

Position of Refugees in The Labour Market and their Inclusion in Active Labour Market Policies

**POSITION OF REFUGEES
IN THE LABOUR MARKET
AND THEIR INCLUSION IN ACTIVE
LABOUR MARKET POLICIES**

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Introduction

This publication presents the findings of a research on the access of refugees to active labour market policies of the National Employment Agency (NEA), conducted by Group 484, within the project “Research on the impact of government policies on refugees“. The project was implemented in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

One of the key aspects of the overall process of refugee integration is their economic empowerment i.e. employment. Successful integration of refugees in their local communities requires the creation of conditions that allow them to be employed and have sufficient earnings for independent living. Among relevant government agencies, the National Employment Agency certainly plays a key role in the economic integration of refugees. In smaller communities, the number of refugees registered as having regular jobs is proportionally lower than in the larger ones. The number of unemployed refugees registered with the NEA is much lower than could be expected given the total number of working-age refugees. Some refugees are unaware that the right to register with NEA or access to numerous NEA programs is no way linked to the possession of Serbian citizenship; this means that all these rights are also accessible to refugees. Without having Serbian citizenship, though, refugees cannot work for government agencies, which indeed restricts their access to the labour market, but does not affect their right to register as unemployed.

Group 484 conducted a survey, together with *Strategic Marketing* research agency and in consultation with professors Marija Babovic and Slobodan Cvejic from the Faculty of Philosophy, in order to obtain a more realistic picture regarding the inclusion of refugees (including the category of former refugees) into the labour market. The survey sought to determine the level of inclusion of refugees in programs of active labour market policies implemented by employment agencies, to establish whether these programs are linked to the actual needs of potential beneficiaries, as well as to reveal how they relate to the specific situation of refugees in the labour market. The respondent sample included 500 working-age

(15-65) persons living in Central Serbia, Belgrade and the province of Vojvodina. The respondents were selected by applying the so-called “snowball”¹ method, with the use of control mechanisms. The sample includes persons who currently enjoy refugee status and those who used to be refugees, subsequently having lost or renounced this status. The survey was conducted during December 2006 and January 2007.

In order to study the impact of employment programs of NEA and other actors in this field, Group 484 has also organized four focus groups, two with representatives of relevant domestic and international organizations implementing different support programmes for inclusion of refugees in the labour market, and the other two with refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina who participated in NEA active labour market programmes.

Participants in the focus groups were officials from the National Employment Agency, Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Policy, Serbian Commissariat for Refugees, Serbian Agency for Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and Entrepreneurship, Microfins, Balkan Centre for Migrations, War Affected Persons Relief and Protection Committee (WAPRPC), Lastavica, IAN, Serbian Democratic Forum, Centre for Development of Local Economy Novi Beograd, Help and UNHCR. They exchanged experiences on training programs and employment incentives intended primarily for refugees, as well as on income-generating programs, strong and weak points of relevant legislation, as well as specific achievements and difficulties during the implementation of certain programmes.

The two focus groups with refugees who participated in active labour market policies discussed their integration in Serbian society, their current socio-economic status compared to their socio-economic status prior to displacement, as well as employment opportunities with special emphasis on NEA programs. Average duration of focus group sessions was two hours, and they were facilitated by members of Group 484 using prepared guidelines. The most important remarks by participants, the findings and recommendations are included in this publication.

The purpose of the present publication is to give an outline of the position of refugees in the labour market and problems they encounter when searching for a job. Results obtained in the survey should provide a realistic picture concerning the position of refugees in the labour market, and help formulate recommendations for undertaking specific measures to improve it, based on an impartial assessment of their vulnerability.

This publication is a result of several research efforts that included desk research, research by *Strategic Marketing*, focus group research as well as the

¹ The method of “snowball sampling” relies on referrals from initial respondents to obtain additional respondents.

analysis of research results prepared by Marija Babovic and Slobodan Cvejic. It includes the following elements:

Overview of the current situation in the Serbian labour market in order to provide a better understanding of the relevant context within which the position of refugees is analysed in terms of employment.

Overview of the legal and institutional framework for addressing unemployment.

Socio-demographic profile of the refugee population included in the sample and their characteristics in terms of civil status, possession of most important personal documents and intent to return to the country of origin or stay and integrate in Serbia.

Characteristics of the current position of refugee population in the labour market relative to the general population in Serbia, as far as can be derived from available data.

Analysis of the change in refugees' socio-economic status and in particular their position in the labour market prior to displacement and today, monitoring basic characteristics and pace of change in this status during displacement.

Refugees' experience with NEA, and their ratings of active employment policies.

Description of different elements of the economic situation of the sample refugee households relative to the general population.

1. Characteristics of the Serbian labour market

Since 2000, the Serbian labour market has been characterized by an upward trend in unemployment, a large share of long-term unemployment, high youth unemployment rate, high unemployment rate among people with secondary education and below, prominent regional differences with respect to the situation in the labour market, and the persistently large share of informal employment.

In 2005, the self-employed accounted for 20.6% of all persons in employment, an overwhelming majority (71.3%) worked for an employer and 8.1% had the status of unpaid family workers². The intensified privatization has led to a significant transfer of employees from the state/socially owned companies to the private sector. While in 2002 21% of all persons in employment worked in the private sector, their share in total number of employees rose to 60% in 2005.³

Although there is no accurate data available on marginalized social groups (Roma, refugees, IDPs, persons with disabilities, special categories of women) various studies show that that they are rather disadvantaged in the labour market. According to a 2004 research conducted by UNDP, unemployment rates among marginalized groups were much higher than the national unemployment rate in Serbia. While the national unemployment rate is placed at approximately 19%, it is estimated at 32% among refugees and IDPs and 39% among Roma population (UNDP, 2006:9). Beside significantly higher unemployment rate, the position of marginalized groups in the labour market is also characterized by higher employment in informal sector and different employment structure by branches of economy (Table).

² Unpaid family workers are persons who assist other family members in a family business or a farm, without an employment contract and without being formally paid for the work they perform.

³ Statistical Yearbook for 2003, Workforce Survey 2005.

Table: Employment by branches of economy, in %			
	Domicile non-Roma	Roma	Refugees and IDPs
Trade	18%	23%	21%
Agriculture and forestry	2%	22%	11%
Industry and mining	13%	9%	7%
Services (tourism, catering etc.)	10%	6%	12%
Public utilities	10%	5%	9%

Source: *Vulnerability Report for Serbia*, UNDP, 2006

Although the above data is not fully comparable to the data obtained in the survey this report is based on,⁴ concentration of refugee population in the service sector is a distinguishing feature of its labour market position.

2. Legal and institutional response

Strategic documents governing the reform of employment policies and of the national labour market promote the principle of affirmative action in employment of members of particularly vulnerable groups. The principles of equal access, equal treatment and non-discrimination in the field of employment are also set out in the Serbian Law on Employment and Unemployment Insurance (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia *no.* 71/2003). These special protection measures for vulnerable groups through affirmative action do not contravene the above three principles outlined in this Law.

The National Strategy for Integration of Refugees attaches key importance to employment as one of the mechanisms for integration of refugees. The National Poverty Reduction Strategy views refugees as a particularly vulnerable group and proposes four lines of action for their effective integration, placing special emphasis on education programs and a proactive role of refugees themselves in job-seeking. The National Employment Strategy envisages undertaking appropriate measures for boosting employment and proactive attitude of persons facing multiple discrimination and socially marginalized groups, including refugees.

The National Employment Strategy envisages specific measures for improving the position of marginalized groups in the labour market, which should be implemented in the 2005–2010 period. The strategy focuses on three basic goals stated in the Lisbon Strategy,⁵ namely:

⁴ Primarily because refugees and IDPs are taken as a single category and because of differences and classification of activities.

⁵ Lisbon Strategy is the action and development plan of the EU, adopted by the Council of Europe in 2000 in Lisbon.

- Full employment;
- Quality and productivity at work;
- Social cohesion and inclusion in the labour market.

The national strategy stipulates the undertaking of special measures in order to improve the position of refugees and IDPs in the labour market. They include:

- Streamlining the procedure for issuing personal documents,
- Providing scholarships for secondary school and university education to students from poor refugee and internally displaced families,
- Employment in agriculture, particularly for refugees and IDPs coming from rural areas by way of allocating plots of arable land and provision of favourable loans for purchase of agricultural machinery,
- Greater inclusion of refugees in active labour market policies, especially those able-bodied individuals from the most affected refugee households (individuals without adequate accommodation, those unable to repossess their property in the country of origin, single mothers, households without breadwinner) (National Employment Strategy, p. 55-56).

Indicators for measuring success of the implementation of Strategy measures include: changes in the participation rate and unemployment rate among particularly affected groups and their actual inclusion in active labour market policies.

The Government of the Republic of Serbia adopted a decision on developing the national investment plan for the period 2006-2011, envisaging 1 billion Euros to be invested in the development of economy. This plan will include projects in main social areas. However, it makes no mention of affirmative action in favour of vulnerable groups or refugees. Encouragement of employment and micro-loans regulations (which is of utmost importance for refugees) have been recognized as a crucial issue that should be regulated by 2008.

3. Overview of the socio-demographic position of the respondent sample

The survey included a sample of 500 refugees, aged 15-65, of whom 55.8% are men. The majority of respondents (55%) live in Vojvodina, 33% in Belgrade, and 14% in Central Serbia. The Table below presents the respondent sample by place of residence.

Table: Respondent sample by place of residence, in %	
TYPE OF SETTLEMENT	
N	Total
City – center	44,6
City – urban outskirts	35,2
City – rural outskirts	0,0
Other	11,4
Total	100%

The refugee sample was found to have better educational level than the general population. However, this comparison should be taken with reservations, as the general population includes persons over 65 as well, whose educational achievement is typically lower than that of younger generations (see Table below).

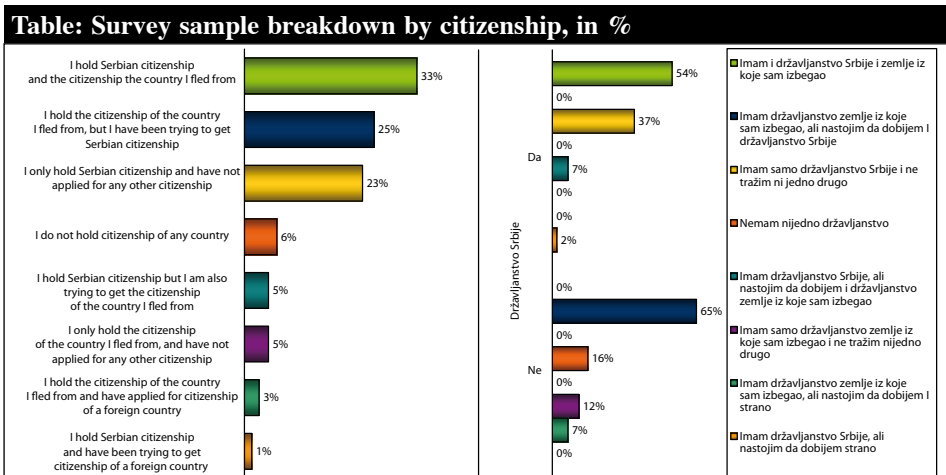
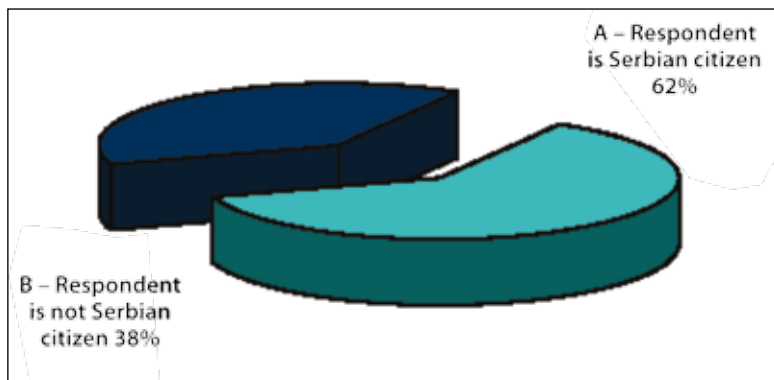
Table: Educational level of the general population versus survey sample, in %		
Highest level of school completed	General population aged 15 and over	Refugees aged 15–65
None (uncompleted elementary school)	21.8	1.4
Elementary school	23.9	13.6
Secondary school	41.1	66.8
College	4.5	8.0
University	6.5	9.2
Other/unknown	2.2	1.0
Total	100	100

Refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina account for 34.4% of the sample, the rest being refugees from Croatia. Their current status in terms of having Serbian citizenship or identity card is presented in the Table below.

