

**EUROPEAN THEMATIC GROUP ON ASYLUM SEEKERS**

**SKILLS AUDITS – THE BASICS:  
WORKING WITH ASYLUM SEEKERS**

**Asylum Seekers in the EU: the Challenges of Integration**

**(Dublin, 31 March – 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2004)**

For information: this document has been prepared as a working document and does not necessarily reflect the opinion or formal position of the European Commission.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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When an asylum seeker arrives in the EU, a key step towards their socio-vocational integration in the host country is to recognise their individual skills and qualifications. This process, however, is not always a straightforward task, as many asylum seekers have non-formal skills or are unable to provide certificates or proof of former study or employment. In the light of this, several of the Development Partnerships (DPs) in the asylum seekers theme of EQUAL<sup>1</sup> have developed, tested and applied new methods and tools to recognise, value and assess the skills and abilities of asylum seekers.

Skills audits are normally part of an integrated process. They are valuable for asylum seekers not only because they facilitate integration and access to training or employment in the host society, but also because they empower individuals regardless of their future or asylum application outcomes. The skills audits usually result in asylum seekers being able to access relevant education, training, volunteering, employment or work shadowing opportunities. This is of great benefit to the host society by contributing to the economy whilst also reducing the 'costs' of inactivity and alienation of the asylum seekers.

The European Thematic Group on Asylum Seekers (ETG5) formed a Working Group on Skills Audits in October 2003 to take stock of the good practices from the DPs. Five DPs from Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, and United Kingdom were involved. This document provides an outline of the Skills Audits process for asylum seekers, building on aspects of the good practices and experiences of these DPs.

Users of the document are encouraged to contact those DPs who have contributed in order that to tailor their approaches to their particular circumstances. Contact details are provided in section 7.

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<sup>1</sup> EQUAL is a European Community initiative which tests and promotes new means of combating all forms of discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work, through transnational co-operation. EQUAL also includes action to help the social and vocational integration of asylum seekers. Around 5% of EQUAL resources are spent on activities to further the socio-vocational integration of asylum seekers. In 2003 there were 38 DPs in the Asylum Seekers Theme, at least one in each EU Member State.

## 2. THE SKILLS AUDITS PROCESS

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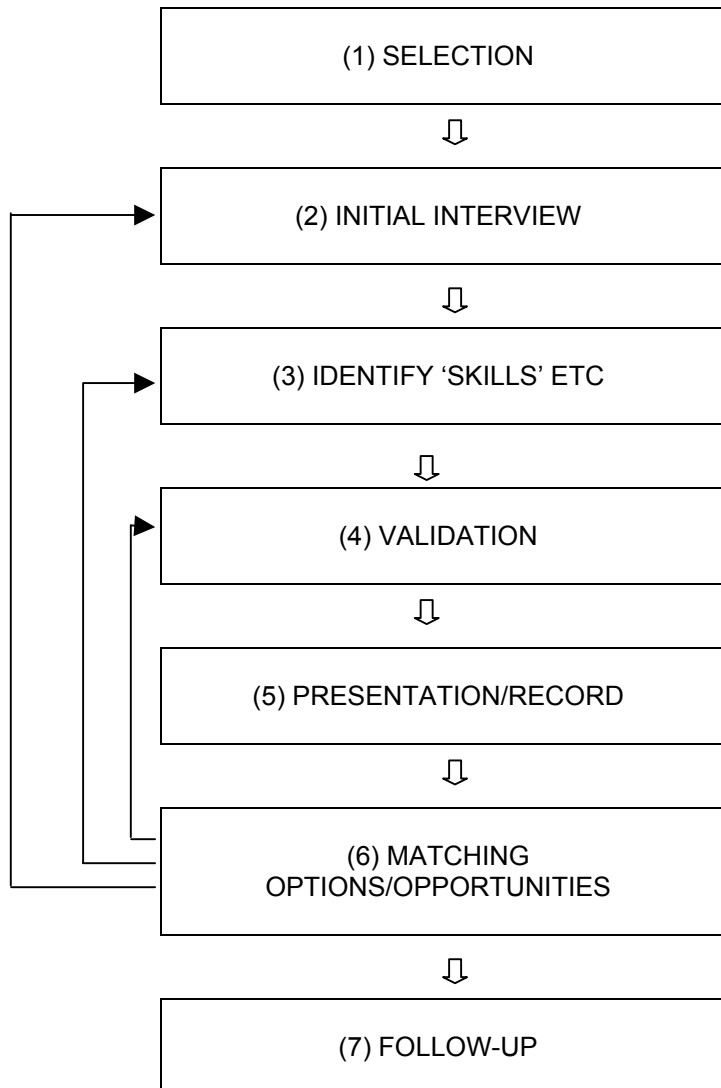
The primary objective of a skills audit is to help an asylum seeker become aware of and engage with future work-related options and opportunities in the host country. Due to the lack of demonstrable information about educational and training backgrounds of asylum seekers, they often participate in educational or training programmes that do not make use of their real skills and ambitions. Some asylum seekers are also prone to overestimate their own potential and opportunity in their host country because they are not aware of the skills and/or qualifications that are required for particular study programmes or professions. Through the skills audit process asylum seekers can gain a more detailed insight into their potential as well as the opportunity to acquire new skills and to develop new ideas and objectives. The administering of a skills audit can also contribute to an individual's self-esteem, build their confidence and make them better informed about potential opportunities.

The skills audit is a process rather than a one-step exercise. Even though a skills audit can be set up in a number of different ways, some common steps can be identified in all skills audit processes.

Firstly, there is a **selection** of participants (step 1), and information is conveyed to the asylum seeker about the skills audit. Once the participants have been identified, there is an **initial interview** (step 2) when the programme is explained in detail and the asylum seekers motivations to participate are investigated. The next stage is to **identify** (step 3) 'soft' and 'hard' **skills** / qualifications / competencies / work experiences / language comprehension by using a variety of tools e.g. questionnaires, recording, interviews, digital portfolio and integrated skills audits. The requirements for obtaining a certain degree or professional qualification varies between countries and so **validation** (step 4) of the certificates is usually necessary. How and when this validation takes place is dependent upon the national system. The **results** of the skills audit are usually **presented** (step 5) in a CV or portfolio which is given to the participants. Following the skills audit, an individualised programme/action plan is agreed upon that outlines future **options/opportunities** (step 6). The evaluation of the cost effectiveness of undertaking skills audits is made in the **follow-up** (step 7).

