees from Ukraine by legal status in Hungary (as of December 2024)



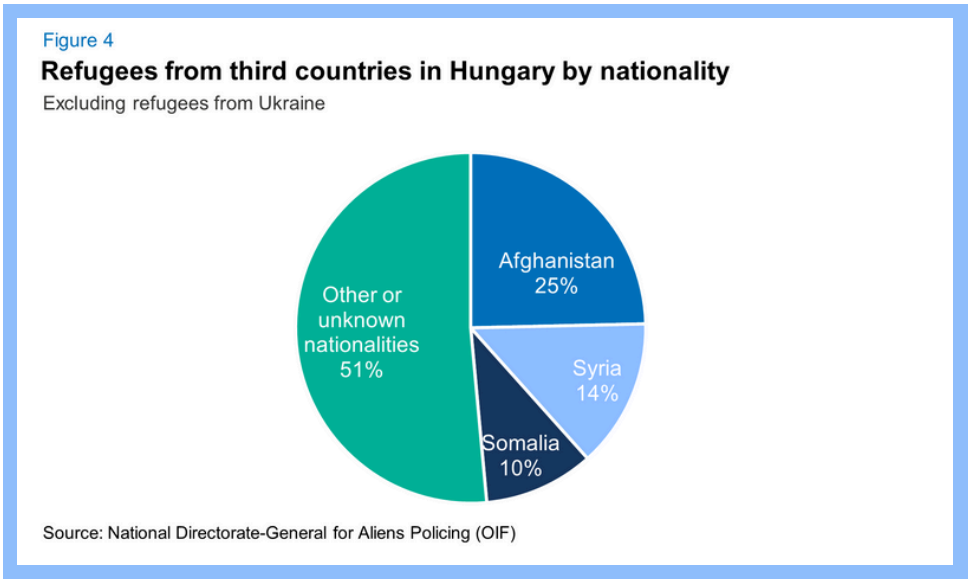
Source: National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (OIF)
Note 1: Beneficiaries of temporary protection includes only those who currently hold the status
Note 2: Ukrainians who are present on the territory through the 90-day visa free regime and dual nationals are not reflected, neither are Ukrainian beneficiaries of international protection who arrived before February 2022

[7] Data provided by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, December 2024.
[8] *Ibid*

In 2024, UNHCR conducted a socio-economic survey of 795 households representing 1,824 persons in total (mostly beneficiaries of temporary protection) who had fled Ukraine;[10] and some 66% of survey respondents were adults and 63% were women and girls. In the active working age group of 18-59 years (who make up 52% of those overall assessed), females were in the majority (73%). The average household size was 2.3, and close to 40% of the households were single women with children.



Refugees from third countries other than Ukraine may number around 6,000, judging from data provided by the Hungarian Central Statistical Bureau.[11] There is no central record system in Hungary to keep track of their continued presence in the country.



[9] UNHCR's data portal, Ukraine situation, Location: Hungary, available in English here: https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine/location/10783
[10] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024, available in English here https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/112070
[11] Central Statistical Bureau Hungary, 22.1.1.26. The number of asylum-seekers who had arrived in Hungary and those who had received international protection, available here https://www.ksh.hu/stadat_files/nep/hu/nep0026.html

LANGUAGE KNOWLEDGE

Admittedly, there are still challenges when it comes to Ukrainians' knowledge of the Hungarian language. Half of the surveyed refugees reported that they only spoke Hungarian at a beginner's level. However, among the active working age group, 13% claimed to have an intermediate level grasp of the language, while 9% said their language skills were at an advanced level.[12] A 2023 study by the International Organization for Migration (IOM)[13] found that 62% who did not speak Hungarian were nevertheless working, meaning that the lack of language did not hamper their employment, although the quality of the jobs and wages was likely to be low. Furthermore, a multi-sectoral needs assessment by UNHCR in 2023 found that 26% of refugees surveyed spoke Hungarian as their first language (mainly those from Transcarpathia).[14]

When asked about their needs in terms of socio-economic inclusion in UNHCR's 2024 survey, Ukrainian refugees said that in addition to their main request, which is social protection support, they could benefit from **language training** (54%), **job matching** (37%), **counselling in relation to social protection and the job market** (24%) and **adequate skills recognition** (19%).[15]

WHERE ARE UKRAINIAN AND OTHER REFUGEES LIVING?

The survey by UNHCR showed that 94% of Ukrainian refugees in Hungary live in cities, mainly in Budapest.[16] Based upon UNHCR's knowledge, it is assumed to be true for refugees from other countries too. Outside the capital, Ukrainian refugees have a significant presence in northeastern cities such as Eger, Miskolc, Nyíregyháza and Debrecen, and in the northwestern strip of the country, including Esztergom, Tatabánya, Székesfehérvár and Győr.

Accommodation is a priority need for refugees. Most live in private housing (58%) and only 49% of those surveyed said they could stay in their current accommodation for more than six months.[17] Around 31% said they lived in collective accommodation, which includes workers' hostels and other types of collective sites. To UNHCR's knowledge,[18] around 2,700 refugees (mostly beneficiaries of temporary protection) had to leave their collective accommodation when they lost eligibility for state support due to changes in the law in June 2024.[19] While some subsequently returned to Ukraine or moved to another country, UNHCR believes most have sought alternative self-paid rental accommodation in Hungary.

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[12] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[13] International Organization for Migration, Hungary – Labor market integration of refugees from Ukraine – Annual Report 2023, available in English here https://dtm.iom.int/reports/hungary-labour-market-integration-refugees-ukraine-annual-report-2023
[14] UNHCR, Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment, December 2023, available in English here https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105324
[15] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[16] *Ibid*
[17] *Ibid*
[18] The figure is calculated based on the following: UNHCR was aware from the Government that around 4,000 refugees stayed at the collective shelters and were financed by state subsidies before the legislative changes. The Minister heading the Prime Minister's Office confirmed this figure at a 'Government info' press conference on 22 August 2024, https://www.szabadeuropa.hu/a/gulyas-gergely-az-ukrajnai-menekultekrol-negyezren-eltek-itt-ugy-az-allam-penzen-hogy-nem-dolgoznak/33088327.html. Later the Charity Service of the Order of Malta (the Government's main civil partner in implementing the legislative changes) shared with UNHCR that approximately 3,000 of the refugees had lost eligibility for the subsidy because of the legal change. However, as part of a one-time opportunity close to 300 of them received approval for their leniency requests and could remain to be subsidized despite losing legal eligibility. This is how the figure 2,700 was estimated.

KEY POINTS ON UKRAINIAN REFUGEES[20]

- Around 60,000-70,000 Ukrainian refugees live in Hungary. 56% of households have children.
- 52% are in the active working age group (18-59) and 73% of those are women.
- Close to 70% of refugees say they intend to stay in Hungary long-term.
- Most refugees (71%) have been in Hungary for more than 2 years and have reached some level of socio-economic integration.
- Some 26% of refugees speak Hungarian as their first language.
- 94% live in urban centres, mostly in Budapest and in the cities of the northeast and northwest of Hungary.

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[19] The promulgation of Hungarian Government Decree 134/2024 of 28 June, amending Government Decree 104/2022 of 12 March on, available in Hungarian here https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2024-134-20-22; Please see Government Decree 104/2022 of 12 March, available in Hungarian here: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-104-20-22.20

[20] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.

2. BUSINESS CASE FOR EMPLOYING UKRAINIAN AND OTHER REFUGEES IN HUNGARY

Why employ refugees?

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Among the multiple reasons for the employment of refugees, the most important are their effectiveness, motivation and reliability as a workforce. They usually seek jobs in sectors with high labour demand and can be recruited and retained with relatively moderate effort.. Overall, working with refugees and stateless persons can be beneficial for both business and the local economy. In Hungary the administrative process for employing refugees is generally less complicated than for other foreign workers. (See Chapter 3 for more details.)

EXCEL IN CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

One of the most compelling business reasons for employing refugees is that integrating them into the workforce and adapting hiring processes and work environments to accommodate them fulfils employers' corporate social responsibility (CSR) committments, now often referred to as environmental, social and governance (ESG) committments. Defined by the European Commission as "the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society",[21] CSR is a cornerstone of corporate policies. It must be considered not just in corporate branding and marketing but also across the organization, in the recruitment process and the work environment. While CSR commonly involves environmental or local community projects, the diversification of the labour force and the hiring of refugees are also considered. In fact, this is one of the most meaningful forms of CSR and can bring long-lasting benefits for a company, refugees and the host society.[22] The long-term, stable employment of refugees can have a positive impact on their social inclusion.

[21] Defined by the European Commission in the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for corporate social responsibility, 25. 10. 2011. available in English here https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/com/com_com(2011)0681_/com_com(2011)0681_en.pdf; it was also referred to in Commission Staff Working document – Corporate Social Responsibility, Responsible Business Conduct, and Business and Human Rights: Overview of Progress, 2019, available in English here https://ec.europa.eu/docsroom/documents/34482

A multitude of initiatives linked to CSR, including the high-level European Partnership for Integration,[23] promote employment of refugees and give employers an opportunity to include their labour integration programmes in the Partnership. In 2004, the EU established a Diversity Charter to promote the fundamental principles of diversity, equality and discrimination-free workplaces.[24] As of early 2025, all 27 EU member states, including Hungary, are part of the initiative.

The Hungarian Business Leaders' Forum launched the Hungarian Diversity Charter in 2016, with support from the Ministry of National Economy and 50 signatories, including multi-national companies like Hungarian Telekom, Henkel, Bosch Hungary, and some small and medium sized businesses.[25] As part of the Diversity Charter, signatories have committed to improving diversity at their companies in exchange for internationally recognized certification and professional support. They foster equal opportunities and diversity in the workplace and learn from best practices. An annual Diversity Prize[26] is awarded to the company that has advanced most towards diversity. One of the ways to sign up to the Diversity Charter and fulfil the related pledges, companies can hire refugees and start programs to support their integration into the workplace and the host community.