Table: Respondent sample, by country of origin and current status, in %⁶	
Origin, citizenship status in Serbia	%
Refugees from B-H, without Serbian citizenship	13.6
Refugees from B-H, holding Serbian citizenship, not having Serbian ID	1.8
Former refugees from B-H, holding Serbian citizenship and ID	19.0
Refugees from Croatia, without Serbian citizenship	24.8
Refugees from Croatia holding Serbian citizenship, not having Serbian ID	6.2
Former refugees from Croatia holding Serbian citizenship and ID	34.6
Total	100

⁶ Many people retained their refugee status, as it is not withdrawn upon obtaining Serbian citizenship, but only after the issuing to the individual of an identity card (ID).

It is important to note that 38.4% of refugees from Croatia included in the survey do not have Serbian citizenship. At the same time, only 7.5% of respondents stated they have not applied for Serbian citizenship (Table).



The troublesome fact is that 6.2% of respondents are stateless, which hinders their repatriation and integration alike. Interestingly, this group within sub-sample does not differ significantly from the rest of the sample by other characteristics such as age, place of residence or education. An overwhelming majority of respondents (80%) wish to stay and live in Serbia, 7% wish to return to their country of origin and 11% wish to go broad. Among them, 46% of refugees from Croatia hold Croatian passports.

Many refugees have Croatian travel documents that enable them to travel visa-free to the countries of western Europe. Many of them, however, are reluctant to use Croatian passport and travel abroad for fear that they

might be arrested on international warrants for war crimes issued by Croatia. According to one focus group participant, an acquaintance of his got a lucrative job of bus driver who can cross state borders visa-free, but ended up being arrested in Bulgaria. Yet, refugees still travel in search of employment, as there are numerous job opportunities in taking care of elderly persons and children. However, some people had bad experiences with that as well.⁷

The category of respondents with Serbian citizenship and ID no longer belongs to the refugee population as such, but given their recent change of status, it is important to identify the economic and social characteristics of their integration, as well as possible differences with respect to persons who still enjoy refugee status. All respondents fled to Serbia prior to 1996; hence the time frame for their integration has been at least 10 years.

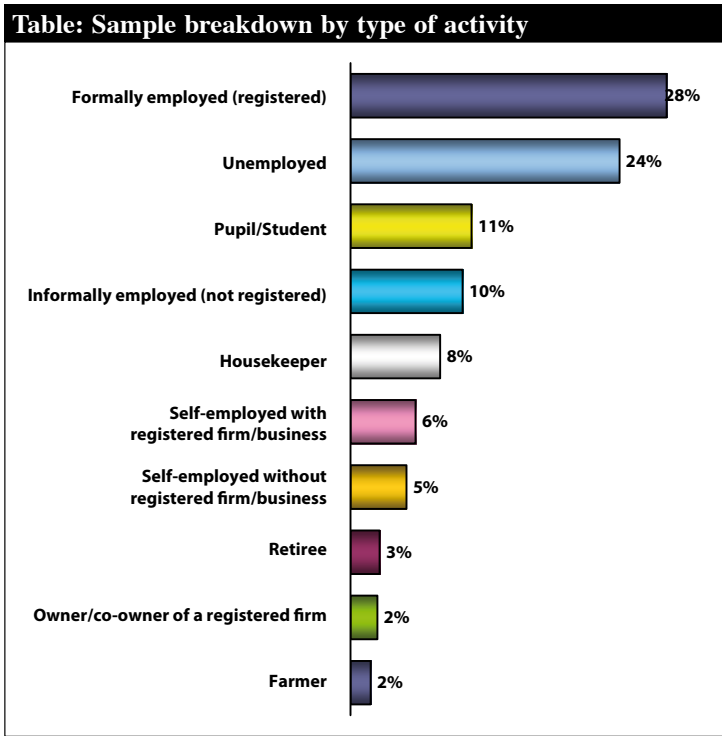
When further interpreting the survey results, it should be mentioned that the “snowball” methodology captured the sample whose socio-demographic characteristics were better than those of the refugee population as a whole. The sample includes able-bodied refugees aged 16 to 65, concentrated mostly in urban areas (80%), with fairly high level of education – very high share of secondary education (67%), and rather high share of tertiary education (17%), compared to educational attainment of the general population in Serbia (secondary education - 41%, college and university education – 11%). Men were over-represented in the sample (56%), and socio-economic status of male population is typically better. That the survey sample represents a more prosperous segment of the refugee population is also indicated by the latest refugee census conducted by the Serbian Commissariat for Refugees. The registration⁸ showed that 50% of refugees had secondary education, and 9.5% college or university education. It also showed that women account for slightly over a half (51.4%) of the refugee population.

4. Current position of refugees in the labour market

The survey was conducted on a sample of working-age refugees (from 15 to 65 years of age). Basic indicators of activity of refugees show that this population is very active (as illustrated in Table). The share of active persons in the general sample is over 3/4.

⁷ Information obtained at focus group sessions.

⁸ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Commissariat for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia *Refugee Registration in Serbia*, November 2004-January 2005.



Although precise comparison with the general population in Serbia is not possible, data obtained from the Work Force Survey (2005) was analyzed for the purpose of basic comparison. Since the sample included the age group 15-65, the share of active individuals in the general population aged 15 to 65 was calculated and placed at 68.4%, which is lower than the share of active population in the survey sample. The share of employed persons aged 15 to 65 in the general population is 54.1%, and 54.4% among refugees who constitute the sample. While national unemployment rate⁹ for 2005 is 20.8%, this rate is considerably higher among refugees within the sample; reaching 30.6% (see Table below).

Table: Activity, employment and unemployment rates for the general population aged 15-65 and refugee population of the same age group included in the sample

Rates	Refugees included in the sample	General Serbian population aged 15-65
Activity rate	78.4	68.4
Employment rate	54.4	54.1
Unemployment rate	30.6	20.8

Source for general population: WFS 2005, Serbian Statistical Office (RZS)

⁹ The unemployment rate represents the share of unemployed persons in the total number of active persons.

The above data suggest that the surveyed refugee population is very active, while at the same time facing great obstacles in accessing employment, which is why the unemployment rate among refugees is much higher than the national unemployment rate. Furthermore, roughly equal employment rates for these two groups may well conceal their differences with regard to stability and other employment characteristics that will be discussed later in this document.

In this respect, there are no significant differences between refugees from Croatia and those from Bosnia and Herzegovina, except that the sub-sample of refugees from Croatia had somewhat higher share of unemployed persons (25% compared to 21.2% among refugees from B-H). More significant differences were found between the respondents with Serbian citizenship and those without. These differences are primarily reflected in the share of categories engaged in informal economy. There is a significant share of informally employed and self-employed in the category of refugees without Serbian citizenship, while the share of formally employed persons is higher among the refugees who are Serbian citizens (Table).

Table: Sub-samples by activities: Refugees with and without Serbian citizenship		
	Refugees without Serbian citizenship	Refugees with Serbian citizenship
Owner/co-owner of a formally registered company	2.6	2.3
Self-employed, with a formally registered company/business	5.2	6.2
Self-employed, without a formally registered company/business	9.9	1.9
Formally employed	17.7	34.7
Informally employed	14.1	7.5
Farmer	1.0	2.3
Unpaid family worker	1.0	1.2
Unemployed	19.8	26.6
Pupil/student	12.0	10.1
Housekeeper	12.0	5.5
Retiree	4.2	1.6
Other	0.5	0
Total	100	100

The share of active persons in the sub-sample of those who do not have Serbian citizenship is 71.2%, and significantly higher among those who are Serbian citizens, reaching 82.7%. This indicates that being a citizen is an important element determining one's position in the labour market in terms of access to formal (self) employment.

Concerning the employment status, the respondents differ from the general population by having a higher share of entrepreneurs and self-employed, as well as a lower share of unpaid family workers¹⁰ (Table).

Table: Employment status for the general population and the respondent sample, in %

Employment status	Employed persons (general population)	Employed persons (respondent sample)
Self-employed ¹¹	20.6	27.6
Employed workers ¹²	71.3	70.2
Unpaid family workers	8.1	2.2
Total	100	100

Source for the general Serbian population: *Work force survey 2005*

The data concerning the general Serbian population compiled in the Work Force Survey unfortunately make no distinction between those in formal and informal employment. Hence the differences in that respect between the general population and the survey sample cannot be identified. It is worth mentioning that among employed workers among the respondents, there are 27% who work without a formal employment contract. In addition, the self-employed respondents, informally self-employed, running businesses without official registration, account for as much as 37% of the sample. Another important finding of the research is the significant under-representation of farmers who made up 1.8% of the sample, despite comprising 2.2% of the work force category. Unfortunately, due to the fact that farmers were largely under-represented in the survey sample, statistical analysis of this sub-sample is not possible. It is important to note that none of the 9 farmers included in the sample had received training or financial assistance for starting their farming business (all but one interviewed farmers were older than 45).

Agricultural programs, as heard at focus group sessions, are almost discontinued due to the lack of willingness to fund such programs both at local and central government levels. On the other hand, it is evident that urban settlements, especially Belgrade, register an influx of population leaving rural areas. In the case of refugees, it is a sort of forced urbanization. Many of them had left their land and machinery behind in their countries of origin and never engaged in farming again. Beneficiaries of the Pilot In-Kind As-

¹⁰ Unpaid family workers are persons who assist other family members in a family business, without an employment contract and without being formally paid for the work they perform.

¹¹ The category of self-employed includes all categories of self-employed persons, namely entrepreneurs who employ other people, self-employed persons who do not employ other people, and self-employed with or without registered companies.

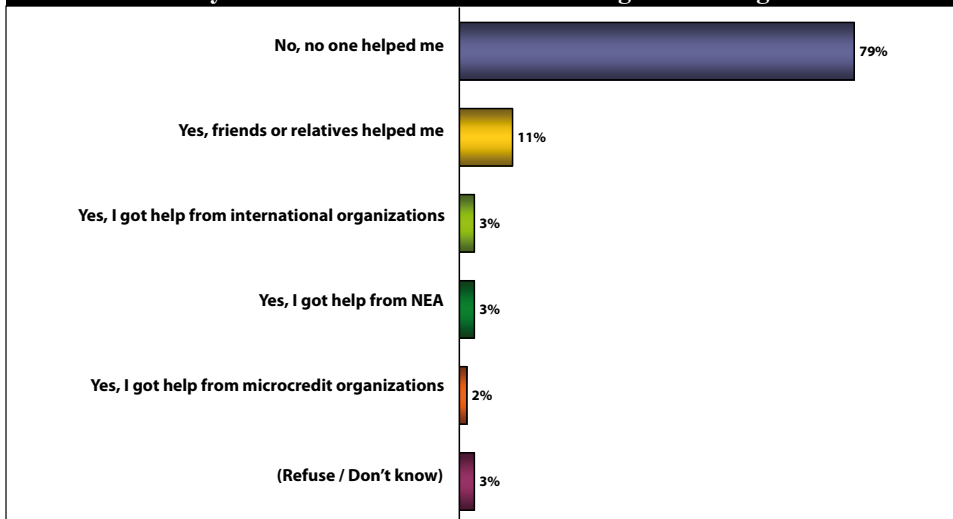
¹² The category of employed workers includes persons who work for companies and institutions, with or without formal employment contract.

sistance Programme (PIKAP) aimed at assisting refugees leaving collective centres, said they would like a part of that programme to be focused solely on farming. For refugees from rural areas, the best solution would be to purchase small farms. According to the data of National Employment Agency, 200 such farms were bought out last year. And now they need assistance to start using these farms for earning an income. Many people who used to be farmers no longer apply for buying out of small farms because they found other solutions in the meantime – they work or receive pension checks and rather apply for housing programs; they see no reason why they should engage in farming any more.¹³

a) *Entrepreneurs and self-employed persons*

Most of the entrepreneurs and self-employed persons interviewed started their own business after 2000; only 29% began before that time. For a vast majority of respondents (85%) the reason for starting their own business was to escape unemployment, while only 11% embarked in entrepreneurship in order realize their business ideas. By the number of people they employ, the surveyed entrepreneurs fall into the category of small entrepreneurs (employing up to 10 workers) with only one of them being a medium entrepreneur and employing 30 people. However, one in four surveyed entrepreneurs stated that in addition to permanently employed workers they occasionally hire additional work force as well. Vast majority of these respondents said they received no training or financial assistance for starting their business (see Table).