These steps and their interrelationships are presented in the following figure and elaborated further in the text below, drawing on the experiences of the DPs in the ETG5 Skills Audits Working Group.

## *The Skills Audits Process*



## 2.1. SELECTION

*Selection involves exchanging information, raising awareness and assessing motivation. The sooner an asylum seeker participates in a skills audit following their arrival in the host country the better.*

The first step in the skills audits process is the 'selection' of participants. Often the sole requirement and criteria for selection is the individual motivation of an asylum seeker to participate. Selection can also be based on other minimum requirements such as age (over 18) and the ability to read and write in a Latin language. It is crucial, at this stage, to clearly communicate to the asylum seeker, the benefits of undergoing a skills audit in helping them to recognise their skills and enhance their future work opportunities.

The ways in which information about the skills audit is conveyed to asylum seekers varies according to the reception systems in the different EU Member States and the operation and set up of the skills audit organisation. In some cases the skills audit is integrated in a broader educational programme, which means that all asylum seekers participating in that programme also undergo a skills audit. In most cases, the referral system is used to communicate information about the skills audit process whilst some asylum seekers are advised about options to participate whilst still residing in asylum seeker centres. In Sweden, asylum seekers can also be referred by their counsellor at the Swedish Migration board and in the UK asylum seekers are referred by housing associations, and community-based organisations and through informal networks.

As part of the skills audit process, contact may be made with educational institutions and organisations or employers that might offer suitable opportunities to asylum seekers once they have completed the skills audit. These contacts can be made in different ways, for example, by providing employers with leaflets to inform them about the skills audit programme and the benefits of taking asylum seekers on board. Even though legal barriers sometimes hinder asylum seekers from working, there are other options such as 'work-shadowing', which also engage asylum seekers in the economic sphere and help to prevent inactivity.

Inactivity can have a very high cost both to the individual and society. Long waiting periods and uncertain outcomes are very difficult and asylum seekers can become isolated, depressed and de-motivated and their skills can also get outdated. It is therefore very important to minimise this period of inactivity by carrying out a skills audit as soon as is possible following arrival. There have been, nevertheless, positive results for individuals who have resided in the host country for several years before undergoing a skills audit.

## 2.2. INITIAL INTERVIEW

*Face-to-face interviews are used to assess motivation and establish trust.*

After initial contact has been made, there is usually a first interview with the asylum seeker, sometimes referred to as the 'intake interview'. The asylum seeker meets with the assessor or caseworker, and the assessment programme is explained in greater detail. The intake interview is the first opportunity to understand the asylum seeker's ambitions, experiences and possible professional or vocational direction. The meeting also discusses their thoughts about their future in the host country and their motivation to participate in the skills audit process. The interview usually lasts for half an hour but can take up to several hours and in some cases several meetings will be required. The interviews take place either in the offices of the responsible organisation or at the reception centre where the asylum seeker is accommodated.

During the interview the case worker/personal coach/assessor guides the asylum seeker through the entire skills audit process and encourages him/her to be actively involved. It is important that a relationship of trust is established so that the participant feels at ease and understands the purpose of the assessment.

### 2.3. THE IDENTIFICATION OF “SKILLS”

*A variety of tools e.g. questionnaires, recording, interviews, digital portfolio, integrated skills audits can be used to identify ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ skills, qualifications, competencies, work experiences and language comprehension.*

There are parallels between the skills audit process for asylum seekers and the means by which other participants in education and training are assessed. Asylum seekers, in common with other participants, have a distance from the labour market and certain ‘hidden’ skills and ambitions that cannot be easily matched to the labour market. The skills audits for asylum seekers, nevertheless, needs to recognise that they face additional and specific barriers. Some skills may not be clearly relevant to the host country labour market and most asylum seekers do not have an adequate grasp of the host country language.

The DPs involved in the Skills Audits Working Group have adopted a number of different approaches to undertaking a skills audit. The methods, which are sometimes used in combination, include: questionnaires, recording tools, interviews and integrated skills audits. Short descriptions of the different approaches are as follows:

#### *Questionnaires/recording tools*

The skills audit questionnaires that have been developed specifically for asylum seekers are very detailed and intended to help the asylum seekers to talk not only about school, education, studies and jobs, but also about their family, the social network, hobbies, interests, and activities in the community. This is important especially for female asylum seekers who often have non-formal skills and skills, such as childcare or domestic work. These skills might also be useful when applying for jobs and can be drawn upon when looking at possible education opportunities in the host country.

The questionnaires are sometimes used as a recording tool rather than an interview schedule, and are often completed by the asylum seeker together with a caseworker.

Because asylum seekers come from many backgrounds and can have a low to negligible comprehension of the host country language, language independence is an important feature of the tools used when working with asylum seekers. The skills audit questionnaires created for those with a low language comprehension often make use of pictures to illustrate how the asylum seeker feels about a certain subject or to describe their experiences within a specific area. DP Perspectief has developed a digital portfolio that is filled in on a computer. The digital portfolio includes a language-independent assessment scheme in which smilies (symbols with happy, indifferent or unhappy faces) are used. An example from the digital portfolio follows:





## Project "Perspectief"

**Portfolio Supplements**

Photo Participant

### **Supplement 1: Skills**

Strong or not so strong proficiencies of the participant:

	😊	😐	☹️
Manual labour	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working outside	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking care of animals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking care of plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Creativity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Technically inclined	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Working with the elderly	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Help and look after people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dealing with conflicts, problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conversable speaker	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Debate, discuss	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Writing, a story or report	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Arithmetic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taking initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Keep appointments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ask for clarification if something is not understood	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Be a good loser	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Suppress anger and stay calm	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### *Interviews*

In-depth interviews have many benefits. When undertaken in an open and trusting environment, they can provide a breadth of information from which to draw up accurate skills audits. Depending upon the organisation's resources, a series of interviews ranging between thirty minutes to several hours long, are undertaken with the asylum seeker. Working with asylum seekers this way is, clearly, very labour intensive and requires staff with considerable knowledge and sensitivity.