A strong and visible commitment to CSR can be good for marketing. Increasingly, customers are starting to value and choose products when the producer takes social impact seriously. The Tent Partnership for Refugees commissioned a report in Italy, France, and Germany, which showed that companies who work with and support refugees in the host country are highly favoured by consumers.[27] Moreover, shareholders place great value on a business's ethical decision-making, not just its profits and financial plans.[28]

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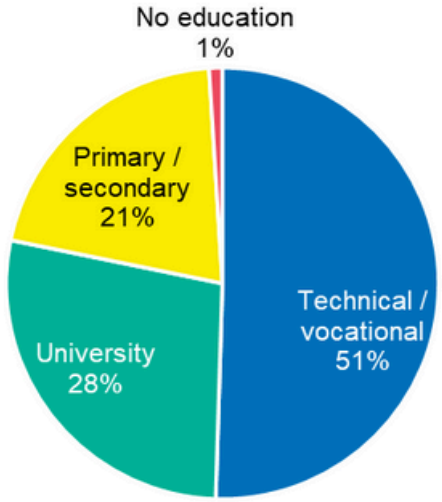
[22] Changing attitudes: A corporate perspective on refugee employment, available in English here https://www.globaltalentpathway.org/blog/changing-attitudes-a-corporate-perspective-on-refugee-employment
[23] European Partnership for Integration website, see it here https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/european-partnership-integration_en
[24] EU platform for diversity charters, https://eudiversity2024.eu/european-diversity-month-2024/eu-platform-of-diversity-charters/
[25] Hungarian Business Leaders Forum, Sokszínűségi karta, available in Hungarian here https://sokszinusegikarta.hu/hu/sokszinusegi-karta-2/
[26] Hungarian Business Leader Forum, Sokszínűségért Díj, available in Hungarian language here https://hblf.hu/dijak/hblf_sokszinusegert_dij
[27] Tülin Erdem, Cagdas Sirin, Vishal Singh, and Qianyun Zhang, "How helping refugees helps brands. An analysis of French, German, and Italian consumer perceptions", Tent Foundation, 2019, available in English here https://www.tent.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Tent_ECP_V5-single-page.pdf
[28] KPMG Australia, "Shareholder value: shareholder values", September 2019, available in English here https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cc7d5c277b903ed3206ff77/t/63d59d0759dd8c4e8c7b64b1/1674943764693/KPMG+-+Shareholder+value_+Shareholder+values+-+September+2019.pdf

GAIN A QUALIFIED AND TRUSTWORTHY WORKFORCE

Despite the potential differences among the educational and qualification systems of Hungary and non-EU third-countries, refugees can be a highly qualified and skilled workforce. Among Ukrainian refugees, the educational level is relatively high. In 2023, 40% reported to UNHCR that they had a higher educational degree while 20% said they had finished secondary education.[29] In 2024, 28% of those interviewed held a university degree and more than half (51%) of working-age respondents had technical or vocational qualifications.[30] Only 1% had no formal education. The data also shows that women – who make up most of the Ukrainian refugee population – tend to have higher educational levels.

Figure 5

Highest level of formal education



Source: Hungary Socio-Economic Insights Survey 2024

Ukrainians had been working in Hungary long before the war broke out in 2022, particularly in manufacturing, construction, and hospitality sectors, which means that many are already familiar with the Hungarian working environment and culture. Some of these workers opted not to return to Ukraine after the war started and their families joined them in Hungary.

For employers, the stability of the workforce is of utmost importance.[31] UNHCR's survey showed most respondents (71%) had been in Hungary for around two years or more, meaning they would have progressed in their integration.[32] During this time, most would have found long-term housing and schools for their children, gotten to know local culture and administrative procedures, and learned the language, to some extent.

[29] UNHCR, Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment, December 2023, available in English here https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/105324
[30] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[31] *Ibid*
[32] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.

They are likely to have been employed and to have experience of the Hungarian labour market and work culture. UNHCR found that 69% of Ukrainian refugees were planning to remain in Hungary long-term.[33] Only 6% of them said they would move on to another country and just 3% would return to Ukraine in the next 12 months.

Non-Ukrainian refugees have likely been living in the country for several years as most were granted international protection status before 2020. Since then, the Hungarian asylum-system has become rather restrictive, resulting in a very low number of asylum-seekers being able to enter Hungary. Ergo, common concerns among employers about the fluctuation of the labour force due to refugees coming and going are not well-founded.

Experience shows that refugee workers are more loyal to their employers than the average employees. A study by the Tent foundation[34] conducted among companies across the US found that **refugee employees tended to stay in a job longer than other employees**. Employers that made basic integration efforts experienced on average a 7% lower turnover rate among refugees as compared to locals across all sectors.

This loyalty was even stronger if refugees had the chance to learn the language on the job or receive language classes on the side. The study also found that if an employer made some effort to create a welcoming atmosphere, this attracted more refugees to the company. Most employers interviewed for the study said that refugee employees were in general willing to learn, work hard and prove their worth. Another survey conducted among German employers in 2017 showed more than 80% were fully satisfied with the performance of their refugee workforce.[35]

[33] *Ibid*
[34] Tent Foundation, David Dyssegaard Kallick and Cyierra Roldan, May 2018, "Refugees as employees" Good retention, strong recruitment. Available in English here https://www.tent.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/TENT_FPI-Refugees-as-Employees-Report.pdf
[35] OECD (2017), "Labour Market Integration of Refugees in Germany: Finding their Way", OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/14947519-en.

ENSURE THAT WORKERS ARE MOTIVATED[36]

Refugees are resilient and can be dedicated and loyal employees. Once they find a fair employer, they tend to hold on to that opportunity and put effort into proving their worth. The previously cited study by Tent found that 73% of surveyed employers in the United States said they had a higher retention rate for refugee workers compared to other employees.[37]

This is especially true as employment is often their primary (or sometimes only) source of steady income, as is the case for 80% of Ukrainian refugees UNHCR surveyed.[38] Only 9% of their livelihoods comes from state allowances and a mere 1% from humanitarian assistance. Social support for Ukrainians is limited, as they are only entitled to a subsistence allowance of 22,800 HUF a month for adults and 13,700 HUF for children.[39] Refugees over 16 years of age receive the allowance for 45 days upon arrival to Hungary, and only the most vulnerable thereafter. The contribution of wages to total income is naturally lower for poorer refugees but still represents a significant part (close to 40%). Non-Ukrainian refugees legally have access to a broader range of social assistance but in UNHCR's experience, they often face administrative and practical barriers to obtain it. This makes a steady job their most important source of income.

Refugees also seem more eager to work than the mainstream population, as a higher proportion of refugees are searching for jobs as compared to the host community. According to IOM's 2023 assessment in Hungary, 24% of interviewed working-age Ukrainian refugees were unemployed and looking for a job at the time of questioning.[40]

[36] All figures not referenced below are from UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[37] Tent Foundation, Kallick and Roldan, "Refugees as employees"
[38] Data in this paragraph is from UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[39] Articles 4 and 5 of the Governmental Decree 106/2022 of 12 March on certain rules relating to the employment and benefits of persons recognized as beneficiaries of temporary protection in the event of a humanitarian emergency in a neighbouring country during a state of emergency, available here in Hungarian: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-106-20-22

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In 2024 UNHCR found the number had gone down but still 10% of refugees in the labour market were unemployed and looking for jobs. This is significantly higher than Hungary's 4% unemployment rate,[41] offering possibilities to employers with a demand for labour. While 61% of those of working-age are employed in formal and non-formal jobs, this figure is still lower than the national average of 75%.[42] This compares with 68% of working-age Ukrainians who told UNHCR they were employed in Ukraine before fleeing.[43]

The potential to acquire long-term, safe and legal employment motivates refugees to search for jobs. According to UNHCR's assessment, around 32% of refugees work without formal contracts.[44] This puts them at risk of exploitation, including long working hours and low pay, without paid sick leave or insurance. Under-reporting means the number could be even higher. Hence, there is room for good employers to attract refugees into the formal work sector by offering steady jobs, with better pay and conditions.

It is also worth bearing in mind that refugee youth offer untapped potential who could also be motivated to work. Of the 15–24-year-old refugees interviewed in 2024, 11% said they were neither enrolled in education or vocational training nor employed. This is slightly higher than the rate among Hungarians (10%) and much higher than the regional average for Ukrainian refugees (8.5%).[45] To open opportunities for this age group and make full use of youth potential, it is particularly important to develop new ways of assessing and matching skills and recognizing qualifications.

Low wages and underemployment[46] drive refugees to look for better job opportunities. The reported per capita net income of Ukrainian refugees in 2024 was around 278,000 HUF a month, which is 35% below the Hungarian average monthly net income (423,400 HUF) and only just above the minimum wage for unskilled workers.[47] **This shows that many refugees are struggling with underemployment and unable to get better-paying or higher-level jobs despite their educational background and qualifications.** In IOM's 2023 assessment, only 57% of respondents said their current job in Hungary corresponds to their level of education, qualifications, and experience.[48]

The possibility to become a self-employed, freelance worker is as of the beginning of 2025 is not open to beneficiaries of temporary protection.[49] Consequently, refugees who could otherwise provide services as entrepreneurs cannot do so as freelancers. Instead, they are limited to working as employees or establishing their own companies, which can be prohibitively expensive.

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[40] IOM, Labour Market Integration of Ukrainian Refugees, 2023 Annual report.
[41] Central Statistical Bureau of Hungary, December 2024, https://www.ksh.hu/labour
[42] *Ibid*
[43] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[44] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[45] *Ibid*
[46] Underemployment is understood as a phenomenon when a person is employed in a job that requires significantly lower qualification, skill or educational level, than the person actually possesses. For example, if a refugee with a Master of Arts degree is working in a factory on an assembly line due to language barriers.
[47] Central Statistical Bureau of Hungary, Flash information note, Earnings, July 2024. https://www.ksh.hu/gyorstajekoztatok/ker/ker2407.html
[48] IOM, Labour Market Integration of Ukrainian Refugees, 2023 Annual report.
[49] Article 3 (1) of the Act CXV of 2009 on the individual entrepreneur and companies, available in Hungarian here https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2009-115-00-00

RECRUIT EASIER AND RETAIN LONGER

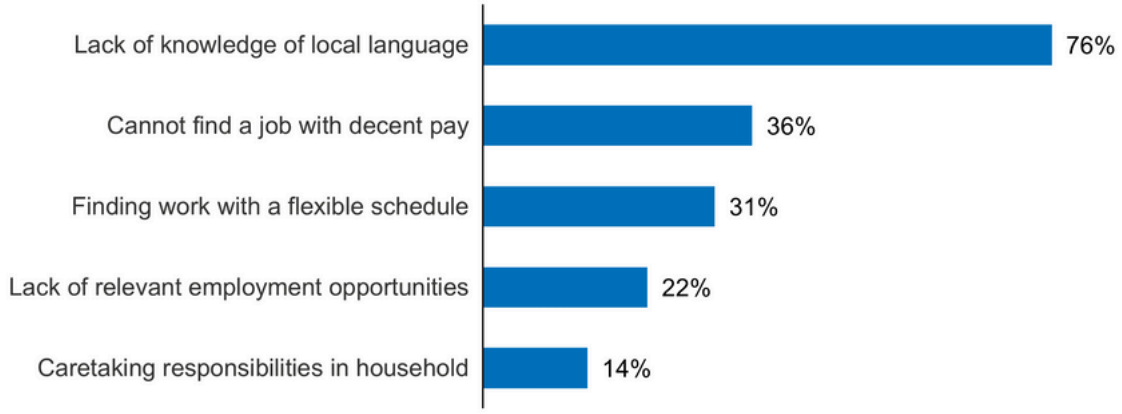
The administrative burden of employing refugees is relatively light. Compared to taking on workers from third countries, it is easier for employers to reach out and hire Ukrainian and other refugees in Hungary. First, as they are already here, there is no need to bring them to Hungary. Second, in most cases, they live in private housing, so there is limited need for employers to house them. At the same time, many are mobile and can move within the country for work, if needed. According to the Hungarian legal framework, beneficiaries of international protection, temporary protection and dual nationals fleeing the war in Ukraine can be hired without additional administrative burden because they do not need work permits. (See Chapter 3 for more details.)