Table: Availability of financial assistance and training for starting own business



¹³ Data obtained at focus group sessions.

Lastly, 36.4% of entrepreneurs and self-employed stated they were very or fairly satisfied with their private business, 42% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while the remaining respondents (21.6%) said they were not satisfied with their business performance.

Income-generation projects are not sufficiently transparent, those implemented by the government or non-governmental sector alike. This is especially the case when it comes to selection of beneficiaries. Given the limited resources and widespread poverty, it is not possible to launch an extensive campaign to promote distribution of grants or favourable loan schemes. Lack of transparency in the selection process, on the other hand, leaves room for corruption. Refugees often do not know who to approach, where to apply for funds, how to register and how to link and invest their funds. Information sometimes passes unnoticed, because it was published only once or did not get media coverage. Grants are usually awarded to people who already have businesses and not to the most needy who are left with no support whatsoever.

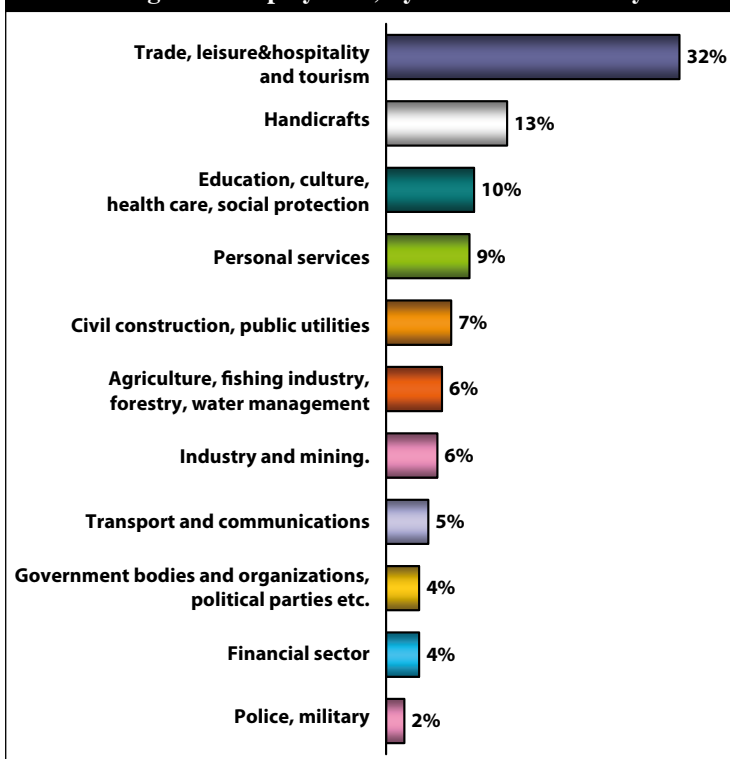
It is a striking fact that in the communities with high national and gender marginalization very few members of vulnerable groups apply for assistance programmes. In patriarchal communities very few women apply for jobs or economic empowerment programs. Local centres for social work or refugee offices know who the people in need are, but some people tend to refuse help because they feel embarrassed; what they need above all is support and encouragement. As for the people who stayed in collective centres, be they old, sick, alcoholics or listless, there is no comprehensive and systemic solution to their problems.¹⁴

b) *Persons in employment*

As stated above, employed workers represent the largest segment of the sample. If we break down this group by branch of economy they work in, we can see that they are mostly concentrated in the trade sector, leisure and tourism, handicraft and personal services, as illustrated in Table below.

In order to gain insight into the differences with respect to branches of economy between the respondent sample and the general population of Serbia, branches of economy were partially re-categorized both on the survey sample and on statistical data for the general population. Data comparison yielded significant differences with regard to share of employment by branches of economy. Refugees are far less present in agriculture, industry, mining and energy sector, government bodies, education, social protection and health care, while they are more present in trade, catering and tourism, civil construction, handicraft and personal services. (Table).

¹⁴ Data obtained at focus group sessions.

Table: Refugees in employment, by branch of economy**Table: Persons in employment by branches of economy - general population versus the respondent sample**

Branches of economy	Persons in employment (general population)	Refugees in employment
Agriculture, forestry, fishing industry, water management	24.0	6.1
Industry, mining, energy	21.7	5.6
Civil construction, public utilities, personal services, handicraft	9.4	29.4
Trade, catering and tourism	17.8	32.0
Transportation, warehousing and communications	5.6	4.6
Financial services	1.5	3.6
State administration, social insurance, education, health care, social work, military	16.6	15.2
Other/unknown	3.4	3.6
Total	100	100

Source for the general population: *Serbian Statistical Yearbook, Serbian Statistical Office, 2005:107*

An exceptionally large share of respondents at the time of survey worked as highly skilled and skilled workers. When the data on refugees in employment was broken down by occupation and compared to the general population¹⁵, considerable differences were found between the two groups. Namely, the share of professionals, office workers and technicians is significantly higher in the general population whereas the respondent sample shows significantly higher share of highly skilled and skilled workers. (Table).

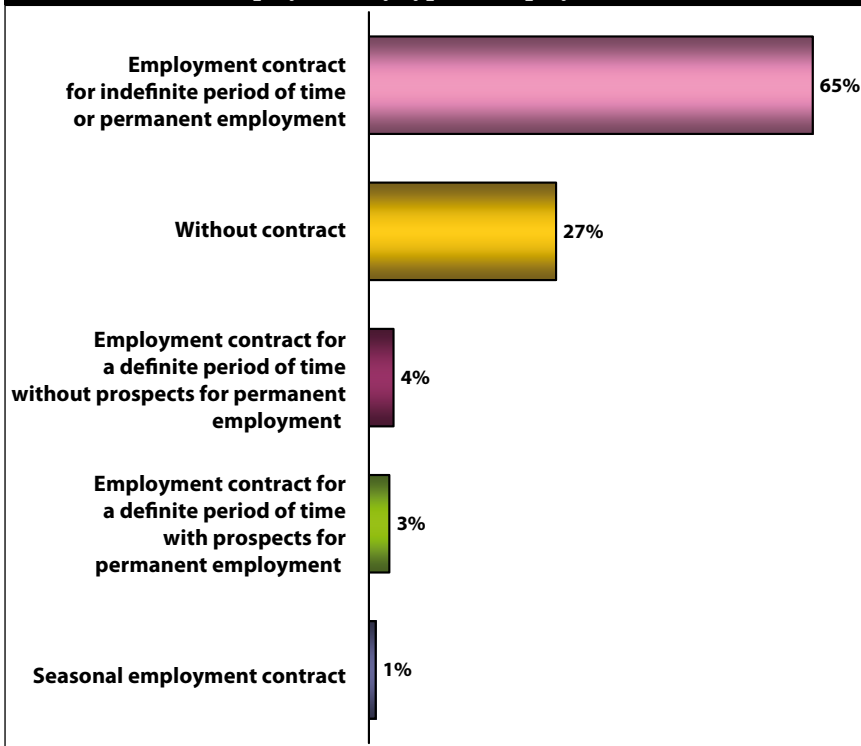
Table: Persons in employment by occupation – general population versus the respondent sample, in%

Occupation	General population	Refugees
Professional	16.1	7.1
Low level management jobs	6.9	4.1
Office worker/technician	26.3	20.3
Highly-skilled and skilled (manual and non-manual) worker	30.0	48.7
Semi-qualified and unqualified labourer	15.3	13.7
Other/unknown	5.3	6.1
Total	100	100

Findings of the research on the position of refugees also indicate that a significant number of respondents perform jobs that are below their qualifications. Among persons in employment with university education, one in four works as highly skilled or skilled employees. Also, 13% of the employed respondents with completed secondary education (vocational or high schools) work as semi-qualified or unqualified labourers. The situation differs notably within the general population: only 7% of persons with university education among the general population work as office clerks or technicians, and only 3.6% as skilled workers. Furthermore, only 10% of persons with secondary education work in jobs that are below their qualifications. The above data indicates that the position of refugees in the labour market is less favourable and that they are more often than the non-refugee population forced to take jobs below their qualifications to be able to support themselves.

The majority of employed refugees (58.9%) work in the private sector, 13.7% are employed in non-transformed socially owned companies, and 14.7% work in state-owned companies and government sector. Nearly two thirds of employed persons hold relatively steady jobs, i.e. under permanent employment contracts. The share of informally employed persons is also notable. (Table).

¹⁵ Data for the general population was taken from the research on transformation strategies of different social groups in Serbia, conducted by the Institute for Sociological research of the Belgrade Faculty of Philosophy (ISIFF) in 2003. To make the sample more comparable, it excluded some regions and villages in order to get higher similarity between samples according to these criteria.

Table: Persons in employment by type of employment contract

A vast majority of employed persons who work without a formal employment contract are in the private sector (87%), 4% work in socially-owned companies while the ownership of the remaining companies that informally employ refugees remains unknown.

c) The unemployed

When the overall position and unemployment are observed by age categories, it can be noted that unemployment does not affect all age groups equally. According to data, the age group most affected by unemployment are persons between 31 and 45 years of age. (Table).

Table: Indicators of the position of refugees in the labour market, by age categories

Labour market indicators	Age categories		
	15–30	31–45	46–65
Activity rate	62.0	92.8	93.9
Employment rate	47.3	62.5	67.7
Unemployment rate	23.6	48.4	27.9

Activity, employment and unemployment rates are the lowest among young people. One in three young people interviewed are still at school, which is the reason why they have the lowest activity rate. Based on this data, although the activity rate among middle-aged and the oldest age group are roughly the same, employment rate among middle-aged is somewhat lower while their unemployment rate is considerably higher than in other two age categories.

Persons with secondary education constitute the majority of unemployed persons from the sample (Table).

Table: Unemployment rates by education	
Education	%
None (incomplete elementary school)	1.6
Elementary school	17.5
Incomplete secondary education or vocational school (less than four years)	23.4
Secondary school and high school	42.5
College and university	12.2
Other/unknown	2.8
Total	100

Long-term unemployment prevails among the unemployed refugees. Only 16.5% of the unemployed have been in that status for less than 12 months, while the remaining 83.5% have been without work for 12 months or longer, which places them in the category of long-term unemployed, according to the Eurostat¹⁶ criteria. Moreover, 68% of the respondents have been unemployed for more than five years. As per length of unemployment, no significant differences were found between refugee sub-samples either by country of origin or the citizenship status. Considerable differences were found only with respect to education level. Although long-term unemployed constitute the majority in all education groups, among the unemployed persons with university education there are 40% short-term unemployed, whereas the share of short-term unemployed persons in the group with secondary education is merely 15%. Similar trends are found in the general population as well, because the current situation in the labour market makes it more difficult for persons with secondary education or lower to find jobs.