One way of using interviews is to combine them with the completion of a skills audits questionnaire.

At the outset of the skills audit process, asylum seekers may have a negative opinion of the jobs and activities that they were involved in their country of origin. They might not also see any possibility of continuing the careers which they began in their home country. Through the interviews however, the caseworker is able to gradually build up a very detailed profile of the asylum seeker whilst also encouraging them and helping to explain the terminology involved.

### *Integrated skills audits*

The skills audit can also form part of an integrated programme that is offered to asylum seekers. Such programmes usually provide a combination of language courses, educational/vocational training, introduction to the labour market and on-the-job training. The skills audit usually forms the first phase of the programme, as it is intended to help participants to identify the skills that they already have and the education or professional route that they would like to pursue.

The Danish DP Want2Work has developed a methodology that incorporates skills auditing through continual feedback, reflection and self-evaluation that is carried out during vocational training and courses. By carrying out different 'awareness-raising' exercises through the teaching, asylum seekers are able to recognise the job-related skills that they possess, including the less obvious skills, which have been gained from different professional backgrounds. The exercises include 'SWOT-analyses' (recognising Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), 'Buzz-exercises' (groups consisting of two or more people reflecting on a given subject) and 'reframing-exercises'. The asylum seekers are also encouraged to maintain a personal logbook and to participate in a CV workshop, in which the participants go through exercises that help them reflect on and describe in detail their personal skills, working skills and responsibilities in order to write a thorough CV for him/herself. The combination of all these elements contributes to empowerment of each asylum seeker during the course.

## 2.4. VALIDATION

*The skills audit process, wherever possible, should demonstrate that the qualifications and experience recorded are accurate. Detailed consideration also needs to be given to extent to which qualifications and skills from the country of origin are comparable and recognised by professional bodies in the host country.*

Many asylum seekers have non-formal skills or cannot provide certificates from their studies or previous employment. Even when they have their certificates and diplomas, these may be inadequate, as the requirements for obtaining a certain degree or professional qualification varies between countries. This can be illustrated with the Danish example where 90% of foreign doctors get authorisation to work as doctors, whereas only 5% of nurses obtain permission. Engineering qualifications equally, are difficult to assess, since the term is wide ranging and can include ‘technicians’ as well as those professionals with highly specialised university degrees. Working cultures can also vary so much that formal skills, although theoretically transferable, may be hard to use. For instance engineers from Iraq are not used to working in project teams and “flat” organisations, which makes them less qualified to work in Danish engineering companies. These differences in skills and experience also need to be assessed.

How, when and by what body the actual validation is undertaken depends on the national system. This can be shown through examples from those countries with DPs in the Working Group. In Sweden, the Swedish Social Board is responsible for the recognition of skills and qualifications. The Board is allowed to handle requests from asylum seekers but in reality the requests have such a long processing time that in the end the Board only deals with the documents once their application has been approved. Undertaking the skills audit whilst an individual is still seeking asylum is, nevertheless, beneficial, since the process of official recognition once the application has been approved is speeded up this way. Usually it takes some time to locate and receive all the certificates, and the earlier this process is started, the better. In the Netherlands, validation is only possible after the asylum seeker’s application has been approved.

In Denmark the formal validation of all higher education from BA and higher degrees is undertaken by the CVUU (Centre for assessing Foreign Educations). The assessments of the CVUU were previously intended to be a guide, but are now formally valid. Similarly health education qualifications are assessed by the Danish Health Authorities. The main problem encountered is a lack of official validation for middle-range skills, for example manual skills such as carpentry. A very effective and well-functioning skills audit for this professional group is undertaken by the technical schools, but only for Danish residents - asylum seekers do not have access to this. Some form of formal cooperation between this system and the organisation responsible for skills auditing of asylum seekers would indeed be very beneficial for both.

In the United Kingdom, NARIC is used to validate and give equivalence to higher education qualifications if the candidates have copies of their certificates with them. Professional qualifications are assessed by the appropriate professional body. A nurse, for instance,



from outside of the UK would need to present a range of materials to the Nursing and Midwifery Council in order for these to be assessed.

The validation process can become complicated at times. This can be illustrated by the case of one of the individuals involved in the skills audits in the Netherlands, who had finished “high school” in Sierra Leone. The asylum seeker did not have any certificates, and since the educational infrastructure in Sierra Leone had been destroyed, it was impossible to track duplicate documents. The solution was to make an estimation of this individual’s level of education through an overview and comparison of educational systems, which showed that the high school education system in Sierra Leone could be compared with the Dutch system.

## 2.5. PRESENTATION

*Skills audit outcomes includes a written portfolio that can be presented to employers and education and training organisations. The portfolio is also of value to the asylum seeker who can own an up-to-date record that sets out their skills and potential contribution to the labour market. It is usually more detailed than a normal CV since it seeks to explain the background to any skills gained in the asylum seeker's country of origin and sets these within the context of the host country.*

The skills audit usually leads to the production of a CV or a portfolio that is owned and developed by the asylum seeker. In many countries of origin, CVs are not as commonly used as they are in the EU, which means that the benefits and purpose of creating a CV, including its contents, must be explained in detail to the asylum seeker.

The individual portfolio is more comprehensive than a normal CV and could for instance include a CV and documents, school reports, credits, references, letters, photographs of crafts work, and job-training contracts in the host country. The portfolio can be used in a job interview and helps to demonstrate the skills possessed by the asylum seeker. This is particularly important in those cases where the asylum seeker does not have formal qualifications from former study or work experience, but can instead demonstrate relevant skills gained through other practices and interests, for example, community work.

Social skills can be difficult to quantify, which is an issue that has been addressed by DP Fluequal in their work with 'socio-grammes' that accompany individual portfolios. A socio-gramme describes the participant's social networks, both in the country of origin and in the host country. The DP has developed a programme that adds value to their portfolios by taking account of intercultural skills through discussions with the asylum seekers about their host country experiences. To give an example, many asylum seekers lived in large families in their country of origin, which has given them experience of childcare and care of the elderly; these are transferable skills, which would be valued in certain areas of employment. Skills and attributes acquired through living in a large family might also include: team working; empathy; willingness to compromise; and patience. The socio-gramme provides snap shots of people's life experiences and translates these into marketable employment skills.