Among the obstacles to employment, refugees cited the lack of Hungarian language (76%), low wages (36%), incompatible schedules (31%) and skill mismatches (22%).[50] The language barrier aside, employers could address the other factors by offering higher salaries, part-time or flexible schedule jobs, and mechanisms for matching skills and accepting qualifications. Creating more flexible opportunities would attract women in particular, as women managing alone (and mothers in general) must often organize their lives around children or taking care of other dependents.

With women representing 73% of working-age refugees, this is a potential labour force that cannot be ignored. When it comes to the extent of employment, there is also a gender disparity. While 81% of Ukrainian men said they were employed, the figure was only 64% for women. Unequal division of care responsibilities at home would seem to explain this.

Figure 7

Difficulties encountered when looking for work



Source: Hungary Socio-Economic Insights Survey 2024

Flexible conditions, coupled with possible daycare services, would appeal not only to jobseekers but also to those who are temporarily outside the labour market. Among working-age refugees surveyed in 2024, 67% worked or could work.[51] Those not in the market for jobs (33%) told us it was because they were caring for children or ailing family members), studying or coping with medical conditions. The number of outsiders is higher than the average among Ukrainian refugees in other hosting countries in the region (29%).

Figure 8

Labour force participation

Source: Hungary Socio-Economic Insights Survey 2024

GROW YOUR BUSINESS

Importantly, based on UNHCR's assessment, the most common sectors where Ukrainian refugees work or seek employment are those with high labour demand. These include services such as the beauty industry (hairdressers, nail salons), cleaning, hospitality and tourism, manufacturing, and construction. In the case of Ukrainian women, in 2023 most were employed or seeking jobs in manufacturing (40%), hospitality (19%) and service sectors (12%).[52]

In sum, hiring refugees is good for business. The improved productivity of companies employing them proves this. Take IKEA, for example. Their Toolkit[53] for employers indicates that employing refugees can create a competitive edge and lead to better financial results.

As Chapter 7 demonstrates, the Swedish company continues to build its operation on recruiting a diverse workforce and promotes its benefits among other companies and in wider society.

[50] In this paragraph: UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.
[51] *Ibid* (in this paragraph)
[52] UNHCR, Multi-sectoral Needs Assessment, December 2023.
[53] KEA, "Skills for Employment Toolkit", available in English here: https://www.ingka.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Skills-for-employment-toolkit_A-how-to-guide-for-opening-pathways-to-decent-work-for-refugees_Ingka-Group-an-IKEA-Retailer.pdf

KEY POINTS ON UKRAINIAN AND OTHER REFUGEES[54]

➜ Refugees have high educational levels and skills. 28% of Ukrainian refugees possess a higher degree, and 51% some type of vocational or technical qualification;

➜ There is huge potential to attract more refugees into the workforce:

- 10% of Ukrainian refugees in the labour market are actively searching for jobs;
- 33% of Ukrainian refugees are outside the job market, largely because of caregiving, but could be attracted to work if given flexible/part-time options and care services;
- 32% of Ukrainian refugees who work informally could also be attracted to more steady, formal work;
- 11% of Ukrainian refugee youth are neither employed nor in education or training. Effective mechanisms to recognize skills and qualifications, plus intern/trainee opportunities could lead them to employment; and
- Many refugees are looking for better employment alternatives, as they complain of underemployment or having jobs that do not match their skills/educational level;

➜ Refugees primarily work in sectors – services, tourism/hospitality, manufacturing and construction – that have the high labour demands;

➜ Most refugees say their primary income – 80% of their livelihoods – is from employment; and

➜ Refugees constitute a stable, long-term workforce. Most have been in Hungary for two years or longer, and in general refugees have a lower turnaround rate in jobs than local workers.

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[54] UNHCR, Socio-Economic Insights Survey, October 2024.

3. LAWS AND PROCEDURES

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE THROUGH THE PAPERWORK

WHAT ARE THE RULES?

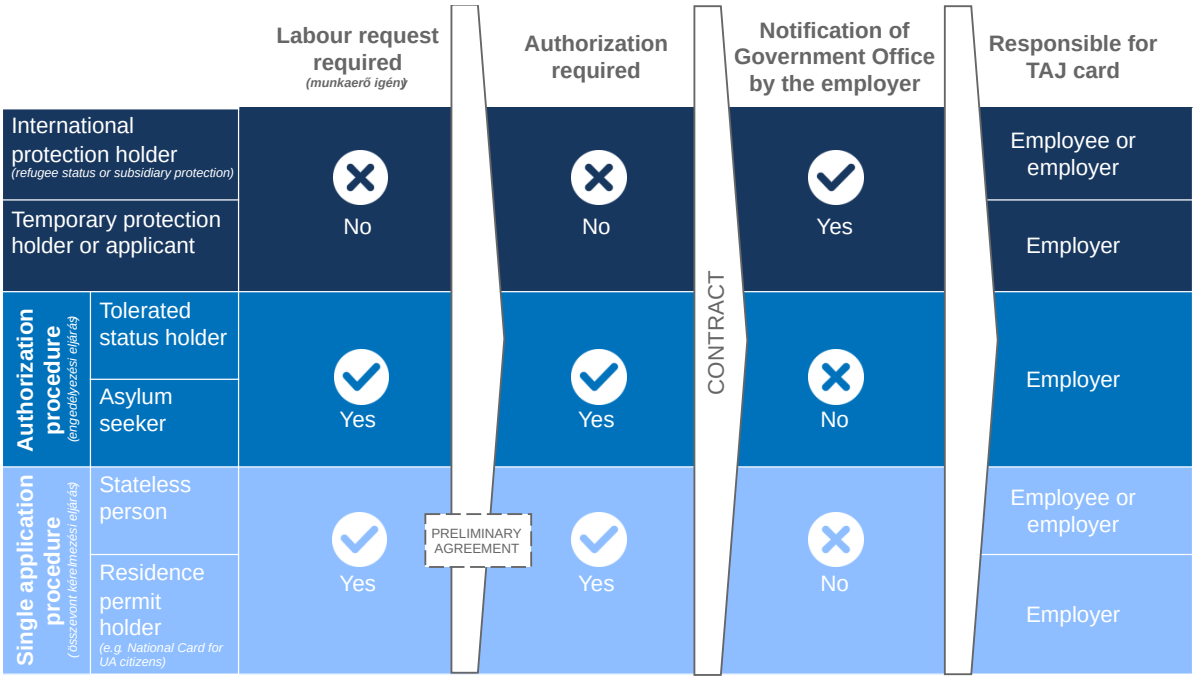
Beneficiaries of international protection (**refugees** and **beneficiaries of subsidiary protection**) and those who have (or have applied for) **temporary protection** have a streamlined access to the labour market, meaning that their employment does not require a permit. Employers only have an obligation to notify the relevant Government Office about the hiring of such individuals.

In contrast, the employment of **tolerated status holders** and **asylum-seekers** must be authorized by the relevant employment authorities. In addition, **stateless people**, who do not have the nationality of any country and who have gone through a procedure to obtain this legal status in Hungary can be employed in the same way as non-EU third-country nationals, based on a permit issued in the so-called "single application procedure."

WHAT ARE THE PROCEDURES?

The paperwork may seem insurmountable but not if you follow this step-by-step guide:

Figure 9
Administrative procedures



1. EMPLOYING RECOGNIZED REFUGEES, BENEFICIARIES OF SUBSIDIARY PROTECTION, AND THOSE WHO HAVE (OR HAVE APPLIED FOR) TEMPORARY PROTECTION STATUS

Beneficiaries of **temporary protection** can be freely employed in the health sector, which generally requires citizenship, the right to free movement or at least permanent residency. Those beneficiaries of temporary protection, who reside in Ukraine and arrived in Hungary on or after February 24, 2024, with a health qualification issued in Ukraine and attested by a Ukrainian state-recognized diploma or academic degree can work in the health sector without having a Hungarian-recognized qualification. However, they are obliged to start the procedure for the recognition of their qualifications in Hungary.[55]

When hiring beneficiaries of or applicants for temporary protection, the employer must arrange for the social security (TAJ) card, if the employee does not have one yet, and the employer must notify the local Government Office about the employment.[56]

Hiring: The hiring process is the same as for Hungarian citizens. No prior authorisation is needed to employ a recognized refugee, a beneficiary of subsidiary protection, applicant, or beneficiary of temporary protection. Family members of persons with refugee status or subsidiary protection, such as a spouse, parent or a guardian of a minor, also can be employed without a prior authorization, provided they have a valid residence permit issued for the purpose of family reunification.[57]

Social security card ("TAJ card"):[58]
➔ Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can request a TAJ card for themselves at the local Government Office, once they receive a decision on their asylum case. If the employee has not obtained a TAJ card themselves, the employer can also make the request.
➔ Persons applying for or beneficiaries of temporary protection, will become eligible for a TAJ card only once they start working (except if they have been legally employed before). Because of this, their employers must apply for the TAJ card to the health insurance body of the local Government Office. For a complete application, employers need to ensure that the following documents are included:

- a request form for the creation of the TAJ number and card;[59]
- an application form for the issuance of an official certificate of the TAJ number;[60]
- the employee's authorisation to act on behalf of the employee (a form is available on NEAK's website);[61]
- a copy of the temporary protection card of the person to be employed, issued by the National Directorate-General for Alien's Policing (NDGAP);
- proof of residence, which in the case of temporary protection beneficiaries is issued by the NDGAP and must be obtained from the NDGAP in person; and
- a copy of the employment contract.

[55] Government Decree 121/2022 of 28 March on emergency rules for the employment in Hungary of health workers who are refugees from Ukraine, available in Hungarian here: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2022-121-20-22

[56] Article 16 of Government Decree 445/2013 of 28 November on the authorisation of the employment of third-country nationals in Hungary on the basis of a non-aggregated application procedure, on the exemption from the obligation to obtain an authorisation, on the cooperation of the labour office of the metropolitan and county Government Office in the aggregated application procedure, and on the notification of the employment of third-country nationals who are employed in Hungary without an authorisation and on the reimbursement of wages. Available in Hungarian here: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2013-445-20-22

The completed application for a TAJ card is normally processed within 8 days. If there are missing elements, however, the entire procedure can take up to 60 days, after the gaps have been filled in.

The documents can be submitted personally by the employer at the health insurance body of the local Government Office or through the e-filing service.[62]

The Government Office will generate a TAJ number and inform the employer that a TAJ card is available. Based on this information the employer will inform the employee, who or his/her authorized representative can pick it up at any Government Office with competence for **health insurance funds**.[63]

Notification obligation: The employer is obliged to notify the local Government Office both on the establishment and the termination of the employment. It is not required to show compliance as a condition for employment, but there is an administrative fine of up to HUF 500,000 for failing to notify the relevant authorities immediately.