More than one third (33.9%) of unemployed persons have never had a job, and 14.5% lost their jobs due to the restructuring or bankruptcy of companies they worked for, or were simply laid off. According to the Work Force Survey of 2005, 39.2% of the unemployed in the general population had never worked before and are looking for their first job, while 29.8% became unemployed due to lay-offs or because the company they worked for went bankrupt. It may be assumed that unemployed refugees are comparatively less affected by restructuring of companies because they were less integrated in the segment of the labour market subject to restructuring.

¹⁶ Statistical Office of the European Commission.

When searching for a job, the unemployed respondents rely mostly on their informal networks – as many as 63.6% of them was trying to find a job through their relatives, friends or acquaintances. 47.7% approached National Employment Agency, 18.7% expected to be offered a job by the Agency, 24% canvassed potential employers, 7.5% posted advertisements in the newspapers, 6.5% searched for a job through youth or student employment agencies, and only 1.9% visited *Career Fairs* or approached NGOs for assistance in finding a job. (Table).

Job seeking methods	% of respondents
Through relatives, friends, acquaintances	63.6
Approaching the National Employment Agency	47.7
Expecting NEA to contact them	18.7
Canvassing potential employers	24.0
Placing adds in newspapers	7.5
Through youth or student employment agencies	6.5
Visiting <i>Career Fairs</i> and approaching NGOs for assistance in finding work	1.9

A mere 10.5% of respondents have already been offered a job and turned it down, of which 61.5% did it because of low payment, 15.4% because of illness and 7.7% because of inadequate qualifications.

d) *Additional and occasional jobs*

The research on the socio-economic status showed that about 15% of respondents perform informal work on a regular basis. Notably, 5% of respondents are informally self-employed, while 10% hold regular jobs, yet without formal employment contracts. However, the research also sought to obtain detailed information on additional and occasional work, which remains unregistered when basic socio-economic status is determined but which is proven to be widely present and an important element of socio-economic strategies of Serbian households and individuals during 1990s and in the transition period that followed after 2000.

A total of 28.8% of respondents state that besides their regular job (or their other status, e.g. of unemployed person, pensioner, student or housekeeper) they take additional paid jobs: 55.6% undertake such work on a regular basis, every month, 22.2% does so occasionally (5-6 times a year) and the same percentage of respondents rarely take additional jobs (up to four times a year). Among those who occasionally take additional jobs, only 9.7% do it in a formal way, by signing employment contracts with employers, youth or student employment agencies, 44.4% work for informal employers and 42.4% work independently.

¹⁷ Respondents were allowed to state more than one job-seeking method.

If we compare the survey results with findings of a research on socio-economic strategies of households and individuals in Serbia, albeit with caution, since the latter had been conducted several years before, it may be concluded that refugees engage slightly less in additional work, as compared to 36% of the general population regularly or occasionally performing additional jobs. The two samples distinctly differ in types of work performed occasionally (Table).

Table: Types of occasional jobs in the general population and the respondent sample, in %		
Type of occasional work	General population	Refugees
In agriculture	30.5	18.1
In civil construction (as plumbers, electricians etc.)	14.8	21.5
Trade	15.6	8.3
Unskilled manual labour	9.8	6.9
House cleaning, taking care of the elderly	2.9	13.9
Other	26.4	31.3
Total	100	100

Unlike general Serbian population, in which agricultural jobs are the predominant form of occasional work, refugees mostly work in construction, followed by house cleaning and taking care of the elderly.

The above characteristics reflect the current position of refugees in the labour market. However, for better understanding of this position and greater inclusion of refugees in active labour market policies, the focus should be on the dynamic characteristics of their position in the labour market, by way of looking at their position before displacement as well as their prior working experience during displacement.

e) Position of refugee women in the labour market

Research results indicate that refugee women included in the sample are in a disadvantaged position compared to their male counterparts (Table).

Table: Activity rate, employment rate and unemployment rate in female and male working age refugees		
Labour market indicators	Women	Men
Activity rate	71.0	84.0
Employment rate	47.0	60.2
Unemployment rate	33.0	28.5

Compared to the general female population in Serbia, women refugees have higher activity and employment rates but their unemployment rate is also higher. This indicates a notably pro-active attitude by women refugees on one hand and significant obstacles hindering their access to jobs on the other (Table).

Table: Activity rate, employment rate and unemployment rate among overall female population and refugee women		
Labour market indicators	Refugee women	General female population
Activity rate	71.0	57,9
Employment rate	47.0	44,0
Unemployment rate	33.0	24,1

Source for the general female population: *Position of women in the labour market*, UNDP, 2006.

The slightly higher employment rate among refugee women does not necessarily mean that their position in the labour market is generally better. It should be noted that the survey sample included female refugees with better educational level than that of the general female population. Besides, as comparable data is not available, comparison by “quality” of employment between women refugees and general female population is not possible. Findings of the research done on refugees undoubtedly show that nearly one third of employed refugee women work informally, mainly for employers, with a smaller number of women being informally self-employed or unpaid family workers.

The qualitative research by Group 484 entitled *The status of refugee and IDP women in Serbia* has shown that women from this group face numerous difficulties in finding employment: difficult access to information on jobs and employment opportunities, sparse social networks (friends, acquaintances) which prove to be important route to employment, as well as facing employers’ and co-workers’ prejudices towards refugees and IDPs.¹⁸ Consequently, refugee and IDP women are often not in a position to choose jobs but take those which are below their qualifications (mostly low-skilled jobs in the service sector) poorly paid and informal. In addition, compelled by adverse material circumstances they often hold several jobs at the same time.

5. Position of refugees in the labour market prior to and during displacement

Going into exile has significantly changed the overall socio-economic status of refugees and their position in the labour market. A total of 48.8% of respondents fled to Serbia before 1994 (two major refugee influxes occurred in 1991 and 1992). More than a half (51.2%) of the respondents fled to Serbia in 1995. For the sake of comparison of their former and current socio-economic status, the research registered three points in time for each respondent: the first - prior to displacement, the second – six months after coming to Serbia, and the third – at the time of survey (Table).

¹⁸ Group 484, *The status of refugee and IDP women in Serbia*, Belgrade, 2006:29.

Table: Socio-economic status prior to displacement, six months after coming to Serbia and at the time of survey, in %

Socio-economic status	Prior to displacement	Six months after coming to Serbia	Current status
Owner/co-owner of formally registered company	0.8	–	2.4
Self-employed, with formally registered company/business	1.4	0.6	5.8
Self-employed, without formally registered company/business	0.6	0.8	5.0
Formally employed	39.8	4.0	28.2
Informally employed	1.0	7.2	10.0
Farmer	3.6	1.2	1.8
Unpaid family worker	0.6	0.2	1.2
Unemployed	11.6	49.6	24.0
Pupil/student	30.8	25.2	10.8
Housekeeper	4.0	5.2	8.0
Retiree	0.6	0.6	2.6
Other	5.2	5.4	0.2
Total	100	100	100

By comparing their socio-economic status in 2006 and before displacement, we can conclude that a change in socio-economic status occurred in 66.4% of cases. The research on transformation strategies of different social groups¹⁹ revealed similar results with regard to social mobility of the general population in Serbia. Although not entirely comparable,²⁰ this data provides some insight into social mobility of both domicile and refugee population. The results of the research show that the mobility rate in the period 1989-2003 was also high in the general population: nearly half (49.8%) of respondents experienced a change in their social status (Bolčić, 2004:116). It can therefore be concluded that social mobility rate among refugees is significantly higher than that of the general Serbian population.

The biggest change that many refugees faced after coming to Serbia was unemployment. Only a small percentage of respondents (4%) managed to get employment in the first six months after coming to Serbia. Most of the refugees were

¹⁹ ISIFF, 2003

²⁰ Results of the research on transformation strategies of different social groups in Serbia refer to the status before post-socialist transformation (1989) and the status at the time of research (2003), whereas data for refugees cover the period before exile (1990-1995) and 2006. Not only is the time period different but also their status before going into exile might already have been influenced by the collapse of socialism and by the war. Some changes may be attributed to the predominant social circumstances between 2003 and 2006, making the two samples only partially comparable. Nevertheless, this comparison provides an indication with regard to differences in social mobility patterns between the general population and refugees

employed before displacement. The share of formally employed in the sample is even today still considerably lower than before displacement, while different forms of entrepreneurship and self-employment have risen significantly. This may indicate the willingness of refugees to compensate for their inability to find formal work in the formal labour market by way of starting their own business. Yet, the share of unemployed in this group is still significantly higher than before displacement, while at the same time the share of pupils and students decreased sharply. Data related to unemployed persons showed that many young people who completed or interrupted their education during displacement and entered the work force were often unable to find employment. It was also found that the share of farmers in this population group was not high even before coming to Serbia.

The refugee survey sought to thoroughly examine the particularities of changes in social status of refugees in the period between 2002 and 2006 (see Table).

Table: Changes in social status by frequency, moving from being employed to being unemployed, moving from formal to informal sector and attempts to start one's own business, in %

Number of changes	Change in social status	Moving from being employed to being unemployed	Moving from formal to informal sector	Attempts to start own business
No changes	55.8	69.6	86.2	84.0
One change	24.4	17.2	11.2	14.8
Two changes	9.2	5.8	1.6	0.8
Three and more changes	10.6	7.4	1.0	0.4
Total	100	100	100	100

As might be expected, the highest number of changes occurred in the basic social status that includes, besides labour mobility, status changes from pupils to students, retirement etc. It is worth mentioning that 30.4% of respondents have moved at least once from being employed to being unemployed and vice versa, with 7.4% experiencing such changes in status more than twice in four years. This suggests a relatively fragile or unstable position of refugees in the labour market. The incidence of moving from being employed to being unemployed is higher than the incidence of moving from formal to informal sector, with the lowest incidence of attempts to start own business. If current entrepreneurs and self-employed are excluded from the group of respondents who at least once attempted to start their own business or at least become informally self-employed, it is found that a mere 3% of respondents, other than entrepreneurs or self-employed, have attempted to start their own business. These 3% can be considered as failed attempts to start own business. Small percentage (1.2%) of respondents repeatedly attempted to start their own business without success.

The above data suggest that moving from being employed to being unemployed is the most frequent change in social status affecting the respondent

sample, while the incidence of moving from formal to informal sector is 14%. Given the size of the sample, it is not possible to make an in-depth analysis of internal characteristics of particular sub-groups or trends. Since there is no available data on status change among domicile population, it is not possible to gain a comparative insight into the characteristics of the dynamics of changes in the labour market position.

6. Willingness to work, employment characteristics and social capital characteristics

Work orientations of refugees were studied through a range of aspects, used to measure their willingness to change location for the sake of work, their flexibility in taking jobs available in the market, including those below their qualifications, willingness to work on contract and in the informal sector of economy, willingness to engage in more intensive forms of work (longer working hours, additional jobs), as well as in independent forms of work (self-employment and entrepreneurship). The survey also looked at their willingness to gain new knowledge and skills in order to adjust to labour market demands. Comparative data for general population and refugee sample are presented in the Table.

Type of willingness	General population ²¹	Refugees
To move for work	50.1	43.8
To take just any paid job	49.5	47.0
To work beyond normal working hours	67.1	59.4
To hold more than one job at the same time	40.1	41.4
To take jobs below one's qualifications for higher salary	62.1	63.8
To move from a permanent position to working on contract for a better pay	33.4	39.8
To do additional jobs besides one's permanent job	62.0	58.6
To work informally, in grey economy	28.4	35.8
To attain new knowledge and skills and gain new qualifications	53.7	55.0
To start one's own business (self-employment)	47.7	50.2
To set up one's own company or co-owned company	39.9	44.6

With regard to willingness, some differences emerged between the general population and refugees, reflected in less willingness on the part of refugees to move for work, to work beyond normal working hours, to perform any paid job and to moonlight. At the same time, refugees showed greater willingness to take

²¹ Data taken from the research *Transformation strategies of different social groups*, ISIFF, 2003.

jobs below their qualifications, to work on contract instead of working on permanent basis, to work in informal economy, to gain additional knowledge and skills and to start their own business either through self-employment or engaging in entrepreneurship. By and large, it can be concluded that refugees demonstrated, as expected, a more flexible attitude in the labour market (except in some respects) since they have not been effectively integrated in the host community, and given their unfavourable socio-economic status and maybe a greater need to adjust to the new circumstances in the labour market.