'Traditional' skills are also being assessed within the DPs. For example, ASSET UK undertook a skills audit with a farmer from the Congo who had no qualifications. His skills were assessed and highly rated by the local agricultural college.

Examples of CVs and certificates are included in section 4, 'Case studies'.

## 2.6. MATCHING OPTIONS / OPPORTUNITIES

*A key step in the Skills Audit process is to match the skills and potential of the asylum seeker with realistic opportunities within the labour market and education system. Individual action plans should then be developed to set out the steps that must be taken to achieve a 'match' between these skills and opportunities.*

Typically following the skills audit, an individualised programme/action plan is agreed upon. This could consist of an education plan, work-shadowing, volunteering or some other work-related plan depending on what the national system allows and what opportunities the skills audit has identified as being most appropriate. In some cases modules including education and training courses are offered to the asylum seekers. DP Perspectief, for example, follows their skills audits with a vocational training programme that is suited to the participant and into which on-the-job training is incorporated. This has many beneficial outcomes since the asylum seeker can get work experience whilst waiting for the outcome of their asylum application. In those cases where they receive a residence permit, their chances on the labour market have already improved substantially.

The DP Want2Work has developed a skills audit database as a follow-up tool to the asylum seekers' skills audits. This database is used for matching possible employers with the asylum seekers in order to find work or internship places. A leaflet has also been created in order to involve employers, mostly from the voluntary and public sectors.

Some specific examples where asylum seekers have been successfully matched include:

- An asylum seeker who secured a work contract within the institution where he was advised to study.
- A doctor, qualified in his home country, who received on-the-job training at a hospital in his host country. This increased his knowledge and awareness of issues relating to medicine and working practices within the host country, and increased his self-confidence and social contacts as well as giving him some relief from the anxiety of the asylum process. The Skills Audit was a key catalyst in initiating this process at an early stage. Through this work experience, the doctor was able to tailor his skills to the host country working practices, and in turn, the host country was able to gain the services of an additional qualified doctor.
- A woman previously working as a Russian literature teacher obtained a job as a linguist-secretary in a company that deals with Russian companies.
- A vet who found a job in a chicken-farm
- A manager of a shoe-company who found a job as an orthopaedist shoemaker after the skills audit demonstrated his ability to make shoes by hand.

Additional examples of how the skills audit results can contribute to the integration of asylum seekers into the labour market are set out in the case studies in section 4.

## 2.7. FOLLOW-UP

*It is essential to systematically follow up any results from the skills audit process. Direct and indirect benefits should be monitored in addition to any costs and drawbacks. Case studies can be used to demonstrate the diversity of potential follow-up processes and findings should be used to improve these processes.*

### **3. AN ASSESSMENT OF COSTS AND BENEFITS**

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The skills audits undertaken so far have had many positive outcomes. Those asylum seekers who have undergone a skills audit and then been granted permission to stay are usually more active and are more prepared to integrate into the labour market than those who have not undergone a skills audit. Undertaking the skills audit makes it possible for the asylum seeker to focus on the future whilst they are waiting for the outcome of the asylum application, and also to begin appropriate professional training within a relative short time period. This means that the skills audit process helps to both reduce the dangers of inactivity and supports the integration process. The host country benefits from the asylum seeker becoming self-supporting in a legal way faster than might otherwise have been the case.

#### **Direct costs**

The costs of undertaking a skills audit varies according to the methods used and the circumstances in which it is undertaken. Innovative approaches to the execution of skills audit are referred to throughout this document through the different experiences of the Development Partnerships. The resources for this development work have sometimes been shared with other organisations and institutes and represent a 'one off' cost provided that the principles and practices continue to be applied. The experiences of four DPs, given below, provide illustrations of the range of direct costs.

#### Fluequal DE

The skills audit instrument being implemented by Fluequal was developed in conjunction with the German Youth Institute (DJI) in the context of a national programme of the Bavarian Welfare Ministry and ADAPT (Grundtvig-Program). Fluequal adapted it for asylum seekers and tested it.

To apply the skills audit process, 4–6 advice sessions are normally required involving 10–16 contact hours. Related staff costs of around 200 euro are typical. The sequence of sessions is varied and adapted to individual migration biographies. The material costs for the skills audits instrument (paper version) is currently averages at 17 euro per/ participant. The DP also plans to develop a digital computer version that should reduce costs.

In practice the skills audit instrument is applied in individual casework or/and group work. With individual casework the costs are higher.

By March 2004, Fluequal had carried out 50 skills audits, 35 of these through individual casework and 15 in group work.

Additional related costs include:

*Training of trainers* - Delivering a skills audit requires that the vocational trainer: has the ability to motivate and build trust; has experiences of working with immigrants; and has detailed knowledge of the national education and vocational training system pathways. Fluequal offers training for trainers (for social workers, for example) free of charge.



*Publicity and coordination* - The public relations and mainstreaming process can be an expensive one. It is necessary to establish dialogue with partners from the area, including education organisations and enterprises. Two meetings were held during 2003.

## ASSET UK

As the project is a Development Partnership, the costs of undertaking the skills audits and finding placements for beneficiaries have been higher than they would be for a mainstream activity. The costs average between 400 and 500 euro per participant, which includes staff costs of project workers plus any additional costs such as course fees etc.

## Want2work DK

The Want2work skills audit tool, which is still under development and requires around 20 group contact hours per week over a period of 11 weeks plus attendance at CV workshops (20 hours) and individual interviews for each participant. Average costs per participant are around 1000 euro , which reflects the greater educational content of the process.

By the end of 2003, 357 persons had participated in skills auditing and educational activities that were implemented by Want2work.

## RE-KOMP, SE

160 immigrants, refugees and 2 asylum seekers have made portfolios at Lernia Ltd in co-operation with the "Portfolio project" and Valideringscentrum in Malmo. The main costs of making the portfolios were staff and administrative costs, with an average cost of around 400 euro per participant. This cost includes the work of two project workers who meet the participants in groups of 10 for three weeks, with organised work at Lernia Ltd 2-3 times a week and then individual work with the portfolio during the other days of the week. The participants also receive individual support at six different times during the work with the portfolio. The average duration to complete the portfolio was 3-6 months.