In order to do this, employers should visit the webpage of the National Employment Service,[64] and select the following from the opening page:

- From the left menu: For employers / *Munkaadóknak*
- Useful information / *Hasznos tudnivalók*: Authorisation and notification of employment of foreign nationals / *Külföldi állampolgárok foglalkoztatásának engedélyezése és bejelentése*
- Download the form entitled Notification of employment without authorization / *Bejelentés engedélymentes foglalkoztatásról*

The employer must use the e-filing (*e-papír*) service, indicating that she or he is submitting the documents as a company, and then the data is entered through the "business gate" (in Hungarian "Cégkapu").[65]

When submitting, employers should select the following from the drop-down menu:

- Subject group: Government Office matters / *Kormányhivatali ügyek*
- Case type: Employment subsidies, public employment and other public employment tasks / *Foglalkoztatási támogatások, közfoglalkoztatás és egyéb állami foglalkoztatási feladatok*
- Addressee: The employment department of the competent Government Office for the employer's place of business / *Kormányhivatalok Foglalkoztatási Főosztálya*.

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[57] Article 15 of Government Decree 445/2013 of 28 November

[58] The abbreviation TAJ stands for the social security tax identification number,"*Társadalombiztosítási Adóazonosító Jel*" in Hungarian, which is certified by an official document in the form of a card, the so-called TAJ card.

[59] Request form by the employer available here in Hungarian: https://www.neak.gov.hu/nyomtatvanytar/TAJ_igenyles_foglalkoztatok_reszere_Megrendelo_

[60] Application form for an official certificate of the Social Insurance Number available in Hungarian here: https://www.neak.gov.hu/pfile/file?path=/nyomtatvanytar/nyomtatvanytar/gepi_kitoltes/NYT.53.G&inline=true

[61] Employee's authorisation form available here in Hungarian: https://www.neak.gov.hu/pfile/file?path=/nyomtatvanytar/nyomtatvanytar/gepi_kitoltes/NYT.159.G&inline=true

[62] The e-filing service is available in Hungarian at epapir.gov.hu

[63] To find the closest Government Office, please visit: https://kormanyhivatalok.hu/kormanyablakok

[64] *Nemzeti Foglalkoztatási Szolgálat in Hungarian*. To do this, please follow this link: http://fovaros.munka.hu/ The webpage is available only in Hungarian language.

The application must be submitted with an electronic signature and a time stamp.

The notification must contain the following information:

- Number and age of the employees (in a non-identifiable manner);
- Educational qualifications;
- Nationality;
- FEOR number[66] that corresponds with the job title;
- Form of the employment;
- In the case of a dependent, his or her family member status;
- The statistical reference number of the employer; and
- Whether the employment has begun or ended.

The Government Office certifies that the notification has been submitted and will keep a record of the data. The employer must keep the certificate and documentation on the establishment and termination of the employment for three years after it has ended and be ready to present it if there is an official inspection.

For more detailed information, please consult the word document called "Information on the employment of foreign nationals in Hungary" / "*Tájékoztató külföldi állampolgárok magyarországi munkavégzéséhez*" on the above-mentioned website of the National Employment Service, especially the rules on e-administration on page 5 of the Word document.[67]

The employer should note that the starting date of the employment must be reported on the first day and the end date on the day after termination, at the latest. Failure to notify the Government Office shall incur an **administrative fine of up to HUF 500,000.**

2. EMPLOYING PEOPLE WITH TOLERATED STATUS AND ASYLUM-SEEKERS

The employment of tolerated status holders and asylum-seekers is subject to authorisation.[68]

What is the authorisation procedure?

As a general rule, asylum-seekers and tolerated status holders can get jobs in Hungary once authorised by the local Government Office. The employer submits the application, and the permit is issued to him or her, in contrast to the aliens' procedure, where the applicant is the worker.

The purpose of authorisation is to assess whether employing a third-country national is compatible with the priority of employing Hungarian and European Economic Area nationals.

[65] Business gate or in Hungarian, *"Cégkapu"* is the official platform for online administration in the Hungarian public administration system for companies. Available also partially in English at: https://tarhely.gov.hu/ckp-regisztracio/

[66] FEOR is the Hungarian abbreviation for *"Foglalkozások Egységes Osztályozási Rendszere"*, which is Unified Coding System of Jobs. See Statement no. 7/2010 of 23 April of the Central Statistical Bureau on the Unified Coding System of Jobs, official English translation is available here: https://ksh.hu/docs/osztalyozasok/feor/feor08_kozlemeny_eng.pdf?lang=hu

[67] The document in Hungarian language can be downloaded from http://fovaros.munka.hu/resource.aspx?ResourceID=budapest_kulfoldi_tajekoztato_2024

Generally, the permit is issued based on an assessment of the labour market situation. However, the permit can be issued without a labour market assessment for certain people or activities, for instance for tolerated status holders.

The employment of an asylum-seekers and tolerated status holder may get the green light if the employer had a **valid labour request (*munkaerőigény*)** for the job to be done by that person prior to the submission of the application and, at the time of the submission, was not assigned any registered jobseekers who meet the job conditions specified by law or in the labour request.

Hiring: Employing tolerated status holders and asylum-seekers must be authorized. This means that before the job contract is finalized, the employer must submit a labour request (*munkaerőigény*)[69] and an application for authorisation (*engedély iránti kérelem*)[70] to the Employment Department of the district office of the county/capital Government Office acting as the public employment service.

In case of asylum-seekers, for the first nine months from the date of their application for recognition, they are entitled to work in the reception centres where they are staying (currently, this is the reception facility at Balassagyarmat).[71] They can also work at a workplace designated by the public employment service. After nine months, the rules of their employment are the same as for tolerated status holders. This means their employment is subject to authorisation.[72]

Step 1: Submitting the labour request (munkaerőigény)

The employer has to submit a labour request to the Government Office in whose territory the planned employment takes place. It can be submitted online as well, at the Virtual Labour Market Portal (*Virtuális Munkaerőpiac Portál*).[73]

A labour request is considered valid if the employer:

- Submits it together with the application for authorisation; or
- Submitted it before submitting the application for authorisation but not earlier than 60 days before; or
- Submitted the labour request more than 60 days before the application for authorization but its validity was extended by the authority not earlier than 60 days before submitting the application for authorization.

[68] See Article 242 (4) d) and f) of the Act XC of 2023 on the general rules of entry and stay of third country nationals. Available in Hungarian at https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2023-90-00-00 f).

[69] The labour request form can be downloaded in Hungarian language from http://fovaros.munka.hu/resource.aspx?ResourceID=budapest_mig_lap

[70] The application for authorization can be downloaded in Hungarian language from http://fovaros.munka.hu/resource.aspx?ResourceID=budapest_munkavallalasi_ujkerelem

[71] National Directorate-General of Aliens Policing, Reception facilities and asylum detention centres, available in Hungarian: https://oif.gov.hu/befogado-intezmenyek-menekultugyi-orzott-befogado-kozpont

[72] The relevant regulation is Article 5 of Act LXXX of 2007 on asylum.

[73] The Virtual Market Portal is available in Hungarian here: https://vmp.munka.hu/

Employers can submit the two documents to the Government Office at the same time.

The content of the labour request and the application for authorisation must be the same (e.g. job title, salary, place of work, etc.).

Then the authority assesses whether Hungarian workers are available for the job in question, and if the answer is no, the foreigner's employment in Hungary can be authorized by the Government Office.

On the labour request form, the employer should answer **"Yes"** to the question: "Do you want us (i.e., the authority) to fill the vacancy (above)?" If you answer **"No"**, the application for authorisation shall be rejected automatically.

Step 2: Application for authorisation (engedély iránti kérelem)

The next step for the employer is to submit the application for authorisation to the Government Office. The necessary forms can be obtained from the Government Offices or on their website.[74]

Please enclose the following:
➔ **Labour request**, if it has not been previously submitted to the competent Government Office;
➔ **Documents proving the professional qualifications of the prospective employee**: a certified copy (*hiteles másolat*) of the document certifying the third-country national's qualifications for the job and – if it was issued in a foreign language – its certified Hungarian translation (*hiteles fordítás*);

- If the applicant received a permit from a Government Office within the previous five years and the document certifying his/her professional qualification was submitted together with the application for a work permit, it is not necessary to enclose the document. It will be obtained by the competent Government Office upon the employer's request;

➔ **Documents in Hungarian (or their certified copies)** to prove the application relates to third-country nationals who are asylum-seekers, or who are tolerated status holders; and
➔ A copy of the prospective employee's **passport**.[75]

The authority may ask the employer to provide additional information and documents. The Government Office makes the decision on authorising employment.

The permit names the employer, the employee, the place of work, the activity, the job its holder will do, the FEOR number[76] and the duration of the work. **Any other type of employment shall be sanctioned.**

[74] Government Offices central website, available in Hungarian here: https://www.kormanyhivatalok.hu/sites/default/files/2024-05/kerelem-munkavallalasi-engedely-irant.docx
[75] For more information visit the National Employment Service's webpage: https://nfsz.munka.hu/cikk/641/A_kulfoldiek_magyarorszagi_foglalkoztatasanak_engedelyezese

The employment will be considered unauthorised if the person does not work with the indicated employer or the employer employs him or her in workplaces or jobs other than those specified in the permit. The employer must keep the permit for the duration of the employment and three years after its termination and present it if officially inspected.

Step 3: The employment contract

Since the employment relationship requires official permission, it can only continue for the duration specified in the authorisation.[77]

If the employer wants to keep the employee in the same job at the same workplace after the permit expires, he or she can apply for an extension. The application must be made no later than 15 days before the expiry date.

TAJ card: Tolerated status holders and asylum-seekers do not usually have a TAJ number (except if they have been legally employed before), as they will only become eligible once they start working. The employer has to submit the application for the TAJ card to the health insurance body of the local Government Office where he or she is based. Alternatively, it can be requested online, on an e-filing form.

To do this, the employer must follow the steps described in the part on "employing recognized refugees, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, and those who have (or have applied for) temporary protection status".

When employing asylum-seekers or persons with tolerated status, for the application for the TAJ card the employer needs to provide the relevant identity documents of the applicant, which are humanitarian residence permits in card format[78], instead of a copy of a temporary protection card.

[76] FEOR Statement no. 7/2010 of 23 April of the Central Statistical Bureau on the Unified Coding System of Jobs
[77] Article 192 (3) of Act I of 2012 on the labour code, available in Hungarian language at https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2012-1-00-00
[78] Laminated card is issued for asylum-seekers and plastic card for tolerated status holders.

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3. EMPLOYING STATELESS PERSONS

Hiring: Stateless people can only work if they have a permit. This can be obtained through the so-called **single application procedure (*összevont kérelmezési eljárás*).**

What is the single application procedure?

Stateless people can work on the basis of a permit issued by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (NDGAP). Even though they already have a document entitling them to legally stay in the country, but that document does not include the entitlement to undertake employment. Therefore, stateless people need to apply for a permit, which allows for their employment. In this case, the asylum authority examines the application in a so-called "single application procedure". Here the employer does not have to apply in advance for authorisation, but nevertheless, a labour request must be submitted.