In searching for a job, respondents use different methods or often combine several methods in order to find employment.²² Some differences have been found in job-searching methods between respondents in employment and the unemployed (Table).

Table: Job-searching methods of employed and unemployed refugees, in %		
Job-searching method	Employed	Unemployed
Through NEA	24.7	47.7
By applying for a job directly with employer	41.1	24.3
Through friends, acquaintances, relatives	80.0	63.6
Through youth/student employment agencies	3.6	6.5
By placing ads in newspapers	5.3	7.5
By visiting <i>Career Fairs</i>	2.6	1.9
Through domestic NGOs	0.5	6.5

The results show that employed persons are less inclined to rely on NEA when searching for a job and more on direct contacts with employers and their own social networks (relatives, friends and acquaintances) than the category of unemployed, although both groups look for employment mainly through their own social networks. In addition, the findings show that relying on one's own social network proved to be the most effective channel for finding a job, since more than a half of the employed persons found their current job in that way (Table).

Table: Manner in which employed persons found their current jobs, in %	
Manner in which they found the job	% of persons in employment
Through National Employment Agency	3.6
Through direct contacts with employers	21.8
Through friends, relatives, acquaintances	53.8
Through youth/student employment agencies	1.0
By placing an ad in the newspaper	1.0
By visiting <i>Career Fairs</i>	1.0
Other	17.8
Total	100

²² Respondents were allowed to circle more than one method they used or still use used for job hunting.

The above data suggest that job-searching on their own, through social networks and by directly contacting employers is a far more effective method of finding employment than contacting the National Employment Agency or youth and student employment agencies.

Social capital is of particular importance for employment processes in modern labour markets.

Table: Relying on social networks in dealing with different problems and life's challenges – the refugee sample							
Type of support	Friend	Acquaintance	Relative	Neighbour	Nobody	Other	Total
Finding (extra, better) job	42.2	4.0	22.4	2.6	27.6	1.2	100
Access to health care	37.8	4.4	16.4	3.6	37.0	0.8	100
Enrolment of children in schools	28.0	2.4	10.6	2.4	54.8	1.8	100
Housing problems	27.4	2.6	17.8	2.2	49.0	1.0	100
Administrative jobs	30.4	5.2	15.2	2.6	45.4	1.2	100
Money lending	32.6	1.0	28.2	2.4	34.6	1.2	100
Advice and emotional support	40.0	1.0	27.4	2.8	27.6	1.2	100

Table: Relying on social networks in dealing with different problems and life situations – general population sample							
Type of support	Friend	Acquaintance	Relative	Neighbour	Nobody	Total	
Finding (extra, better) job	28.0	1.7	12.2	4.3	53.7	100	
Access to health care	22.0	3.9	19.1	4.4	50.6	100	
Enrolment of children in schools	8.1	1.4	4.0	1.3	85.2	100	
Housing problems	9.5	2.3	10.3	1.6	76.4	100	
Administrative jobs	16.1	4.0	11.8	2.5	65.5	100	
Money lending	22.5	0.9	32.3	5.1	39.3	100	
Advice and emotional support	30.3	0.5	31.9	6.1	31.2	100	

Such a situation with regard to social capital adds another important element to the overall picture of the position of refugees. Their proactive attitude is also reflected in their striving to build social networks, one of the key prerequisites for their integration and obtaining support in dealing with different livelihood problems, as well as a source of social and emotional support. It has also been found that social networks are not used in all aspects of life, primarily because social networks do not have the same importance in different areas of life. For example, enrolling kids into school is one of the aspects where in most cases no particular support from a social network is needed. The second reason may be that people try to build social networks so as to secure additional source of support. This support is obvious where job-searching is concerned. Among refugee population, 42% of respondents can rely on friends in their search for a job or a new, better, extra work. This may indicate that it is during the very adjustment process and development of labour market strategies that social relations are built with other people who can provide support to refugees in improving their position in the labour market.

There is another significant discrepancy found between refugees and the general population that deserves to be mentioned. During the adaptation period, refugees have created such forms of social capital that enable them to rely more on friends and acquaintances. In the general population, however, there is a noticeable lack of social capital, making people rely more on relatives and neighbours. *This discrepancy is indicative of the fact that refugees, being uprooted people driven out of their own social networks, and faced with lack of other forms of capital (economic capital in particular), during difficult transition in 1990s and due to inefficient institutional mechanisms for integration (devastated institutions and organizations in economy, education, finance, health care and social welfare) were compelled to create informal social networks to help them integrate in society and access important social sectors and resources.*

The survey also sought to examine whether social networks built by refugees are limited only to members of the same group or extend beyond refugee population, which is an important indicator of the level of their integration in the local community. Data shows that some respondents still maintain closed social networks (34% usually rely on fellow-refugees), but also suggests that social networks are becoming increasingly open and that refugees have been establishing ties with local population as well (13.6% rely more on people from local population and 36.4% rely equally on other refugees and local people) (Table).

Another important survey finding refers to the refugees' perception of social distance between them and the domicile population. Respondents were asked to assess the extent to which local population is bothered by different relationships with refugees and their presence in different spheres of life in society. As shown in Table, refugees do not perceive any significant intolerance on the part of domicile population.

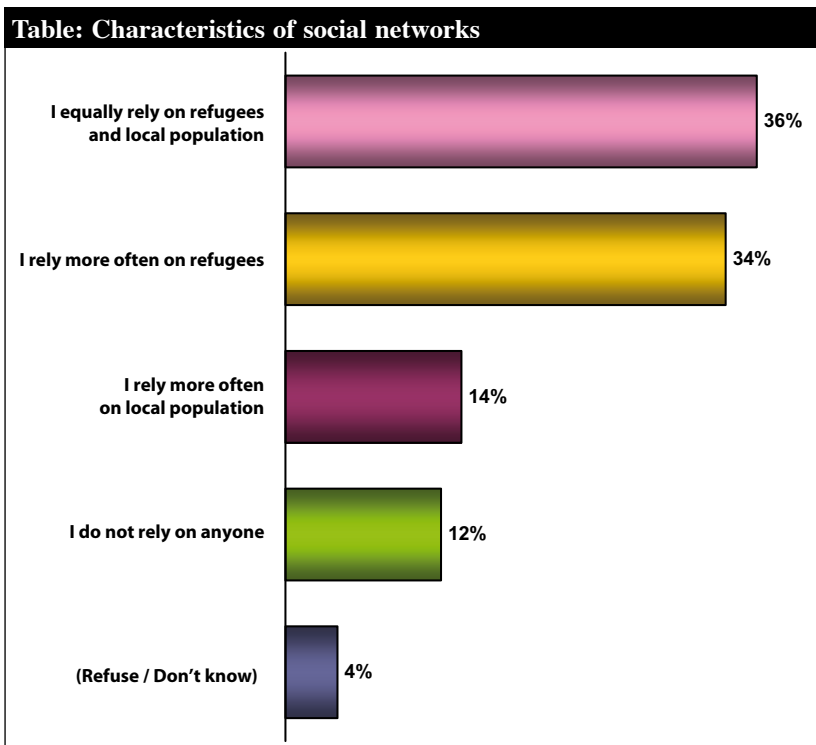


Table: Social distance – average rates (1 – not bothered at all, 5 – very much bothered)

To what extent domicile population is bothered by the following relationship with refugees	Average rate
Living in the same country with refugees	1.9
Living in the same neighbourhood with refugees	1.9
Being co-workers with refugees	1.9
Having a refugee as a boss	2.2
Their children hanging out with refugee children	1.7
Their close relatives and children marrying refugees	1.8

Perceptions of social distance indicate that in early 2007, according to survey respondents, the social distance toward refugees was not so apparent. In this respect, there were no discrepancies between refugees from Croatia and those from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Slight differences were found between refugees who obtained Serbian citizenship and those who did not. The latter group perceived somewhat greater social distance, but none of the rates is higher than 2.3.

The above indicators suggest that while refugees still demonstrate a notable tendency to establish relationships with members of the same social group, they are also gradually developing social networks through which it becomes obvious that the social integration of refugees in the host community has indeed begun.

Focus group participants in general state that they are well integrated in the Serbian society. It has been noticed that elderly focus group participants insisted more on their negative experiences with the local population. One participant said a job advertisement was published several years ago stating that “refugees are not welcome to apply”. Despite positive experiences, many participants believe that refugees are stigmatised; you not only cannot get employment in state administration if you are a refugee, but you also remain labelled as such for the rest of your life. Many of them, young refugees in particular, combine their adaptation capabilities with the desire not to be assimilated. Thus in school or at the university they use “ekavica” (dialect spoken in Serbia) and at home their own dialect.

Some focus group participants said they felt ghettoized. They live in boroughs populated exclusively by refugees or former refugees, maintaining little or no contact with local population. Some refugees said they had very limited communication with municipal authorities when they needed to solve some problem, but mostly remain uninvolved in local affairs during displacement.

Experiences of refugees with the National Employment Agency

The survey attempted to find out the following: the role of the National Employment Agency in the employment of refugees, the experiences that refugees have with this Agency, to what extent are refugees included in active labour market policies, how they perceive and rate Agency’s performance and programs. These experiences and perceptions were gauged on the general sample in order to obtain an insight into the experiences of different groups, not only those currently unemployed.

In the attempt to find out to what extent are the respondents aware of the existence of an agency in Serbia responsible for helping refugees to find employment, the survey results showed that the majority of them are either completely unaware of such an agency, or if they are aware, they do not know that NEA is that agency (Table).

Table: Can you rely on some agency or organization in this country that helps refugees to find a job?