### **The wider costs benefits of skills audits**

The DPs that have developed and applied the skills audits were interviewed and asked to identify the wider costs and benefits of their activity.

*Is there evidence that the availability of skills audits encourages asylum seekers to come to the host country in question?*

'No. Asylum seekers and refugees come to the host countries for other reasons, for example political causes of repression, violence, oppression and violations of human rights.'

*Is there any evidence that those already out of work in the host country are deprived of the opportunity to work or access education and training courses because of the resources given over to asylum seekers for skills audits?*

'No. Following the skills audit process, asylum seekers have an improved profile and CV for job-search, but they still represent the most disadvantaged group on the labour market because of their limited rights and restricted access in a large number of countries. Skills audits, in reality, could also be usefully developed for other target groups including other unemployed persons'.

*Do the skills audits of asylum seekers lead to any disruption or community tension?*

'No, on the contrary, they enable asylum seekers to participate in the community and therefore reduce the possibility of tension developing.'

*Do the skills audits help meet skill shortages?*

'Yes, skills audits have the potential to help meet skills shortages and they also help to identify skill shortages. For example in Germany, immigrants often regard their employment prospects as negligible, because their life skills are not recognised, nor valued and cannot be proved or matched to the skills requirements of the host countries. By using the skills audits process, it is possible to identify the skills they have which match those needed in the German labour market'.

'No they do not in the UK because asylum seekers are not allowed to work, which means that the potential to help meet skills shortages is currently not being met. For example there are many skills shortages in the Health Service. The British Refugee Council has a register of doctors and nurses including asylum seekers and refugees who could help in filling the gaps. Also there is a similar register of dentists. However, in the UK, asylum seekers are not allowed to work despite the severe shortage of staff in these fields in the UK.'

*Have the skills audits led to reductions in welfare payments and other public costs?*

'Yes, because those asylum seekers who have benefited from a skills audit are better prepared to enter the job market when they are allowed to work. They are more motivated and more likely to find a job quickly and are therefore less likely to rely upon welfare payments. The participants also get a better understanding of how the labour market in the host country works. Also, in the process of undertaking a skills audit, a character profile is constructed. The participant is able to understand their position within the labour market, which skills are needed, what his/her skills gaps are, where his/her opportunities lie and what the best future options/opportunities are. In fact, the skills audits make access to education and training resources or to the labour market easier. In the best-case scenario, if the participant finds a job, it reduces public costs and welfare aid. It also favours integration into the host society.'

*Do the skills audits reduce the likelihood of informal working practices in the 'black economy' and the 'disappearance' of asylum seekers? Has there been reduced criminality?*

'Yes, the black economy and 'disappearance' of asylum seekers is connected with their uncertain status and their restricted access to work. Skills audits can at least clarify legitimate opportunities that are available.'

'Yes, the skills audits could also help to reduce criminality, because skills audits better prepare asylum seekers to enter the legal labour market. Those participants in skills audit programmes have stayed away from criminality.'

*Was there reduced racism and xenophobia because of successful integration?*

'Yes. A young woman from Uganda who undertook a skills audit in Germany took a traineeship in a department store after her audit. She was the first black ethnic minority

female to work there and the enterprise offered to pay for her education after the traineeship.'

'Skills Audits highlight that asylum seekers have many skills, which means that prejudices can be dismantled and the interests and problems of asylum seekers can be drawn into the public's attention. Also, because of partnership building between different organisations, companies, schools and universities through the Development Partnership, there is increased involvement between the asylum seekers and the public in the host society, which also raises public awareness of the asylum seekers and their qualifications.'

*Have community relations improved through capacity building and partnership working?*

'Yes. In Denmark the courses established and the external on-the-job training has improved relationships not only with community organisations but also with private companies. A number of job training organisations, universities and schools have been interested in setting up more permanent arrangements.'

'Fluequal and the German Youth Institute (DJI) have also created a national network (KombiNet) for skills audits. In this network representatives from the economy, immigration organisations and educational institutions are involved, which has been very positive for community relations.'

'In Sweden, the different organisations and authorities involved in implementing the skills audit have improved their relationships and methods of co-operation.'

*What has been the wider influence on practice?*

'The skills audit tool will be mainstreamed in Denmark in the autumn of 2004. Care4You and the Danish Refugee Council have already made use of the experiences of the DP.'

'In Germany, Fluequal and the German Youth Institute (DJI) offers training courses for applying the skills audit. Many education organisations in Germany are planning to work with the instrument.'

'The portfolio model that the Swedish DP RE-KOMP worked with in the "Portfolio project", was very popular both among the teachers and the participants. The project finished in December 2003, but a new application for funding has been submitted to ERF, to continue with the development of the work with the portfolio.'

*What are the policy impacts ?*

'The Danish Ministry of education is currently evaluating work undertaken by the 'Want2Work' DP notably with regard to experiences resulting from the recent decision to repatriate Iraqis.'

'Skills audits is also a significant aspect of EQUAL mainstreaming process.'

*Did the skills audits facilitate asylum seeker labour market opportunities following their return to their country of origin?*

'Whilst it is difficult to be conclusive, the skills audit instrument developed by Fluequal includes questions about working opportunities within the country of origin. This means that



participants will have also been encouraged to recognise any potential opportunities that they have in the host country.'

Asylum seekers who have participated in the skills audits undertaken by 'Want2Work' have indicated that skills audits and courses that lead to qualifications are likely to be beneficial for asylum seekers returning to their host country and for their reintegration into the local labour market.

'One asylum seeker who completed a portfolio and who then had to return home confirmed that the portfolio enabled him to continue with his education and helped him to find a job in his country of origin'.

## 4. CASE STUDIES

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*Two case studies of asylum seekers who have benefited from the skills audit process are given below (their names have been changed for confidentiality).*

### CASE STUDY 1: WANT2WORK DENMARK

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#### ***Ali Hussain Al Sadoun and his family***

33-year old Ali Hussain Al Sadoun fled from Iraq 2002.

Ali's father had worked in Jordan and Kuwait, but he was accused of spying when he returned to Iraq, and died in an Iraqi prison in 1994. Harassments levelled against the family escalated over the following years, until Ali's mother made the decision to split the family up in order to be able to hide more effectively.