At the end of the procedure, a **residence permit** is issued, which entitles the stateless person to start a job with a specific employer and stay in Hungary.

Aside from authorizing the employment of stateless persons, the single permit procedure is followed by the authorities during the issuance of a number of other permit-types, among others when authorizing the employment of third-country nationals for **seasonal employment**, issuing the National Card, the Hungarian Card, the EU Blue Card, or permits for family reunification where the permit-holder also intends to take up employment.

Step 1: Submitting the labour request (*munkaerőigény*) by the employer

Before the employment contract is concluded, the employer must submit a labour request to the Government Office, in whose territory the planned employment takes place. It can be submitted online as well, at the Virtual Labour Market Portal.[79]

On the labour request form, the employer should answer **"Yes"** to the question: "Do you want us (i.e., the authority) to fill the vacancy (above)?" If you answer **"No"**, the application for authorisation shall be rejected automatically.

Step 2: Preliminary agreement between the employer and the prospective employee

The employer and the third-country national applicant conclude a preliminary agreement to establish the employment. The agreement should be valid for a maximum of two years.[80] If the third-country national gets a permit, the employment relationship is established under the terms of the preliminary agreement, **for a period corresponding to the permit's duration**. Any other agreement between the parties is invalid.

[79] The Virtual Market Portal is available in Hungarian here: https://vmp.munka.hu/

[80] However, the fixed-term employment relationship can be for five years if the residence permit of the third-country national has been issued for family reunification, up to four years in the case of an application for an EU Blue Card, or up to three years if the third-country national has a humanitarian residence permit.

[81] A template for the preliminary agreement can be downloaded from the webpage of the National Employment Service at https://nfsz.munka.hu/nfsz/document/5/5/1/1/doc_url/preliminary_agreement.docx

The content of the preliminary agreement:[81]

- activities to be performed, job title, FEOR number;
- the qualifications needed for the job (in case of employment with an EU Blue Card, the tertiary level professional qualifications should be indicated);
- the pay rate, which can only be changed later for the benefit of the prospective employee;
- an indication of the type of employment relation;
- the expected duration of the employment with the expected start and end dates; and
- the location of employment and, if applicable, the working hours in case of part-time employment.

Step 3: Application for a single permit by the prospective employee

The prospective employee submits an application for a single permit to the competent immigration authority (NDGAP), attaching the preliminary agreement. For this, he or she submits Annex no. 9. of the relevant ministerial decree.[82] However, it is best to seek prior advice from the authority on the correct way of completing the form.

Refusal to issue a permit

The authority can refuse to issue a permit for a number of reasons. Some of these may arise on the employer's side:

➔ Workers are available to do the job, but they are not hired for **reasons attributable to the employer**, in particular:

- the employer has specified a condition in the labour request that is not necessary to do the job in question;
- the employer has refused to employ a posted worker or had a valid labour request prior to the application but did not request a posting or set the period of validity of the labour request at less than 15 days.

➔ The employer does not intend to start employment within **120 days** of the application;

➔ The employer has carried out collective dismissal in the year before the application;

➔ There is an ongoing **strike** at the place of employment;

➔ Payment offered for the job is substantially lower than the average basic wage in Hungary.

Please note that if the authority does not issue its opinion, the lack of response cannot be considered as granting the permit.

TAJ card: As residents, persons with stateless status in Hungary can obtain a social security (TAJ) card themselves at the local Government Office if they have a decision on recognition of their status or a document certifying that, and a residence certificate issued by the NDGAP. If they do not already have a TAJ card, the employer is obliged to complete the documentation as described in the previous chapters. The identity document for stateless persons is a humanitarian residence permit in plastic card format.

[82] Annex 9 of the Decree of the Ministry for Interior no. 10/2024 of 29 February on the fees of the procedures to be paid after persons enjoying the right of free movement and residence and by third-country nationals for entry and residence, available in Hungarian here https://njt.hu/document/a8/a895EJR_6825817-4X06584.pdf

4. REFUGEE-SENSITIVE HIRING PROCESS

HOW TO ENSURE SUCCESSFUL HIRING OF REFUGEES?

Standard recruitment processes can create barriers for many jobseekers. This is especially true for foreigners, who might not be familiar with Hungarian work culture and general hiring practices. Therefore, a little effort is needed to adjust the hiring process for potential refugee applicants. With only slight changes, employers can discover a diverse talent pool, with skilled, qualified and loyal employees.

Below are some useful tips for employer and hiring staff to ease the way for refugees into the job market.

Improve outreach to refugees

It can be hard to reach refugees and gain their attention, but a number of organizations have mapped or surveyed refugee populations and are in regular touch with them. Employers can request advice from asylum or immigration authorities in this regard, such as from the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (NDGAP) or the relevant Government Offices. They can also approach service providers, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil groups who specialize in supporting refugees. UNHCR is ready to put companies in touch with such organizations, and directly with refugees. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.) Some of these organizations organize job fairs or job-matching events for refugees, which offer good opportunities for employers to meet jobseeker refugees.

Refugee-sensitive resume review

When considering the resumes of refugee candidates, employers should be mindful of factors linked to their status and special situation, such as:

Lack of familiarity with job application norms in the country

Employers should be aware of cultural and work environment differences and be as sensitive as possible to the challenges refugee candidates might face. Recruiters should make sure that the application process is well explained, translate when necessary and allow applicants to ask questions for clarification. Recruiting staff is advised to reach out and offer support to candidates. Another good practice is to join forces with service providers (e.g. a local employment agency like Budapest Esely) or an NGO with expertise (like the Lutheran Diakonia) to guide candidates through the application process. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.)

Gaps in the candidate's educational background and employment history on their CV

Employers should determine if and how gaps in the experiences of refugee candidates can be bridged. They should consider that the refugee might have had to stop education or work because of conflict or persecution, long flight to a safe place and extended waiting times for asylum. Below are a couple of examples of how the problem of "missing" skill certifications and job experiences can be overcome.

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Mismatched or out-of-date skills and experience

The employers should consider taking foreign work history, qualifications and acquired skills into account, even if those qualifications are not officially recognized in Hungary. They could use an independent agency or online resources/tools to verify the educational and skills equivalence from foreign institutions.

The EU has developed a tool called the EU Skills for Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals, which is accessible in all EU languages, including Hungarian.[83] This tool assesses the applicant's education, literacy and language knowledge, calculation and digital skills, competencies acquired outside employment and plans for the future. The final evaluation is based on all that information. The EU also created a European Skills Agenda site,[84] where employers can find useful tools for skills assessment and information on employment in general.

The German employment service created a tool called MYSKILLS,[85] available in English, German and several languages commonly spoken by refugees, such as Ukrainian, Spanish, French and Arabic. However, it is limited to evaluating skills in 30 professions, ranging from blue-collar jobs like baker, cleaner, plumber and farmer to service-provider roles in hospitality or sales.

[83] EU Skills Profile Tool for Third Country Nationals, https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/

Employers might consider accepting certificates and qualifications issued by NGOs or other service providers, even if they are not officially certified training centres. The Next Step Association, for example, offers various skills development possibilities for newcomers, such as the International Computer Driving License Programme.[86] Here participants can improve their digital and computer literacy. Next Step also has regular car driving and forklift courses, as well as training in the use of AI.[87]

Lack of local experience or references

In addition to accepting foreign work experience, employers could consider offering trainee or internship opportunities to give refugees an entrance to employment. This helps refugees to get local experience and familiarize themselves with the company while the employer can better assess whether to hire them on a permanent basis. IKEA credits its trainee program for refugees with creating a talent pipeline and addressing the company's problem with high employee turnover.[88] Another recommendation is to let candidates submit testimonials or character references from social workers or mentors, who usually have a good knowledge of the refugees.[89]

Lack of language knowledge

If the job does not require a high level of Hungarian or English, the employers should make sure the hiring does not require it either. They need to review the whole recruitment process ensuring that applicants can navigate it without a particular language knowledge. Relevant materials and template should be translated to the **language spoken by the applicant**, and the assistance of an interpreter should be considered (more tips in this regard in the next part).

Overqualified/over-educated applicants

Many well-educated and highly skilled refugees are compelled to take a step down from their professions and seek lower-skilled jobs when they arrive in a new host country. Language barriers, the fact that qualifications may not be recognized and the scarcity of good job opportunities contribute to this. Therefore, employers should not reject them for entry or lower-level jobs because they appear "overqualified". Later, they might be able to be fast-tracked to higher responsibilities, especially if refugees have a chance to learn Hungarian and English and their qualifications can be recognized.

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[84] European Skills Agenda, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/skills-and-qualifications/european-skills-agenda_en

[85] MYSKILLS website, for employers here: https://www.myskills.de/arbeitgeber-innen/, and for jobseekers in multiple languages here: https://www.myskills.de/arbeitssuchende/

[86] Next Step Association, Basic computer skills certification with Next Step, https://nextstepeu.org/job-market-skills/basic-computer-skills/

[87] Information on Next Step's various skills-development activities can be found here: https://www.facebook.com/next.step.hungary/

[88] Based on an interview with Martina Hlisnikovska, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Leader, Central Europe, 22 November 2024.

[89] OECD-UNHCR, "Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees: A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan for employees, refugees, government and civil society", 2018, available in English here: https://www.unhcr.org/media/oecd-engaging-employers-hiring-refugees-10-point-action-plan

Design the interview process

Plan ahead

Employers need to design the interview process with the situation of the refugees in mind and ensure that interviewers are aware of the diverse backgrounds of the applicants. Recruiters should bear in mind that refugees might live in distant suburbs, find their way around less easily or be constrained in their mobility because of regulations at their accommodation. They should try to be flexible and time interviews that are neither too early nor too late in the day.

Provide regular capacity-building for HR and recruiting staff

Employers need to make sure they adequately train interviewers to be aware of the special needs of refugees. More information on refugees and intercultural techniques in interviews will help their staff to overcome any unconscious biases. Civil society organizations and professionals working on refugee inclusion can offer capacity-building sessions, often for free. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.) Recruiting and onboarding staff should update their skills regularly, not just once.

Set up interview panels reflecting diversity (gender, age, ethnic/cultural background)

Ensuring diversity is important when composing interview panels. It is recommended for the recruitment team to reflect the diversity at the company itself in terms of nationality, cultural background and age. However, it might be insensitive to have a recruiter of the same nationality as the refugee, especially if the reason for flight from their home country was some sort of persecution. Gender matters to refugee candidates from certain backgrounds, so having at least one interviewer of the same sex might help to put them at their ease.

Prepare the interviewing staff

To help the interview go well, employers should guide recruiting staff in advance on the diversity of cultural norms. Refugee candidates may not always have the same communication styles as local people, especially when it comes to body language (e.g. shaking hands). This is a sign of cultural differences, not disrespect.