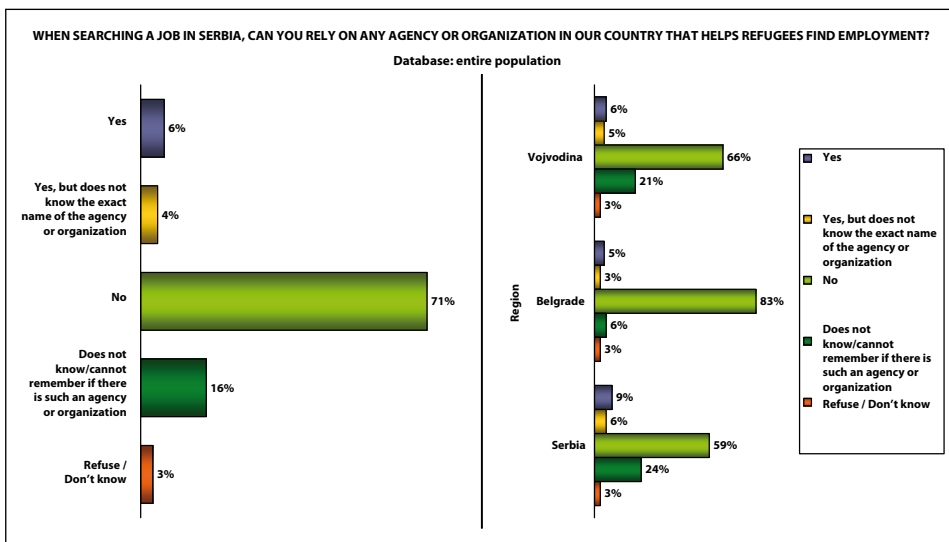
	%
Yes ²³	5.8
Yes, but do not exactly know the name of that agency	4.2
No	70.8
Do not know/cannot remember if there is such an agency	16.2
Other	3.0
Total	100

Within the “Beautiful Serbia” project that has been recently carried out by NEA and UNDP, contractors were obliged to hire 20 to 30 percent of Roma, refugees and IDPs for construction works. The project provided subsidies for employers, such as funds for opening new work places, reimbursement of contributions for social, pension and disability insurance by NEA. According to NEA officials, this agency undertook a set of measures, including informing refugees and maintaining daily contact with them, but refugees showed very little interest in the project.²³

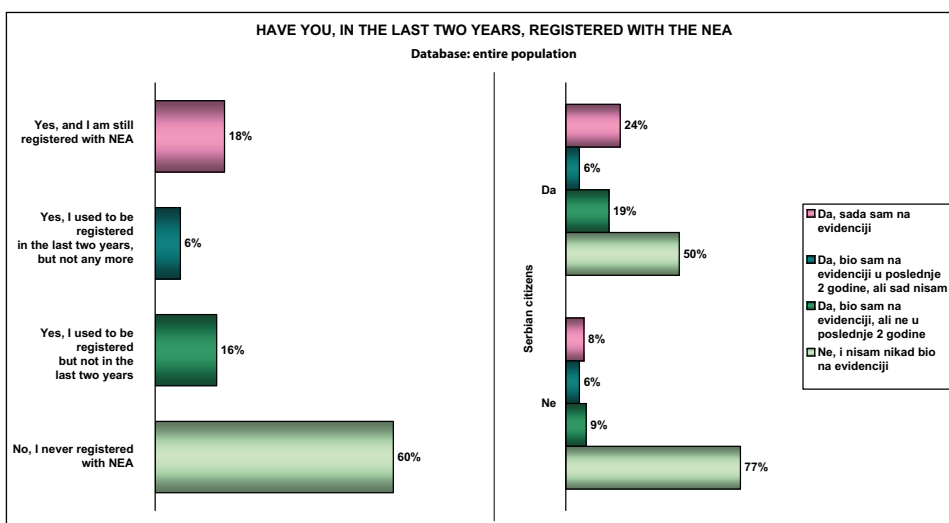
By contacting unemployed persons, NEA has been trying to involve them in the process of identifying the most appropriate measures to be taken. NEA and some NGOs identified motivation skills training courses as being important for the labour market, as well as training in CV-writing and job interview presentation skills. According to NEA staff, many people have trouble accepting the idea of retraining and additional training. On the other hand, many people applied with NEA for computer training or English language courses. NEA is not capable to meet the growing interest in different training programs.²⁴

²³ Among those who said they were aware of an agency helping refugees to find employment, 96.6% stated the National Employment Agency and 3.4% Association of refugees and expelees in Serbia.

²⁴ Data obtained at focus group sessions.



Most respondents (60.4%) have never registered with the National Employment Agency; 17.6% are registered and 22% were registered before. If we isolate the sub-sample of unemployed respondents, it can be observed that slightly less than half of them (49.2%) are currently registered with the Agency, 38.3% have never registered and the rest of respondents used to be registered.



The overwhelming majority (90%) registered with NEA because they are searching for employment, while 6% registered in order to receive health and social insurance. The unemployed who did not register with the agency provided different reasons as to why they did not register. The largest group are those

who stated that they could not register because they were not Serbian citizens (although citizenship is not a formal requirement for registering) or they lacked required documentation or did not meet other requirements (21.1%), followed by those who see no point in registering with NEA because they do not think the Agency can help them find a job (19.3%); 10.5% allege they are not informed about the possibility to register with the Agency, while others state family reasons, lack of trust etc.

Among all the respondents who have been or currently are registered with NEA, only one third said they had their own counsellor, a person responsible for handling their case at the employment agency. Among those who did have their own counsellors, 40% said their counsellors were largely indifferent in helping and understanding the circumstances of their client, 20% rated their counsellors as fairly or very willing to help, while 40% rated them as fairly or totally indifferent.

Experiences with NEA counsellors, according to focus group participants, range from very positive to extremely negative. Some had counsellors who put much time and energy into helping their clients. Such counsellors inspire people's enthusiasm to continue their job-searching with additional self-confidence. Others met counsellors who appeared indolent and unhappy with their job and working with clients. Representatives of NEA had similar experiences with regard to their clients. Some clients, they say, just come and leave their details never to come back; they appear disinterested in work or expecting counsellors to contact them.

Since Belgrade alone has 138,000 registered unemployed persons, counsellors cater for a large number of clients, ranging from 1,000 to 1,500 per counsellor. They include those who want to work and those who do not, since access to most rights is linked to the possession of proof of unemployment. NEA estimates that some 40 per cent of registered job seekers do not want to work, although under the new labour law they are obliged to declare themselves as active job seekers.

The survey intended to gauge whether and to what extent the respondents were informed about various programs included in NEA active employment measures. Results show that only 17.2% of respondents have heard of at least one of these programmes, while the vast majority (82.8%) had never heard of any of the programs listed in the question. In the subset of respondents who answered this question and who heard of at least one of the listed programmes, the results were inconsistent, showing that respondents were more informed about some of the programmes, with only a minority being informed about other programmes (Table).

Table: Awareness of programmes comprising NEA active employment measures – general sample

Active employment measures	% of total number of respondents who answered the question (N = 86)	% of total number of respondents (N = 500)
Trainee employment program	65.1	11.2
Cash assistance to volunteer internship	58.1	10.0
Job training (skills needed for a particular position)	45.3	7.8
Basic computer training	59.3	10.2
Specialized computer training	44.2	7.6
Foreign language courses	62.8	10.8
Other courses (additional knowledge and skills)	45.3	7.8
Vocational re-training and additional training (acquiring new qualifications)	66.3	11.4
Elementary education for adults	39.5	6.8
Financial support to persons who enrolled in graduate studies	26.7	4.6
Training on how to run a company through role-play on how to set up and run a company (“virtual companies”)	25.6	4.4
Training in active job-searching (writing a CV, preparing for a job interview, individual job-searching and the like)	36.0	6.2
Encouragement of and training in self-employment	41.9	7.2
Active job-searching clubs	30.2	5.2
<i>Career Fairs</i>	52.3	9.0

When looking only at the respondents who were unemployed at the time of survey, the picture looks a little brighter (Table). A total of 120 such respondents were included in the sample; only 50 respondents recognised at least one program, while 70 did not circle any of the offered programs; this indicates that they are completely uninformed about the NEA programs in question.

Table: Level of awareness of unemployed persons of programs comprising NEA active employment measures

Active employment measures	% of total number of respondents who answered the question (N = 50)	% of total number of respondents (N = 120)
Trainee employment program	64.0	26.6
Cash assistance to volunteer internship	56.0	23.3
Job training (skills needed for a particular position)	34.0	14.1
Basic computer training	60.0	25.0
Specialized computer training	44.0	18.3
Foreign language courses	58.0	24.1
Other courses (additional knowledge and skills)	34.0	14.1
Vocational re-training and additional training (acquiring new qualifications)	70.0	29.1
Elementary education for adults	40.0	16.6
Financial support to persons who enrolled in graduate studies	28.0	11.6
Training on how to run a company through role play on how to set up and run a company (“virtual companies“)	26.0	10.8
Training in active job-searching (writing a CV, preparing for a job interview, individual job-searching and the like)	42.0	17.5
Encouragement of and training in self-employment	40.0	16.6
Active job-searching clubs	28.0	11.6
<i>Career Fairs</i>	54.0	22.5

It can be concluded that although the unemployed are to some extent better informed about various programmes comprising active employment policies compared to the general survey sample, it still a vast minority. The results also show a relatively small number of respondents who participated in programmes of active employment policies (Table).

Table: Inclusion in programs of active labour market policies and programme ratings

Active employment measures	% of those included in the general survey sample	% of the unemployed who were included in a program	Average rating
Trainee employment program	2.8	2.5	2.9
Cash assistance to volunteer internship	2.8	3.3	2.3
Job training (skills needed for a particular position)	2.8	2.5	3.1
Basic computer training	3.0	5.0	3.2
Specialized computer training	1.8	2.5	2.7
Foreign language courses	3.0	4.1	4.2
Other courses (additional knowledge and skills)	2.6	5.0	3.5
Vocational re-training and additional training (acquiring new qualifications)	3.4	6.6	3.4
Elementary education for adults	2.0	2.5	3.5
Financial support to persons who enrolled in graduate studies	2.6	0.8	4.0
Training on how to run a company through a role play on how to set up and run a company (“virtual companies“)	1.4	0.8	3.5
Training in active job-searching (writing a CV, preparing for a job interview, individual job-searching and the like))	2.6	3.3	4.4
Encouragement of and training in self-employment	1.8	0	3.6
Active job-searching clubs	1.0	0	3.3
<i>Career Fairs</i>	2.0	3.3	3.9

The above data is not fully comparable with the official data on inclusion of unemployed person in active labour market policies. According to data from the National Employment Agency for 2004, 5.8% of unemployed persons were covered by active labour market policies in that year. Cross-checking of this figure with the survey results shows that unemployed refugees are under-represented in these programs compared to the unemployed from the general population.

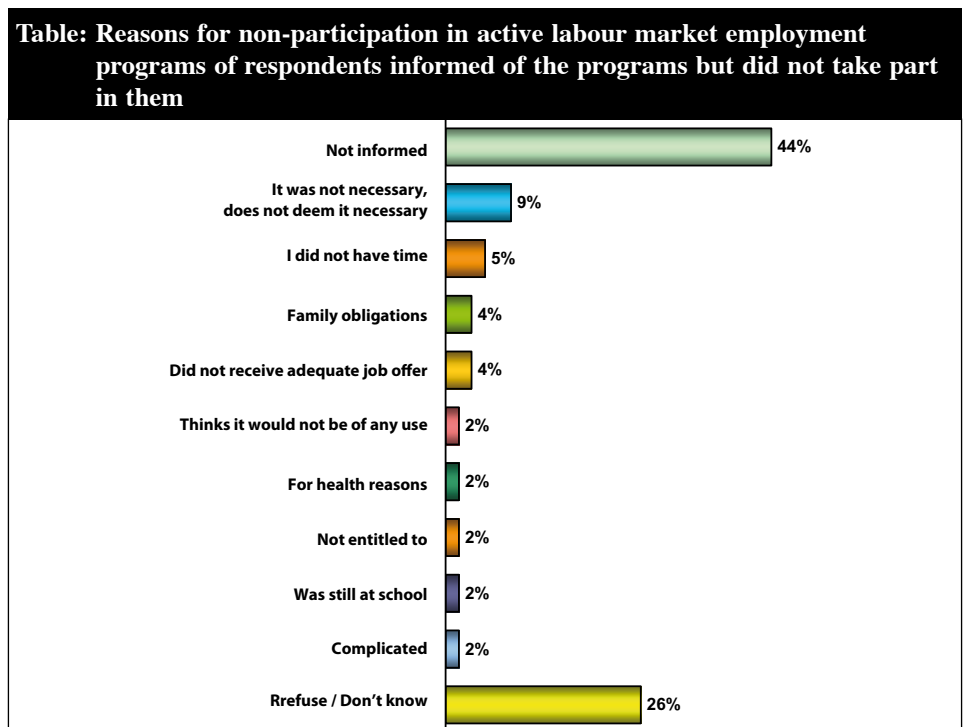
This also indicates that respondents rated various programmes very differently. Best rated were training programmes for active job-seeking, followed by foreign language courses and programs of financial support to persons who enrolled in graduate studies, while the most poorly rated were cash assistance

for volunteer internship programme, specialized computer training and trainee employment programme.

Among respondents who participated in active employment policy measures, unemployed person are still the majority (Table).