Ali found a reasonably safe hiding place at a friends' house in Basra. He lived in a four square meter room with no windows for two years.

*"I had no clue what had happened to the rest of the family. I just sat in my hiding place with a long beard, like the one Saddam Hussein had, when they captured him. I was just reading and sleeping the time away. But the worst thing was thinking about my family."*

Ali could not bear the uncertainty any longer and encouraged his friend to investigate his family's fate to discover that his mother and siblings had fled to Scandinavia. With luck, Ali then also managed to escape, and by coincidence arrived in the same Scandinavian country as his family. His family had arrived in Denmark three years earlier and had already been granted asylum and were living in their own apartment in the western part of Zealand.

According to the Danish law, asylum seekers are not allowed to stay with relatives, but have to live in asylum centres. *"I did not take any Danish courses, because I was confused and sad. I also stayed at four different centres within one year."* Now he lives in an asylum centre in Faxe, Zealand, sharing a room with three others. *"They are very nice people, but it would be nice with some privacy."*

#### ***The reception process***

Ali held a BA degree in Business from Kuwait University and had worked as an accountant's assistant when in Kuwait. Ali's first skills audit interview took place at the centre where he lived, and the first interview lasted approximately an hour. The supervisor ended up suggesting that Ali join a course organised by the DP entitled: "Start your own business", which had been developed and tested by Mr. Richard Pape, who was an experienced entrepreneur. Professionals have developed most of the DP's courses, who bring the benefits of an experienced 'hands-on' approach and also valuable networks for sourcing internships, relevant guest teachers and arranging work place visits etc.

*"I brought my Danish-speaking brother with me for the visit, just in case. But Mr. Richard was very nice. First I had to fill out some very simple forms, describing my knowledge about computers, English skills and things like that. But we spent most of the time discussing my qualifications and objectives in a very relaxed atmosphere."*

The visit built upon the first skill audit interview done by the Want2Work course facilitator. It is conducted face-to-face in a very relaxed environment. The computer is turned off and the interviewer registers the information on completion of the visit. The session takes approximately 30 minutes.

### **The skills audit process**

Ali's skills audit was based on two interviews, the information from which was registered in the skills audit database. The database was developed in cooperation with relevant partners, including labour market institutions and the Confederation of Danish Municipalities. In the instances where the participant obtains asylum, the caseworker in the municipality will be familiar with the method that has been used to describe the individual's hard and soft skills.

Ali's skills audit was embedded in the "Start your own business" course. Want2work views skills auditing as an on-going process, which is embedded within its courses so to be experienced as an empowering, progressive and self-reflective process. Ali's course involved 12-16 participants and was held in English. Want2work has also developed other courses based on Educational Guidelines, which include Agriculture, Sewing and Social & Health Care courses.

The professional component of the courses is very different and some of the courses are held in Danish, but the skills audit process, which continues throughout this part of the course, is based on the same exercises and approach. The teacher is able to choose from the different exercises available, but there are some core elements, which are key to all courses, such as, for example developing a personal action plan and CV-workshops.

The following provides some illustration from the "Start your own business" course as viewed through Ali's experiences:

*"I thought I already knew how to start my own business: You get some money and open a kiosk or a shawarma bar at the corner. Mr. Richard taught me something very different. And I tell you, it is a good method to find out what to do for a living. You have to make your own personal vision, mission and goal."*

Ali developed the following plan:

Vision: *I want to work every day and make a living. I will not be dependent on social benefits.*

Mission: *I want to get asylum and work in an accountant's office. Make friends among costumers, both foreigners and Danes. Save money from my salary and open my own small accounting company after a few years.*

Goal: *I want to stay in Denmark. Make a family and raise my children. I want my own accountancy office with four employees.*

Through other exercises, the participant is encouraged to recognise additional job-related skills that are not necessarily connected to a specific professional background. The exercises include SWOT-analyses that identify Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats and buzz-groups that reflect over a given subject.

Ali found many of the exercises both insightful and empowering, but the one buzz-exercise confused him. *"I remember whispering to the guy next to me: "What on earth is this good for?"*

This basic exercise encourages participants to ask questions about the importance of skills that could be overlooked and not automatically identified as job-related. The purpose is to ask questions such as "Have you ever driven the children to school? Translated a document? Cut your children's hair etc?"

Women, in particular, who might have a limited or non-professional background, can find it encouraging to recognise that they possess soft skills which can be transferred to paid employment. Cutting children's hair, for example, could encourage someone to train as a hairdresser.

Ali, however, arrived at another conclusion.

*"I ended up enjoying the exercise, because I realised that God has created me to be a hard-working man, with many skills. I am not lazy."*

As positive as this conclusion might be, Ali's reflection illustrates the more sensitive aspect of an individually targeted learning programme that is set in a group context. Some women, for example, find it beneficial to write a personal logbook about their progress, visions and goals, whilst men might find this particular skills auditing tool more uncomfortable. All exercises, inevitably, do not have the same outcomes for all participants. Some gain from one exercise while others gain from another. Offering a wide range of exercises is therefore, key, as is the awareness required of a teacher to understand that participant outcomes from each activity would vary.

As described in Ali's action plan, an internship in an accountant company was a vital next step after seven weeks on the course. Ali has now been working in the account office for three months and both he and the employer have found it to be so beneficial that they would like to continue for another three months.

*"Basically it is not different from working as an accountant in Kuwait. Account systems seem to be almost the same all over the world. You know, everyone complains over the Danish tax system, but it is just rules and regulations you have to learn and it is fun using a computer instead of writing everything by hand. Language? Many of our costumers only speak Danish and all bills are written in Danish, so I have really improved."*

Ali's spoken Danish is still not adequate, so he will begin to start taking classes in the evening despite his long working day. Ali gets up at 5:30 every morning at his asylum centre in Faxe in order to be ready for work at his office in Copenhagen at 10 o'clock.

*"There is only one train per hour to Faxe where I live, but it is okay. Sitting on the train together with all the other working people is the best part of my day. Often I sit in there thinking: Now I look like you. I might not get paid but I live an ordinary life like you. I am on my way to work."*

The ordinary Danish working life, however, might soon come to an end since Ali has already had his request for asylum rejected once. The chances for getting a positive answer in the second and final round are limited.