Encourage two-way communication during interviews

Two-way communication ensures interviewers and candidates understand each other. Interviewers should not assume a refugee's silence means they understand. They need to make sure they have made themselves clear. They should not assume refugees are familiar with local labour laws and regulations. At the same time, recruiters need to be open to information coming from the refugees because they might know better the legal and administrative rules that apply to them.

Vary the questionnaires and tests

It is recommended to make the interview questions and tests as varied as possible. Refugees might not be strong or confident in certain skills and yet they could still be suitable for the job. This can also help employers to identify the most suitable candidates.

© UNHCR/Socrates Baltagiannis

Overcome language barriers

Employers should determine the actual level of Hungarian language knowledge needed for the job and tailor the interview accordingly. Some refugees, especially those who have arrived recently or have not had access to language classes, might only know basic Hungarian and yet they could still do the job. Many companies require a level of local language proficiency in the interview process that is higher than that required for the job itself, which can lead to them not being able to identify the right workforce.

The following strategies might help:

- Employers should check if any of their staff knows the required language and could assist with interpretation and paperwork for the initial screening and interviews. Otherwise, specialized civil organizations and authorities could be of assistance. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.)

- Employers could allow the refugee to bring an interpreter for the interview or entrance test.
- It is even better if the employer can provide an interpreter for the recruitment process. The interpreter does not have to be professionally certified. It could just be a co-worker who speaks a language the refugee understands.
- Ensure that the interviewers communicate clearly by speaking slower, but not louder and avoid idiomatic language (e.g. "give it a shot" or "it's a piece of cake") that might be incomprehensible to non-native speakers.
- Rather than asking "yes" or "no" questions, hiring staff should check the candidate's level of understanding by asking clarifying questions, e.g. "What time is your next interview?", but not "Do you know what time you are having your next interview?"

Support refugees and asylum-seekers in verifying their home country qualifications

It makes a huge difference to refugees and asylum-seekers if the qualifications they gained with pride in their home countries can be recognized here. Employers should work with their regulatory or industry body to identify and address the related obstacles. On its website, the Hungarian Bureau of Education[90] has general information, legal advice and useful links for qualifications recognition, including an English language information sheet.[91] The employer could consider supporting refugees by covering the costs of their degree recognition such as procedural fees, and translation costs.

General tips: The employer should amend their standard processes of assessing a candidate's suitability to give the refugee a chance of getting the job by:

- Focusing the recruitment process on assessing the candidate's attributes and potential to do the job;
- Evaluating skills and competence during on-the-job training with skills profiling tools instead of during a one-time interview or test;
- Requiring skills that are essential to the job (e.g. numeracy, computer skills, experience operating heavy machinery or business-level written English);
- Managing expectations about the nature of the work. For example, via conducting a workplace tour to ensure candidates understand what the job entails;
- Accepting references from those who know the candidate well, e.g. from social workers, sponsors or mentors;
- Offering traineeships and apprenticeships; and
- Reviewing entry requirements to make sure refugees are eligible (article).[92]

[90] Recognition of foreign qualifications in Hungary, Bureau of Education Hungary, https://www.oktatas.hu/kepesitesek_elismertetese/english/recognition_of_foreign_qualifications
[91] General information on the recognition of foreign qualifications, Bureau of Education Hungary, available in English https://www.oktatas.hu/pub_bin/dload/kepesitesek_elismertetese/General_info_VHO_2022.pdf
[92] Displaced Talent Hub, "End-to-end process guide for managing a refugee labour mobility program", available in English here https://displacedtalenthub.org/knowledge-base/manage-employer-expectations-for-refugee-labour-mobility-programs/

5. REFUGEE-FRIENDLY WORK ENVIRONMENT

HOW TO KEEP REFUGEE EMPLOYEES?

After a refugee is successfully hired, the employer needs to make a little more effort and possibly try new approaches to help them adapt and thrive. Beyond recruitment and onboarding, the overall experience of refugees at work over time also matters.

Any initiative to employ refugees will only succeed if companies create an environment of genuine inclusion. This will encourage a diverse workforce to come together and explore progressive ways of working.

Employers' extra effort will pay off many times over, ensuring refugees' long-term engagement at the company. Refugees can be among companies' most loyal and reliable employees, and as such it is important to see how to achieve a refugee-friendly working environment.

Foster an inclusive culture

Training and awareness

The first step to developing a welcoming workplace is to create an environment free of misunderstanding, discrimination or racism. Employers should help their existing staff to understand cultural sensitivity and the unique challenges refugees face. It takes time for tolerance to grow. Awareness-raising should be done regularly, not just in a one-off session. The company or organization's leadership should set an example and regularly communicate a consistent message of support for refugees. In this regard, it is especially important to prepare team or shift leaders or those who will supervise the refugees to be able to work smoothly with the refugee workforce with intercultural and similar training opportunities. NGOs or specialized companies can help you conduct training for staff to help create a peaceful work environment. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.)

Zero tolerance policy

Employers are strongly encouraged to implement and enforce a zero-tolerance policy against racism, xenophobia or any form of discrimination. This should not necessarily mean harsh sanctions in every case, but it is vital to bring to light any incident that might occur. Employers can use their management skills to set the tone against xenophobia and foster an inclusive mindset among staff.

Provide supportive services and resources

Adequate information provision

Providing clear, timely and relevant information is one of the keys to facilitating refugees' inclusion, both in the host community and at work. From the start, it is important to inform refugee workers about the various employment processes, rules, rights and obligations, as well as the work culture in a language they understand. They additionally need to be aware of feedback and complaints mechanisms and where to get more information when needed.

Legal and administrative support

It can be very helpful for refugees if employers can offer free legal and administrative support, including counselling, to help them navigate employment laws and regulations and complete any necessary paperwork. If this is not possible in-house, employers should inform refugees where refugees can turn for pro bono help. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.)

Language assistance

Employers should offer language classes or translation services to support refugees in overcoming the language barrier. There is nothing better than learning the language on the job. Employers wanting to make a long-term investment in their workforce could consider introducing a special "bridging" programme whereby refugees start work while at the same time undertaking an intensive Hungarian course, similar to a model that was implemented in Sweden.[93] This way they can develop their professional skills and learn Hungarian in parallel.

In Denmark for example, the government, in cooperation with municipalities and employers, introduced the Step Model,[94] which combines job or trainee placements with intensive language courses, and later skills upgrading.

[93] OECD-UNHCR, "Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees: A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan."
[94] Liebig, T. (2007), "The Labour Market Integration of Immigrants in Denmark", *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers*, No. 50, OECD Publishing, Paris, https://doi.org/10.1787/233783261534.

At the beginning, the state also gives refugee employees/trainees social support. A similar programme could be implemented by employers or by a cooperation of employers in Hungary, and they can also advocate with the Government to lend support to it. Employers could also opt to find organizations giving free language courses to refugees and migrants that might be willing to work with your refugee employees too. (See Chapter 8 for a list of organizations.)

Employees with a shaky command of Hungarian may need language "workarounds", such as matching them with a Hungarian-speaker colleague who also speaks the language the refugees speak or providing training and HR resources in their native language. During a focus group discussion, UNHCR discovered for example, that one factory made sure that an entire assembly line of workers spoke the same language. In that case it was Ukrainian, and appointing a bilingual Hungarian-Ukrainian speaker as the shift coordinator made the work process smoother for all parties. While this may not be possible for all languages, it might be helpful to at least make written information about the work process and work safety standards and measures in the refugees' language available. From a job safety point of view, it is essential to provide all workers, including refugees, with information in a language they can understand.

Create opportunities

Tailored roles and opportunities for upskilling

In the long-term, it pays off to develop roles that match the skills and experiences of refugees and train them to higher levels of skill. Enabling workers to develop professionally, in combination with a more flexible work schedule and good future prospects, guarantees their loyalty and makes it less likely they will leave, as low-skilled workers often do.

Employers should consider the company's own ability to organize training or refresher courses on-site. If that is not possible, explore what employment associations, trade unions, professional networks or civil organizations can offer. For example, Next Step offers courses for forklift operators, potentially useful both for refugees and local workers. If it is a question of needing more resources, try seeking support from the Chambers of Commerce (either the Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry[95] or those of other states active in Hungary). Together, businesses and humanitarian organizations can advocate for government incentives and support to upgrade the skills of refugees while they are on the job.

If refugees are hired for short-term jobs, it helps if the employer can give a reference for their next career move. It is important to keep in mind that, through no fault of their own, refugees often have gaps in their CVs. A reference from a company in Hungary can make them more employable in future.

[95] Hungarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, https://mkik.hu/.

Culturally and religiously sensitive work arrangements

As the UNHCR-OECD Action Plan states,[96] employers must be sensitive and mindful of the cultural and religious diversity of the workforce. Within reason, employers should allow workers to practice their religion and adhere to their cultural values and traditions during work too. This may mean creating a secluded place for meditation or prayer at the workplace and giving flexibility to employees who have specific prayer times. Or it could mean allowing different uniform options for employees with a religious dress code (e.g. wearing a headscarf), unless of course that creates a work hazard. Diverse dietary needs are common these days, so it is also important to make sure the work cafeteria has vegetarian and no-pork options. An added gesture of understanding could be to have a schedule of "floating holidays", allowing refugee staff to take time off on their special cultural or religious days.

Promote a welcoming environment

Buddy / mentoring system

Employers can encourage local staff to engage more with refugee workers by pairing them up in a "buddy or peer-mentoring system".[97] These staff mentors can guide refugee workers on both job-related and personal questions. Having Hungarian mentors can foster a positive attitude in the host community and contribute to a well-functioning, diverse workforce. More broadly, linking refugees and locals promotes cohesion not only in the workplace but also in society at large.

Cultural celebrations

Celebrate cultural diversity by organizing events where refugees and other staff can share their traditions, such as food, music and customs. A book or movie club could allow refugees to share their cultural heritage with colleagues. Employers could also highlight refugees' success stories in company communications. By using these "soft tools" to nurture diversity, employers can strengthen all workers' sense of belonging and their willingness to stay on the job and work productively.

Feedback

Employers are encouraged to establish channels for refugees to provide feedback and voice any concerns. It is important to create a safe team environment, where all employees can speak up, be heard and feel welcome. Embracing the input of employees with diverse backgrounds and expertise can enhance discussion and collaboration among staff. In this way, employers can create a supportive and inclusive workplace that not only benefits refugees but also enriches the workplace with diverse perspectives and talents.

[96] OECD-UNHCR, "Engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees. A 10-point multi-stakeholder action plan."
[97] *Ibid*

6. SUPPORT FOR REFUGEE EMPLOYEES

HOW CAN EMPLOYERS HELP BEYOND THE JOB?

Current Hungarian state support programmes available to employers are intended for those who employ beneficiaries of temporary protection from Ukraine and Ukrainian – Hungarian dual nationals, who reside in Ukraine and arrived in Hungary on or after February 24, 2024.