Table: Socio-economic status of respondents who participated in active employment policy measures	
Socio-economic status	%
Owner/co-owner of formally registered company	2.8
Self-employed, without formally registered company/business	4.2
Formally employed	15.3
Informally employed	6.9
Farmer	2.8
Unpaid family worker	1.4
Unemployed	56.9
Pupil/student	2.8
Housekeeper	6.9
Total	100

Most respondents, who were aware of NEA active employment policy measures but did not participate in them, cited not being informed about the implementation of these measures as the reason for non-participation (Table).



The survey showed that respondents are informed about programs of active labour market policies mostly through their informal social networks (Table).

Table: Who informed them about NEA active employment measures, in %	
Source of information	% of all the respondents who heard of at least one program (N = 86) ²⁵
NEA officer, counsellor	17.9
Obtained information personally in NEA	9.0
Media (TV, radio, press)	25.6
Advertisements	10.3
Relatives, friends, acquaintances	47.4

The assistance provided by NEA in development of skills required for job-searching and employment received unfavourable ratings by the respondents. Asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 the extent of assistance received from NEA in developing different skills related to employment, the respondents rated all the aspects poorly (Table).

Table: Average rating of NEA assistance in developing employment related skills	
How much did NEA help you to learn:	Average rating
How to get a job?	1.4
Which occupation to chose?	1.3
Whether your abilities and skills match your occupation?	1.4
How to get in touch with employers?	1.4
How to handle a job interview?	1.4
How to gain self-confidence?	1.3
How to overcome stressful situations while searching for a job?	1.3

Respondents on the whole demonstrated little interest in programs of NEA active labour market policy. Particularly troubling is the fact that the sub-sample of unemployed persons was not more interested in these programs than the general sample (Table).

Table: Interest in programs of active labour market measures (1-not interested, 5- very much interested) – average rates		
Programs of active employment measures	Average rates for the general sample	Average rates for the sub-sample of unemployed
Trainee employment program	1.7	1.9
Cash assistance to volunteer internship	1.6	1.8
Job training (skills needed for a particular position)	2.1	2.6
Basic computer training	2.1	2.3

²⁵ Respondents could chose more than one answer

Specialized computer training	2.0	2.0
Foreign language courses	2.3	2.2
Other courses (additional knowledge and skills)	2.2	2.4
Vocational re-training and additional training (acquiring new qualifications)	2.1	2.6
Elementary education for adults	1.4	1.6
Financial support to persons who enrolled in graduate studies	1.5	1.5
Training on how to run a company through a role-play on how to set up and run a company (“virtual companies“)	1.6	1.6
Training in active job-searching (writing a CV, preparing for a job interview, individual job-searching and the like)	1.8	2.0
Encouragement of and training in self-employment	2.0	2.4
Active job-searching clubs	1.9	2.2
Career Fairs	1.0	2.2

More than half of respondents (58.6%) are not at all interested in launching their own business, 20% are somewhat interested and considering that option but still do not dare venture into it, while 21.4% are giving it a serious thought or are already gathering the documentation required for registering a firm/business. In this respect, no significant differences were found between the unemployed and the general sample. The highest share of respondents among those who are thinking of starting their own business would opt for the trade sector (Table).

Table: Type of business respondents intend to start, in %	
Type of business	%
Trade	31.7
Handicraft	18.2
Catering	3.5
Agriculture	7.7
Manufacturing	6.3
Services	9.1
Civil construction	3.5
IT, accounting services	2.1
Other	17.9
Total	100

By an overwhelming majority (94%), respondents cited lack of financial means as the greatest obstacle to starting their own business and only 8% said they were not prepared to take the risk involved or lack the necessary know-how.

Three out of four respondents said they were not at all interested in vocational re-training, 18% expressed mild interest and 7% said they were very interested in it (Table).

Table: Interest in vocational re-training programmes, in %	
Vocational re-training	%
Managerial occupations	4.0
Trade and services	22.5
Manufacturing	5.6
Handicraft	8.8
Professional and artistic occupations	11.2
Office workers, accounting	4.8
Agricultural occupations	2.4
Other	40.3
Total	100

The above data leads to the conclusion that NEA and active labour market programs do not play a significant role in the employment of refugee population. NEA, as the agency that facilitates job-searching and provides support has not been recognized as such by a sufficient number of refugees; their awareness of its programmes is low and very few take part in them. Moreover, apart from certain programmes that were rated highly by the beneficiaries, most of the programmes were rated as “mediocre”, and the assistance provided by NEA in the development of job seeking and job finding skills was generally rated as inadequate. Simultaneously, respondents expressed little interest in participating in programmes of active labour market policies.

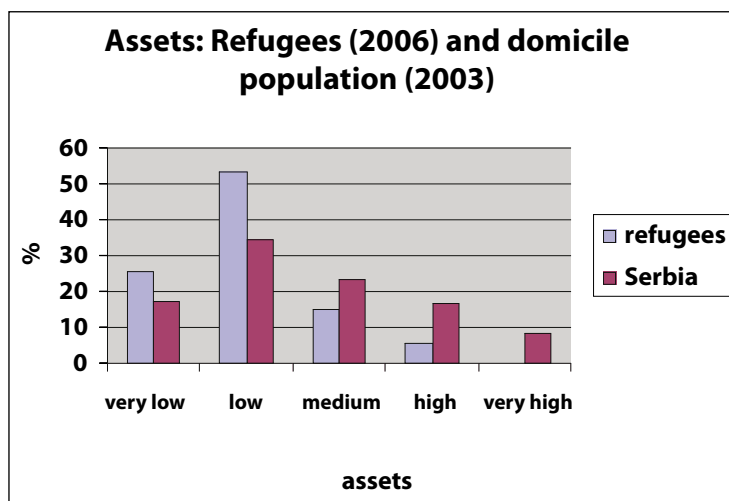
The aspects presented above illustrate the position of refugees in the labour market, their experiences with NEA and perceptions of its role and its active employment programs. A major conclusion that can be drawn is that refugees represent a notably proactive segment of the population, who has learnt during displacement how to adjust to adverse circumstances in the labour market and develop their strategies for economic activities and social integration without receiving any significant institutional support, and relying primarily on their own, individual, informal social networks and skills. A more in-depth understanding of the overall position of refugees can only be gained by also looking at their economic situation.

7. Economic situation of refugee households

This section of the report will present the economic situation of refugee households, which should be taken with reservations because of over-representation in the sample of refugees with secondary and higher education, men, and refugees from urban communities (the sample included working age population aged 15–65). We will focus on three dimensions of affluence, namely assets, income and expenditures. All three dimensions have been constructed on the basis of several indicators, and each of these indicators also may be of interest if examined individually.

a) Assets

The composite index for measurement of assets includes ownership of real property (residential and commercial), motor vehicles (passenger vehicles, trucks, buses, etc.), agricultural machinery, ancillary buildings on farms and household appliances. Firstly it should be emphasized that refugees are in a very difficult situation when it comes to properties they left behind in their countries of origin. Only 20% did not lose their property or have already managed to repossess it. Another 35% state they have nothing to repossess, while over 40% either dare not claim their property, give up before the repossession process is over or are still in the process of repossessing their property. Consequently, the household assets distribution index shows that refugees are in a very adverse position, with nearly 80% having low or very low score on household assets, and none of them having very high score.



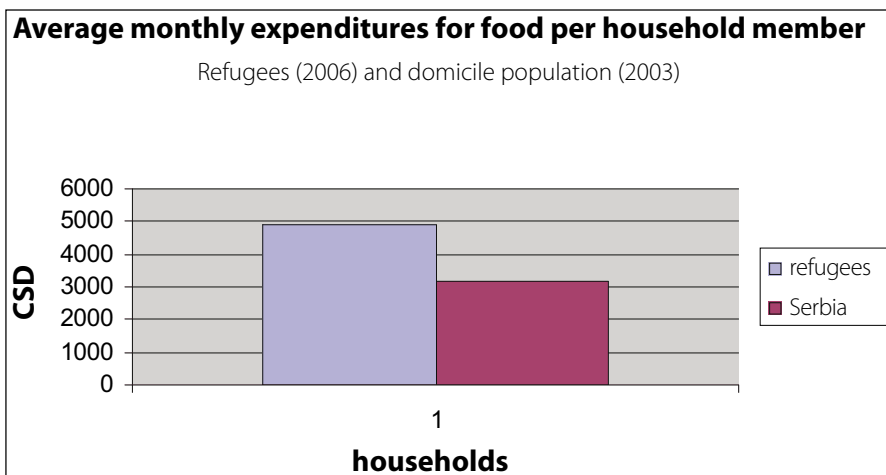
Certainly the worst situation was found with respect to ownership of residential and other real property. While 88% of households owned a housing unit

before displacement, their number dropped to current 54%. Conversely, percentage of those who live in rented housing rose from 4 to 26. Percentage of refugees who use housing units that belong to their relatives or friends also rose from 1 to 7. Not all refugee households were affected equally by war: while some experienced a deterioration of their housing status, others improved their housing situation after the war. This stems from the fact that 55% of pre-war home owners and 50% of persons who lived in rented housing units before the war today possess their own home. On the other hand, 27% of pre-war occupants of rented housing units as well as 25% of pre-war home owners currently live in rented homes.

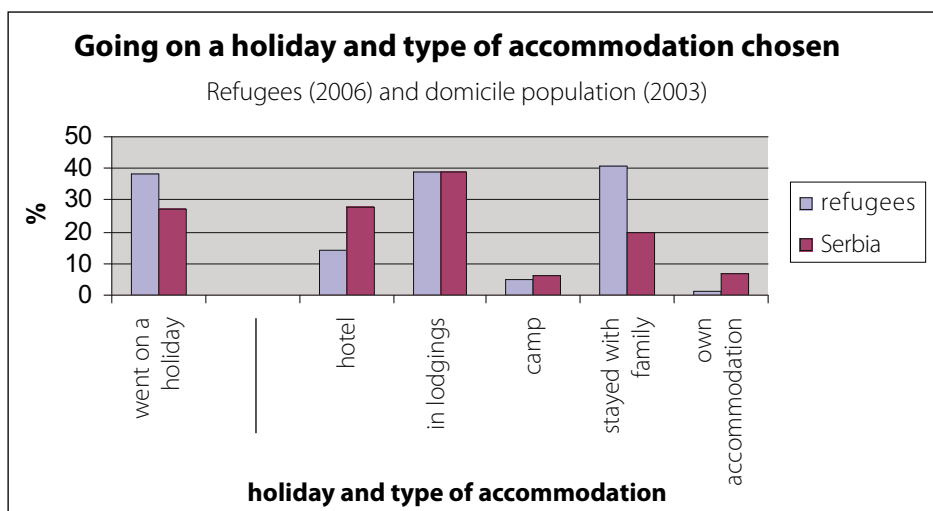
Table: Ownership of home/commercial property in the country of origin		
Do you still own residential or commercial property (business) in the country of origin?		
	# of respondents	%
No, nor we owned one before displacement	71	14.2
No, we lost our tenancy right	17	3.4
No, our property was destroyed during war and has not been reconstructed	76	15.2
No, we have not managed to repossess our property yet	48	9.6
No, we sold our property	125	25.0
Yes, but we cannot use it because it was not reconstructed	51	10.2
Yes, but we cannot use it because it is illegally occupied	28	5.6
Yes, and we can dispose of it at our own will	71	14.2
Other	4	0.8
Refuse to answer, do not know	9	1.8
Total	500	100.0

b) *Expenditures*

The composite index for measuring expenditures contains variables that measure monthly expenditures for food and clothing, indication of use and quality of used personal and home hygiene items, as well as the number of persons who went on a holiday and quality of holiday accommodation. Refugee households reported spending an average of 4,900 CSD per household member on food, which is over 50% higher than the Serbian average of 3,200 CSD in 2003, with corrections due to inflation.



In 38% of refugee households, at least one member went on a holiday, mainly choosing cheaper accommodation (staying with friends, in rented rooms or apartments, or camps). Only 14% of those who went on a holiday stayed in hotels.