*"If I get negative? That will be my last day of my life. My entire family is here in Denmark and I will not live without them. Besides it is still not safe in Iraq. Before there was one Saddam Hussein who terrorised the people. Now there are hundreds Saddam Husseins ruling Iraq. I cannot live under such conditions. Not any longer."*

Ali's action plan developed at the business course, includes a repatriation plan:

*"If I really have to go back - which I do not think I will - I will try to get in contact with Danish companies working in Iraq. I have skills now that can be beneficial for them, knowing both the Danish and the Iraqi account system and culture. But it is not enough to give me a salary; they must also guarantee my protection."*

## **Supporting documentation for validation**

Ali did not bring his documents with him to Denmark.

*"I don't think it is a problem. I can get a copy of my paper from the University of Kuwait if necessary."*

## **Application to national regulations and accreditation processes**

The Danish Ministry of Education runs the Danish Centre for Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, CVUU. The assessment is individually based.

It is difficult to say whether Ali has to start his qualification from scratch in order to work as a Danish accountant. The need for him to take additional courses however has been recognised.

## **Validation**

The validation of Ali's newly acquired professional skills, whilst not formal, will stand him in good stead should he be granted asylum and given the right to work. The combination of the business course and a six months internship at a Danish account company will be of significant benefit.

The Danish educational system has a rather comprehensive life-long learning structure that might be very useful, even if Ali's request for asylum experiences further delay. Asylum seekers are now allowed to follow courses in the formal life-long learning system called VUC; Adult Education Centres. There are 65 Adult Education Centres throughout Denmark, which offer a wide range of courses for a small admission fee.

## **Outcomes**

Ali has gained a lot from the skills audit process. He knows what he wants and he is on his way to achieving it.

His chances of immediate entry to the labour market, within his professional field, have improved dramatically. His new professional skills, such as IT-based accounting and knowledge of the Danish

accountancy and tax system are crucial. His improved Danish language skills and networks of employers who have their accounts handled by Ali are also important.

Above everything, Ali's self-confidence has been restored. The mixture of personal and professional skills auditing has given him an increased understanding of his objectives and aspirations, on both a professional and personal level.

Life's obstacles appear more surmountable if you have a strong sense of identity and know you're your goals are. In all probability, Ali will soon be facing a very challenging period in his life should his request for asylum be denied a second time.

If he is granted asylum, he will follow the standard procedure of the Danish government's three year long "Integration Phase" for those granted residency. This is delivered by the local municipality. The phase includes skills auditing, Danish language training, job training and/or formal education. Case workers in the Danish municipalities state that successful integration can be hindered if the asylum seeker is de-motivated by long periods of inactivity and waiting, which can lead to a loss of self confidence and a de-valuing of professional skills.

According to the Danish Ministry of Integration, the number of refugees and immigrants without ties to the Danish labour market is significantly higher than among other Danes. In 2001, only 45% of the immigrants (which includes refugees) from third countries were in employment compared to 76% of the Danes.

It is too early to evaluate whether joining a Want2Work course will make a difference and improve the statistics, but individual case workers from the municipalities tell us that those refugees who have followed a Want2Work course appear to be motivated and ready for the next step towards a self-supporting and professional life in Denmark.

See Attachment 1 – Certificate from want2work Business Course



*To whom it may concern*

*This is to certify that Mr./Ms.*

\_\_\_\_\_

*Has been admitted to the "How to start your own business" course which was organized by the Want2Work department of the Danish Red Cross Culture House during the period from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_. He/she having been declared to have gone through all the prescribed requirements to obtaining this certificate.*

*Kirsten Gelting*

*Course Co-ordinator*

*Richard Pape*

*Course Facilitator*

*Date: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Place:*

*Danish Red Cross*

*The Culture House*

*Strandgade 100 E*

*1401 Copenhagen K*

*Phone: + 45 32 96 00 88*

*Telefax: +45 32 96 00 58*

*[www.want2work.org](http://www.want2work.org)*

*E-mail: [kobenhavn@want2work.org](mailto:kobenhavn@want2work.org)*

*Course contents:*

<b>Subjects</b>	<b>No. of Hours</b>
Accounting	10
Networking	10
Communications skills	10
General information about starting own business	10
Making a business plan	10
Training and visits	10
Computer skills	08
Negotiations and negotiations skills	10
Group works and practice	08
Monitoring and evaluation	10
<b>Total number of hours</b>	<b>96</b>

In addition to home work

## **CASE STUDY 2: ASSET UK**

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### ***Mayet Sharib and his family***

Mayet Sharib came to the UK from Pakistan in 2001. He was fleeing persecution for his membership of a minority religion. Mayet was accompanied by his wife and two small children.

In Pakistan Mayet was a well qualified sales and finance manager, but his career had been adversely affected by religious discrimination. He applied for asylum on arrival and was sent to Leicester in the East Midlands, where he and his family were provided with housing. Mayet's application to stay in the UK has not been granted and he is waiting the outcome of an appeal. Like most asylum seekers in the UK, Mayet is not permitted to work.

### ***The Initial Experience***

Mayet joined the ASSET UK project in January 2003. He had been inactive since he arrived in Leicester in August 2001. This was a long period of inactivity during which he had not taken part in any education or training courses. Mayet was referred by Refugee Housing (his Landlord) because it was felt that he would benefit from the project.

### ***The skills audit process***

Mayet's skills audit took place over three hour-long interviews at the Leicester project base at Voluntary Action Leicester. The interviews were held in a purpose built interview room although because the interviews were held for Mayet's convenience at the end of a family shopping day, the room seemed cramped as the whole family was often present including Mayet, his wife and their two small children for whom toys were provided. It was helpful for Mayet's wife to be present as her English language was at a higher level than Mayet's and she provided helpful explanations when Mayet struggled to describe all that he wished to say.

The main language barrier in the interviews arose around technical terminology used in financial management rather than any general communication issues. The project worker's knowledge of UK accountancy and financial management terminology was crucial in helping Mayet's experience to be described in English. One concept which neither Mayet nor the project worker could express in the correct terminology was researched further between the first and second interview to enable this to be effectively described. The English translations of Mayet's qualifications were very helpful in categorising his studies, as were references from former employers that described his work experience.