Accomodation subsidies for employers

The Hungarian Government ensures a housing subsidy to employers who provide accommodation for beneficiaries of temporary protection and Ukrainian-Hungarian dual nationals.[98] To receive the subsidy, the following conditions have to be fulfilled:

- The employee has temporary protection status or is a dual national residing in Ukraine, who arrived in Hungary on or after 24 February 2022;
- The employment takes place in Hungary;
- The work contract is for a fixed or indefinite period of at least 20 hours per week; and
- If a minor under the age of 16 is living with the employee, the minor is required to be enrolled in public education until the completion of primary school.

[98] Government Decree 104/2022 of 12 March.

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How to claim the accomodation subsidy?

The accommodation provider and the employer must conclude a contract to house the employee. Under the contract, the employer settles payment to the accommodation provider before claiming the housing subsidy from the Government. The employer encloses this contract when applying for the subsidy. The claim must be submitted electronically or at the competent Government Office, using the form published on the website of the National Employment Service.[99] The subsidy is paid monthly to the employer.

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What is the amount?

The amount covers the monthly accommodation fee under the contract, with the following conditions:

- If the accommodation is located in a so-called preferred small settlement (*preferált kistelepülés*),[100] the maximum monthly amount is HUF 120,000; or
- If the accommodation is in any other type of settlement, the maximum monthly amount is HUF 80,000.

Termination of the subsidy

In the following situations the accommodation subsidy may no longer be paid to the employer:

- The employment is terminated;
- The employer fails to comply with his or her obligations regarding the subsidy;
- The conditions laid down in the relevant legislation are not met;

[99] The form can be downloaded in Hungarian language from https://nfsz.munka.hu/nfsz/document/3/6/4/7/doc_url/Kerelem_menedekes_202403.docx

- The accommodation contract is terminated; or
- Minors under 16 living in the same household as the worker leave the school before finishing primary education.

For more information, please visit the webpage of the National Employment Service.[101]

Childcare

In order to support the employment of Ukrainian beneficiaries of temporary protection and Ukrainian – Hungarian dual nationals, who arrived in Hungary on or after 24 February 2022, the Government made it possible for employers to provide childcare under eased conditions compared to the general requirements concerning child welfare services.[102]

How does it work?

- Childcare is provided between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. on weekdays;
- The childcare is available for children up to the age of 14;
- It is organized in small groups for children of mixed ages; and
- Children can be supervised by someone appointed by the employer, but it is preferable if suitable adults from the refugee community take on the task. If no-one is available, any other suitable adult can be appointed.

Notification requirements

- The employer must notify the competent county or metropolitan defence committee about the establishment of a childcare facility, no later than the day before the start date.
- Data on the number of children in childcare, broken down by age, must be submitted to the metropolitan or county defence committee by the fifth day of each month, covering the previous month.

Financial support

The Government occasionally provides employers with compensatory financial assistance through periodic tenders for childcare and language training for Ukrainian employees. These tenders have focused on dual Ukrainian – Hungarian citizenship regardless of the time of their arrival in Hungary, persons with temporary protection status, Ukrainian nationals with tolerated status, and Ukrainian nationals with different types of guest worker permits. When available, applications are called for by the OFA National Employment Public Nonprofit Limited Liability Company.[103]

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[100] List of preferred small settlements is defined by law by county, and within that by district. The list is defined by Annex 2 of Government decree no. 302/2023 of 11 July. Available in Hungarian language at https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/2023-302-20-22

[101] On the employment subsidy for employees who are beneficiaries of temporary protection, in Hungarian language see https://nfsz.munka.hu/cikk/3076/Menedekes_munkavallalok_lakhatasi_tamogatasa

[102] Government decree no. 147/2022 of 12 March 2022 on the provision of childcare for accompanied children from Ukraine in the framework of the emergency situation, available in Hungarian language here https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=a2200147.kor

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Employers may receive financial compensation to cover their expenses, if they undertake to provide Hungarian language training for Ukrainian workers during or outside working hours, and / or childcare for Ukrainian workers with children aged 0-14 years.

The following cost elements can be compensated from the financial assistance:

- salary and related taxes and social contributions up to a monthly HUF 300.000;
- rental costs; and
- purchase of necessary equipment.

The maximum duration of the financial assistance is 12 months.

At the time of publication, the latest application round has closed but there might be annual calls, because of which it is worth regularly monitoring the OFA website for similar opportunities.

FRINGE BENEFITS (*BÉREN KÍVÜLI JUTTATÁSOK*)

As of January 2025, employers can provide employees, including those with refugee backgrounds, with fringe benefits, as regulated under the Personal Income Tax Act.[104] By providing these benefits to employees, employers can obtain tax exemptions or reduced tax rates.

As a result of recent changes to the legislation, fringe benefits now include housing support, including assistance with rental payments or mortgage repayments. The employee may request the benefit from the employer by specifying the purpose and providing a copy of the rental contract or loan agreement.[105]

[103] For detailed information please visit OFA's webpage in Hungarian at https://ofa.hu/program/ukrajnabol-erkezok-foglalkoztatasanak-osztonzese-erdekeben-vallalati-gyermekmegorzes-es-nyelvtanfolyam-tamogatasa
[104] Act CXVII of 1995 on Personal Income Tax, available in Hungarian here: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/1995-117-00-00
[105] Governmental Decree 203/2024 of 18 December on housing allowance for employees, available in Hungarian here: https://njt.hu/jogszabaly/1995-117-00-00

7. BEST PRACTICE – THE STORY OF IKEA

THE STORY OF IKEA[106]

Many employers in Hungary, ranging from small businesses to multinationals, are leading by example in recruiting refugees. One notable case is IKEA of the Ingka Group, whose special programme and experience may inspire other employers.

IKEA launched its Global Initiative to employ refugees in 2020. Soon after, it started to implement nationally tailored refugee employment programmes in various countries where it operates. The Skills for Employment programme aims to diversify IKEA's workforce, give good opportunities and decent livelihoods to refugees, and hasten their inclusion into local society. This programme involves multiple steps, from seeking to understand refugees' unique situation to communicating about the added value they bring to the company.[107] The programme was launched in Hungary in 2021, and while the first phase ended in 2023, the practice of hiring refugees continues.[108]

A cornerstone of the programme is that IKEA always works with one or two local civil society organizations, which become integral parts of the initiative due to their unique positions vis-a-vis refugees. These NGOs play a crucial role, so IKEA carefully assesses local stakeholders before choosing a partner. In Hungary, the Menedék Association[109] active in the social inclusion of refugees and migrants since the 1990s, plays a key part in Ikea's programme. They are involved in almost the entire process from outreach to refugees, preparing both them and IKEA staff, to providing additional services to the refugee employees.

IKEA makes a great effort at every stage of the programme. They carefully assess the local community, prepare their own staff, and consider the types of extra support they can offer refugees. They use the "Theory of Change" (on how social policy affects outcomes) and various indicators (e.g. the number of refugees hired, their retention rate etc.) to plan, monitor, and evaluate the programme.[110] Initially this requires more resources, but it pays off in the long run.

In cooperation with NGOs like Menedék in Hungary, IKEA begins its programme by counselling refugees on how to find the right job opportunities and training them in application processes, CV writing and mock interviews. At "job clubs" refugees also learn about labour rights. This phase lasts three to six months, after which refugee participants are encouraged to apply for IKEA job vacancies.

[106] Interview UNHCR conducted with Martina Hlisnikovská.
[107] IKEA, "Skills for Employment Toolkit"
[108] IKEA, "Az IKEA segítséget nyújt a menekülteknek a munkaerőpiaci elhelyezkedésben", available in Hungarian here https://www.ikea.com/hu/hu/this-is-ikea/community-engagement/az-ikea-segitseget-nyujt-a-menekuelteknek-a-munkaeropiaci-elhelyezkedesben-pub2c2373f0/

Another significant element of the programme is preparing existing staff to work effectively with refugees. Managers receive training on providing sensitive leadership that promotes refugees' integration within the company. Emphasis is placed on understanding intercultural differences and the traumas refugees might have experienced. The entire workforce is educated to be compassionate and welcoming to new refugee colleagues.

When it comes to hiring refugees, IKEA chose not to designate certain positions exclusively for refugees, but to make their general hiring process more refugee-friendly. With the help of Menedék, IKEA reaches out to job-seeking refugees and prepares them for the hiring process. Even among refugees, IKEA pays attention to diversity, considering nationality, gender, age and other ways in which people might be different. Refugees are hired in every store and are still employed in most places.

IKEA's programme not only allows refugees to earn their living but also facilitates their integration into local society. Even while preparing for their job applications, refugees can benefit from regular Hungarian classes organised by Menedék. Learning Hungarian is crucial for their lives in Hungary and their career growth at IKEA.

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IKEA has learnt that the entire process requires patience from all participants. They acknowledge that everyone has unconscious biases, but these cannot be treated as taboo. IKEA emphasizes the importance of regular sessions to raise staff awareness, empathy and patience with refugee employees, who might take time to become confident on the job. IKEA finds that language is still the biggest barrier, especially in Hungary, so the company prioritizes Hungarian classes.

[109] Menedék Association's website, https://menedek.hu
[110] IKEA, "Skills for Employment Toolkit"

The initiative goes beyond employment to shaping the public narrative, with a view to fostering social cohesion. In its communications, IKEA showcases the stories of refugees who successfully applied for and thrived in various positions at the company. Take the case of Behrouz, an Iranian man who has become a star employee.[111] IKEA has never faced any significant public backlash because of their programme, encountering only some critical comments on social media.

IKEA's programme spans 24 countries globally and has reached more than **2,900 refugees**.[112] In Central Europe, including Czechia, Slovakia and Hungary, IKEA has hired nearly 100 refugees. They pledge to employ 3,000 more refugees globally and encourage other companies to be open to refugees. To support this, IKEA's Toolkit[113] offers useful tips for employers.

While IKEA's motives are altruistic, the company also hopes to build a business case for diversity and inclusiveness. A Harvard study[114] showed that a strong sense of belonging in the workplace can lead to a 56% increase in overall job performance, a 75% drop in the number of sick days, and a 22% decrease in staff turnover. Innovation can increase by 19%. Overall, the programme can benefit IKEA's business and enhance its image as a socially conscious brand.

As part of IKEA's corporate social responsibility, the programme reflects the company's values-driven vision, which emphasizes diversity, equality, and inclusiveness.[115] Refugee employees contribute to the company's productivity and the local economy, and by having stable jobs, they ensure a decent living for themselves. Refugees can often be isolated, having limited contact with ordinary Hungarians. By integrating them into the workforce, IKEA improves their relationship with the local community.

[111] IKEA video, Behrouz came to study, but stayed to live here ('Behrouz tanulni jött, de itt maradt élni') available in English with Hungarian subtitles here https://youtu.be/k6LZmOToJmQ
[112] IKEA, "Skills for Employment Toolkit"
[113] *Ibid*
[114] Evan W. Carr, Andrew Reece, Gabriella Rosen Kellerman and Alexi Robichaux, "The value of belonging at work", 2019, available at https://hbr.org/2019/12/the-value-of-belonging-at-work.
[115] IKEA, "Skills for Employment Toolkit"

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8. CONCLUSION & USEFUL LINKS AND RESOURCES

This guide demonstrates that employing refugees can be a straightforward process and an opportunity for employers to enhance their productivity and positive social impact. The diverse talent, skills and knowledge of refugees residing in Hungary can benefit the labour market and local businesses. By hiring refugees, employers can cultivate a more diverse, creative and productive workforce.