On the aggregate, refugee households had a higher score on the expenditure index than Serbian households. The main reason for this is the fact that refugee households are far more concentrated in towns, which is why they have to spend more money on food.

c) Income

The composite income index also classifies refugee household into five categories, in this case by the amount of total annual household income. As might have been expected, reluctance was higher to disclose information about income than some other data from the questionnaire. It is difficult to estimate the margin of error with respect to income data, because 22.6 % of surveyed households stated they made no income from wages, and only 3% said they had no income at all.

Income earned by working was the most frequently stated type of income in refugee households: 77% of households said they made this kind of income. The lowest annual income cited was 150 euro, and the highest 36,250 euro, the median value being 4,503 euro per year. The largest concentration was found in the group ranging from 1,200 to 6,000 euro (75% of those who earned income from wages), which equals to between 100 and 500 euro per month.

Income from selling produce was found in a mere 4% of households and it is very low, on average only 1,414 a year.

Old age pension benefits or disability benefits were stated as a source of income in 17% of households. Annual pension benefits range from 20 to 6,250 euro, the average being 1,828 euro, which is approximately 150 euro (12,000 CSD) per month.

Other social security benefits (welfare, scholarships, child allowance) were cited by 11% of households, and they range from 0.6 to 1,500 euro per year, the average value being 454 euro.

Only 3.5% of households receive remittances from abroad. Foreign pensions are somewhat higher than domestic ones. They range from 201 (minimum) to 7,500 euro (maximum) a year, with average being 1.928 euro.

5% of households receive remittances from relatives or friends living abroad, and only 3% from relatives and friends from Serbia. Average annual remittances from abroad amount to 1,768 and from Serbia to 1,132 euro.

Income from leasing residential or commercial space was stated by only 2 households, and proceeds from sale of property that were not immediately invested by only one household. Not a single household earned income from interests or dividends.

Lastly, 17% of households stated they made income from extra jobs, regular or occasional alike. Annual income earned this way ranges from 50 to 12,000 euro, the average value being 1,780 euro, with a high variance. The largest concentration was in the categories earning up to 600 euro (40%) and those earning between 1,000 and 3,000 euro (30%). The latter figure shows a clear segmentation in the informal labour market.

d) Overall economic situation

The last three indicators aggregated make up the wealth index. This index shows that 10% of refugee household may be considered poor because they had a very low score on the wealth index. Additional 49% had a low wealth score, which puts them at risk of poverty, while 27% had a medium, 11% high, and 3% very high score.

Recommendations

The current small number of refugees registered with the National Employment Agency could be increased if refugees were better informed about the possibility to register and the advantages of being registered, about rights deriving from the unemployment status as well as about availability of various NEA programs to formally registered job seekers.

Information about self-employment programmes, implemented by governmental or other organizations, should be disseminated to the widest possible audience, and people should be encouraged to take part in these programmes. It is also necessary to create a mechanism for monitoring the sustainability of such programmes.

Implementation of income-generation projects should be preceded by individual training for the intended loan or grant beneficiaries and consultative support throughout the realization of grants.

Programmes for informing people about all services provided by the National Employment Agency should be extended so as to cover people who intend to engage in entrepreneurship but also the most vulnerable people, who for various reasons remain inactive in the labour market.

Conclusions

In a nutshell, the survey shows that working-age refugees (15-65), with higher education level (mostly secondary, college and university education) in urban areas demonstrate a notably proactive attitude in the effort to improve their socio-economic status through either formal or informal employment. This refugee sample had a higher share of entrepreneurs and self-employed than the general Serbian population. They are more willing to engage and do engage in informal types of (self) employment, as well as perform additional or occasional jobs, mostly informal ones, on a regular basis. Despite their being active, unemployment rate among refugees is high, significantly higher than the national unemployment rate. In addition, they receive no institutional support, but develop their own strategies for job-searching and securing means of subsistence through informal social channels and direct contact with potential employers.

The above findings indicate that by developing its own informal and formal integration strategies this group has become a significant development resource. With a more consistent, efficient and comprehensive integration efforts by way of establishing adequate mechanisms of institutional integration (particularly through active labour market policies) not only would the overall position of this population be improved, but also would enable the Serbian society to effectively include development potentials of refugees in the processes of sustainable development.

These general conclusions are based on a series of findings in the research conducted on a sample of working-age population that have until recently enjoyed or still enjoy refugee status, with fairly high education level and living mostly in urban areas.

The current status of refugees in the Serbian labour market is characterized by the following elements:

- Strategic documents governing the reform of employment policy and the labour market include the principle of affirmative action in employment of members of particularly vulnerable groups.

- Refugee population is notably proactive and their activity rate is higher than that found in the general Serbian population.
- Despite their high activity, unemployment rate among refugees is considerably higher than the national unemployment rate.
- The share of entrepreneurs and self-employed among active refugee population is higher than among the general population. Pressured by unfavourable labour market conditions and difficult economic restructuring processes, and in the absence of other options for integration in the labour market, refugees were compelled to look for solutions in self-employment and entrepreneurship.
- In the absence of comparable data, it is not possible to determine with accuracy the share of informal work among refugees and the Serbian population as a whole. However, research results indicate that 15% of interviewed refugees engage in informal work or self-employment on a regular basis, with additional 28% who regularly or occasionally perform additional jobs that are in most cases (90%) informal.
- Unemployment in the refugee population is characterized by the following trends: very high share of long-term unemployment, high share of unemployed persons searching for the first job, transformation processes less affecting the refugee work force, presumably because it is less integrated in the system and therefore less exposed to transformation and liquidation processes of the last few years.
- Differences between refugee groups with respect to their country of origin (Croatia or Bosnia and Herzegovina) are not significant. Greater differences are found between those who are Serbian citizens and those who are not. Among refugees without Serbian citizenship, there is a higher share of informally self-employed and informally employed, while the group of refugees who had obtained Serbian citizenship has a higher proportion of those formally employed.
- Significant differences between employed refugees and domicile population were found in distribution by branches of economy, which are reflected in a significantly lower share of refugees in agriculture, industry, mining and energy, government bodies, education, social protection and health care, and at the same time significantly higher shares of refugees in trade sector, catering, civil construction, handicrafts and personal services.
- Survey results also indicate that a significant number of respondents perform jobs below their qualifications.
- Refugee women are in less favourable position than their male counterparts. Refugee women have higher activity rates than women in the overall population, but their unfavourable position is reflected in higher unemployment rate, i.e. greater difficulties they face in finding a job.

- In the period after the collapse of socialism and the disintegration of former Yugoslavia, refugees were much more affected than other population by changes in their social status. Even if the observed time is narrowed down to the period 2002-2006, the pace of changes in socio-economic status remains rapid. In the observed period, 56% of respondents have experienced at least one change in their social status. The high share of people who moved from being employed to being unemployed is also an indicator of their volatile position in the labour market. Social mobility to a higher degree occurs as switching from employment (both formal and informal) to unemployment, than moving between formal and informal (self) employment. Lastly, in the observed period, apart from respondents who are currently entrepreneurs or self-employed, 3% of respondents have attempted (some of them more than once) to launch their own business.
- Refugees generally show high degree of willingness to engage in flexible employment arrangements. Although less willing to move geographically for the sake of work, work extra hours, or take just any paid job, refugees demonstrated more willingness to engage in other types of flexible employment arrangements. Compared to the overall population, refugees are much more willing to embark on entrepreneurship, self-employment, informal economic activities, or take part-time jobs. This greater flexibility in attitude was to be expected in the situation where refugees are not fully integrated in their host society, with vulnerable socio-economic status and hence perhaps the necessity to adjust to the new circumstances in the labour market.
- Employment is typically found through informal social channels or through direct contact with potential employers, and to a lesser extent through NEA.
- Their proactive attitude is manifested in their efforts to build social capital and informal social networks, which they were forced to do because of the inefficiency of institutional mechanisms for social integration.
- The results reveal persisting closeness of social networks among parts of refugee population, but at the same time, significant opening of social networks and creation of bonds with local population was reported.

Analysis of data relating to respondents' experiences with NEA and their perception of active labour market policies have led to the following conclusions:

- Most refugees do not perceive NEA as the key agency providing support in employment matters.
- Significant number of respondents remains unregistered and thus do not receive services provided by this agency, primarily because they do not think that registering would be of much use for them. In addition, a pro-

portion of those who did register with NEA were motivated by formal reasons, mainly to get medical insurance.

- Refugees are poorly informed about active labour market policies, mostly through their informal social networks.
- An extremely small number of respondents were included in active labour market policies. Participation rate of unemployed refugees in these programmes is lower than among the general unemployed population.
- Some programs (IT training, foreign language courses, and talent programs) were rated as “good”, while most other programmes were rated as “mediocre” or “poor”.
- Very negative ratings were given to NEA assistance in developing job-searching skills.
- Respondents generally demonstrate little interest in participation in active labour market policies.
- It is important to note that over 40% of respondents are moderately or very interested in starting their own business, but paradoxically enough, they show the same low level of interest in NEA self-employment programmes.

By way of comparison with the Serbian general population sample (corrected) which represents their immediate living environment, it can be observed that the economic situation of refugee households is generally worse and that they are at greater risk of poverty. This means that at the time of arrival in Serbia, refugee households took one strategic advantage and most of them chose to live in communities where they could more easily resume their economic activities (Vojvodina, Belgrade, urban centres). However, in those communities refugee households fare worse than domicile households, not only because they were deprived of their property due to war and displacement, but also because their income is generally lower. The main advantage of those households and their most important resource is their notably high labour market activity, which should be supported by adequate employment policies.

Recommendations

- An accurate data base on unemployed refugees should be developed, first and foremost at the National Employment Agency. This would make possible affirmative action in employment of these people.
- Working-age refugees should be segmented and programmes intended for refugees should be refined so as to target specific categories of refugees, in particular those most vulnerable such as unemployed refugee women.
- A regional approach should be enhanced in order to, as much as possible, bring employment needs in tune with market demands. Establishment of local employment councils should be made a mandatory, systemic solution. Local employment councils may be the best source of information regarding activities that ought to be taken for employment of groups that have been identified as vulnerable.
- NEA should establish communication with local refugee commissioners in order to share information with them and plan joint measures. It is the municipal refugee commissioners who are best acquainted with refugees' needs in a particular community. It is necessary to make use of resources and capacities of other employment agencies, including youth and student employment agencies.
- In regulating the area of labour market, priority should be given to some statutory arrangements, such as those governing micro-loans. Co-signer requirement and mortgage on real property are some of the key obstacles impeding higher participation of vulnerable groups in government self-employment programmes.
- Implementation of income-generation projects should be preceded by individual training for the intended loan or grant beneficiaries and consultative support throughout the realization of grants or loans.
- The current small number of refugees registered with the National Employment Agency could be increased if refugees were better informed about the possibility to register and the advantages of being registered, about rights deriving from the unemployment status as well as about the

types and availability of various NEA programs to formally registered job seekers. Information about self-employment programmes, implemented by governmental or other organizations, should be disseminated to the widest possible audience, and refugees should be encouraged to take part in these programmes. It is also necessary to create a mechanism for monitoring the sustainability of such programmes.

- Besides having a social aspect, self-employment should also create new jobs. To this effect, it is necessary to develop a mechanism for monitoring the sustainability of self-employment programmes.
- Programmes for informing people about all services provided by the National Employment Agency and other organizations should be extended so as to cover aspiring entrepreneurs but also the most vulnerable people, who for various reasons remain inactive. Public discussions in locations with high concentrations of refugees may be one of the solutions.
- All institutions should work toward boosting motivation of refugees and other vulnerable groups. Refugee associations and NGOs may play an important role in this process by serving as intermediary between refugees and NEA programmes.
- Computer skills trainings and English language courses should be made accessible to the widest possible range of people, in order to provide them with these indispensable skills.