With minor adjustments to the recruitment process and steps to foster a more inclusive work environment, employers can gain a resilient and loyal workforce. The long-term commitment of refugees to their workplace can be further strengthened by providing access to supplementary services such as to childcare and Hungarian language classes. This kind of support from employer pays off in the long run by reinforcing the loyalty of the refugee workers and improving their performance.

UNHCR, together with its partner organizations, and its vast network of civil, church, international, municipal and state actors can assist employers in facilitating the successful hiring and long-term employment of people forced to flee and stateless people in Hungary. Below, you will find a list of organizations that can provide useful information, connect with job-seeking refugees, facilitate their hiring and employment, offer counsel on labour issues, and support access to services.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND NGOS

Support with outreach to refugees in Hungary

Artmesszió foundation (Budapest)
Dévai Inn (mainly in and around Budapest)
Carpathian Foundation Hungary (Heves county)
Catholic Caritas Hungary
Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta
Hungarian Interchurch Aid
Hungarian Red Cross
Hungarian Reformed Church Aid
International Organization for Migration (IOM) Hungary
Lutheran Diakonia
Menedék Association (mainly in and around Budapest and in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county)
Next Step Hungary Association

OLIve – Open Learning Initiative
Ukrainian Hope Association (Budapest)
UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR
United Way Hungary
UNITY
Utcáról Lakásba (From Streets to Homes Association) (Budapest and Pest county)
Vamos Foundation

Counselling, capacity-building and preparing refugees for labour market integration

Artemisszió Foundation
Carpathian Foundation Hungary (Heves county)
Catholic Caritas Hungary
Dévai Inn (Budapest)
Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta
Hungarian Reformed Church Aid
International Organization for Migration (IOM) Hungary (Budapest)
Lutheran Diakonia (Budapest and Pest county)
Menedék Association (mainly in and around Budapest and in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county)
Next Step Hungary Association (capacity building, mainly Budapest)
OLIve – Open Learning Initiative (Budapest)
Somnakuno Drom Roma Women's Civil Association (Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county)
Ukrainian Hope Association (Budapest)
Unity (Budapest)
Utcáról Lakásba (From Streets to Homes Association) (mainly Budapest and Pest county)
XXI. Century Roma Women's National Association (Hajdú-Bihar and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties)

Job placement and employment counselling

Dévai Inn (mainly in and around Budapest)
Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta Labor Market Service Centre
Hungarian Reformed Church Aid
Lutheran Diakonia

Hungarian language classes

Artemisszió Foundation
Dévai Inn (mainly in and around Budapest)
Carpathian Foundation Hungary (Heves county)
Catholic Caritas Hungary
Hungarian Reformed Church Aid
International Organization for Migration (IOM) Hungary
Jesuit Refugee Service
Lutheran Diakonia

Menedék Association (mainly in and around Budapest and in Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county)
Next Step Hungary Association
Piarist Order (Budapest)
Terre des Hommes Foundation
Ukrainian Hope Association
UNHCR (Budapest Helps community centre, Budapest)

Legal aid and counselling in relation to access to employment / documentation:

Hungarian Helsinki Committee
Lutheran Diakonia
Menedek Association

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ALL ORGANIZATIONS WITH CONTACT DETAILS

Artemisszio Intercultural Foundation
(Website: https://artemisszio.hu/, Contact: info@artemisszio.hu +36 20 322 6027)

Carpathian Foundation-Hungary
(Website: https://www.karpatokalapitvany.hu, Contact: cfhu@cfoundation.org, +36 36 516 750)

- Individual case management and social work facilitating access to decent employment for refugees
- Employment counselling for refugees
- Geographical scope of activities in Heves, Szabolcs, and Hajdú counties

Catholic Caritas Hungary
(Website: https://karitasz.hu/ , Contact: office@caritas.org.hu , +36 1 372 0910)

- Individual and group trainings for refugees related to labour market inclusion
- Occassional referrals to potental employers

Devai Inn Community Center
(Website: https://devaifogado.eu/ Contact: devaifogado@devaifogado.hu)

- Individual employment counselling
- Job fairs
- Monthly career workshops on topics such as CV writing, job search strategies and professional communication

Hungarian Charity Service of the Order of Malta
(Website: https://ukraine.maltai.hu/overview/ Contact: nemzetkozi@maltai.hu +36 –1391 4700)

Hungarian Reformed Church Aid
(Website: https://jobbadni.hu/en/homepage/ Contact: menekult@jobbadni.hu; +36 1 273 04 49, Mon-Fri 9.00 – 17.00 +36 30 194 02 45)

IOM
(Website: https://hungary.iom.int/ Contact: iombudapest@iom.int , +36 80 984 544)

- Counseling on employment and labour rights for refugees and migrants
- Professional/skill training

Jesuit Refugee Service
(Website: https://jezsuita.hu/hirek/jmsz Contact: info@jmsz.hu, +36 30 198 8929)

Lutheran (Evangelical) Diaconia
(Website: https://diakonia.evangelikusoldalak.hu/diakoniai-intezmenyek/, Email: helpu@lutheran.hu)

Menedek Hungarian Association for Migrants
(Website: https://menedek.hu/ Contact: menedek@menedek.hu, +36 20 450 7245)

- Individual counselling on employment and labour rights for refugees and migrants
- Supplementary services for vulnerable refugees in cases of trafficking and labour exploitation
- Support work and co-facilitation of job fairs organized by UNHCR

Next step Hungary Association
(Website: https://nextstepeu.org/ Contact: info@nextstepeu.org, +36 70 325 5205)

- Trainings for refugees related to employment and professional skill development

OLIve – Open Learning Initiative
(Website: https://openeducation.group/ Contact: budapestolive@gmail.com)

- Courses related to career development, career coaching, job seeking skills and various professional skill development for refugees

Piarist Order
(Website: https://piarista.hu/ Contact: palyazat@piarista.hu, +36 30 217 2895)

Somnakuno Drom Roma Women's Civil Association
(Website: https://somnakunodrom.hu/wordpress Contact: somnadrom@gmail.com, +36 30 019 9215)

- Support Ukrainian refugees of Roma background in accessing services related to the labour market and job search in Heves county

Strázsa Tanya Turisztikai Képző és Közhasznú Szociális Szövetkezet
(Website: https://www.strazsatanya.hu Contact: strazsatanya2@gmail.com +36 20 368 5215)

- Counseling on employment and labour rigths for Ukrainian refugees with disabilities for whom they provide housing

Terre des Hommes
(Website: https://tdh-europe.org/en/terre-des-hommes-hungary Contact: hun.office@tdh.org +36 1 266 5922)

UN Refugee Agency, UNHCR
(Website: https://www.unhcr.org/hu/ Contact: hunbu@unhcr.org, + 36 1 336 3060)

Ukrainian Hope Association
(Website: https://www.facebook.com/groups/740405323634710 Contact: ukrspace.budapest@gmail.com)

UNITY
Website: https://help.unhcr.org/hungary/partners/unity/
Facebook site: https://www.facebook.com/jednisty

Utcarol Lakasba! Association
(Website: https://utcarollakasba.hu/ Contact: menekult@utcarollakasba.hu, +36 30 463 0409)

- Provides social work related to employment for refugees participating in their rental subsidies support programme

XXI. Century Roma Women's National Association
(Website: https://romanokegy.mozellosite.com/ Contact: 21szromanok@gmail.com, +36 30 369 4406)

- Employment counseling for Hungarian speaking Ukrainian refugees in Szabolcs and Hajdu counties

AUTHORITIES, STATE AND MUNICIPAL ENTITIES

National Employment Service (Nemzeti Foglalkoztatási Szervezet)
(Website: https://nfsz.munka.hu/ Contact: ugyfelszolgalat@ngm.gov.hu)

- For job seekers: information provision on labour market, individual and group counseling, job matching
- For employers: advertising job opportunities, information on salary support schemes

Budapest: Employment Department of Budapest Government Office (Budapest Főváros Kormányhivatala Foglalkoztatási Főosztály)
(Website: Foglalkoztatási Főosztály | Kormányhivatalok, Contact: munkavedelem.munkaugy@mvmu.bfkh.gov.hu; Phone: 06 1 323 36 00)

- Employment-related services for job seekers and employers
- For individual counselling please find employment services in your district here.

Nyíregyháza: Employment Department of Nyiregyhaza Government Office (Nyíregyházi Járási Hivatal Foglalkoztatási Osztály)
(Website: Nyíregyházi Járási Hivatal | Kormányhivatalok Contact: foglalkoztatas1.nyiregyhaza@szabolcs.gov.hu , +36 42 598 100)

- Provide information on labour market services and programmes
- Individual counseling
- for employers: advertising job opportunities, information on salary support schemes

Debrecen: Employment Department of Debrecen Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási Ügyfélszolgálat Debrecen | Kormányhivatalok, Contact: foglalkoztatas.debrecen.jh@hajdu.gov.hu +36 52 516-111)

Miskolc: Department of Miskolc Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási főosztályok és foglalkoztatási osztályok Contact: foglalkoztatas.miskolc@borsod.gov.hu +36 46 502-850)

Eger: Employment Department of Eger Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatás-felügyeleti és Munkavédelmi ügyfélszolgálat, Eger | Kormányhivatalok Contact: fogl.eger@heves.gov.hu, +36 36 512-150)

Székesfehérvár: Employment Department of Szekesfehervar Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási Osztály, Székesfehérvár | Kormányhivatalok Contact: foglalkoztatas.szekesfehervar@fejer.gov.hu, +36 22 319 346)

Győr: Employment Department of Gyor Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási, Foglalkoztatás-felügyeleti és Munkavédelmi Főosztály | Kormányhivatalok Contact: foglalkoztatas.gyor@gyor.gov.hu, +36 96 795-809)

Kecskemét: Employment Department of Kecskemet Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási Osztály, Kecskeméti Járás | Kormányhivatalok Contact: foglalkoztatas.kecskemet@bacs.gov.hu, +36 76 795-600)

Szeged: Employment Department of Szeged Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási, Foglalkoztatás-felügyeleti és Munkavédelmi Főosztály | Kormányhivatalok Contact: foglalkoztatas.szeged@csongrad.gov.hu, +36 62 680-962)

Pécs: Employment Department of Pecs Government Office
(Website: Foglalkoztatási ügyfélszolgálat, Pécsi járás | Kormányhivatalok Contact: pecs.foglalkoztatas@baranya.gov.hu, +36 72 896-100)

Please find employment services in other towns or districts at this website https://nfsz.munka.hu/tart/kapcsolat/osztaly

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