Mayet understood the need to provide information about his financial management work experience and higher education, but was less certain as to why information about his primary and secondary schooling was needed. Mayet remained focused on his hopes to undertake the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) professional accountancy course and was much less interested in taking part in contributing to the research data that NIACE also wished to gain as a result of undertaking the skills audits. Mayet did not initially understand the benefit of a comprehensive CV for helping him to find an appropriate placement.

Throughout the skills audit interviews, Mayet repeatedly asked the project worker to commit himself to a timeframe in which a work orientation placement suitable for the ACCA training requirements could be arranged. Because the project worker knew this was going to be difficult to achieve and could not promise that the project could deliver a placement of this sort, it made the interviews more tense than they might otherwise have been.

When recording his educational details, at one stage, Mayet became quite distressed as he recalled an occasion when he was cruelly treated by his teachers due to his belonging to a minority religion. At this point his wife was playing with their children just outside the interview room. Mayet may not have described this experience if his family had been present. Mayet enjoyed giving details to complete the 'other life experiences' section and was pleased to be able to describe the voluntary research work that he had undertaken. He also enjoyed telling the project worker about his interests and this enabled the second interview to end on an upbeat note, since they were able to converse about these interests for a few minutes.

The project worker gave Mayet his newly prepared CV at the beginning of the third interview and following some minor corrections, they moved into talking about his aspirations, perceived barriers and the next steps involved in the skills audit. Mayet was very happy with his CV (which often visibly boosts the confidence of participants when they first receive it).

As the aspirations section recorded the fact that Mayet wished to study towards the ACCA exams he was very much engaged with the process, since this was the reason he had initially sought help from the project. He was able to quickly list the perceived barriers to meeting his objectives and after considering these at length, he was not concerned about recording these on paper. He was very happy that the project worker was committed to helping him find an initial work placement in a finance department. Mayet, however, was disappointed again that it was not possible to give a timeframe in which a placement could be arranged but, nevertheless, was pleased to have received his CV after completing the skills audit. His placement was arranged (see outcomes section below) and the project worker continues to meet with Mayet and the placement providers in order to provide support when necessary.

The project provided Mayet with resources so that he could travel to the placement, buy some suitable clothes for working in an office and books to pursue his studies.

See Attachment 1 – Skills Audit Questionnaire

See Attachment 2 – Curriculum Vitae

### ***Supporting documentation for validation***

Mayet had all documentation with him including a certificate proving that he had a Masters Degree in Business Administration from a University in Pakistan.

### ***Application to national regulations and accreditation processes***

The project worker used the services of NARIC (see Attachments 3 and 4) to determine the UK levels of accreditation for all Mayet's education certificates. He received a certificate from NARIC stating that Mayet's Master's Degree was comparable with the British Bachelor Ordinary Degree standard. Using this information an application was made to the UK Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) for exemption for some of the qualifying examinations necessary to become an accountant in the UK.

See Attachment 3 – Comparability of qualifications from Pakistan

See Attachment 4 – NARIC certificate

### ***Validation***

Mayet was able to apply for and gain acceptance for admission to the ACCA course with exemptions because of his qualifications gained in Pakistan, which had been validated by NARIC. His CV has been prepared using a popular UK model which is based upon employers' requirements.

### ***Outcomes***

Mayet has successfully begun the ACCA distance-learning course. His fees have been paid and required work experience provided by the Voluntary Organisation where the ASSET project found him a placement in the finance department. This will benefit him in the UK and in his home country if he returns.

The placement was initially arranged as an eight week opportunity, but the voluntary contribution being made by Mayet to the organisation was so beneficial for both (the organisation and Mayet) that it has become an on-going arrangement. He has also taken part in the organisations in-house training courses including an advanced level Excel course. Mayet is also acting as a voluntary treasurer for a small Muslim organisation in Leicester.

He has gained considerably in terms of self confidence, made new friends, learned new technical and social skills, improved his spoken English, and been less affected by worries about his uncertain future.

In concrete terms the skills audit has enabled his participation in the labour market which has been facilitated with financial help of transport fees, a light lunch at the placement, access to the City centre, course fees etc. Benefits to society more widely are also significant, there is a shortage of qualified accountants so if Mayet remains and qualifies he will be in demand. If he is allowed to stay in the UK he will be able to earn a salary that is sufficient to support himself and his family and will contribute through taxation etc. Already, both voluntary organisations that he is helping are benefiting from his experience and time.

The most important aspect of the skills audit process was that it enabled Mayet to gain confidence in the system itself – to understand UK working practices as well as the things that he had to offer and learn in order to make a contribution and integrate into UK society. He also acknowledges certain unexpected outcomes which include his recognition and importance of soft skills - social relationships and interests beyond accountancy itself.

**Attachment 1**

**ASSET UK SKILLS AUDIT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Personal details**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Mayet Sharib \_\_\_\_\_ (not his real name)

ASSET UK No.: \_\_\_\_\_ LE0100 \_\_\_\_\_

ARC No.: \_\_\_\_\_ IFBO2/045738/G \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.(s) \_\_\_\_\_ 0116 2254680/ 07759353973 \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ mayetsharib@hotmail.com \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Arrival in UK: \_\_\_\_\_ 04/06/00 \_\_\_\_\_

Referred from: \_\_\_\_\_ Refugee Housing \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Experience** (All occupations including any secondary ones – most recent first)

<b>Job title</b>	<b>Duties and responsibilities</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Employer</b>	<b>Dates</b>
Volunteer Accounts Assistant	Maintaining purchase and sales ledgers, providing remittances and remedial actions. Liaising with staff to resolve queries and undertaking general administration tasks	Leicester	Raycam	2003
Voluntary Joint Finance Secretary	Maintaining accounts for a community organisation, managing covenants and submitting completed accounts to the head office	Leicester	Dresalaam Association	2003
Sales Manager	Responsible for managing the Sales Department staff, determining sales targets and monitoring performance, marketing and sales strategies, attending conferences and sales events, coordinating distributor's sales activities	Lahore, Pakistan	B and G Company	1996-1999
Bank Operations MBA Training Placement	Spent two months observing the workings of the treasury and accounts department	Lahore, Pakistan	Regional Bank Ltd	1996
Regional Development MBA Training Placement	Undertook a study on the dispersal of small enterprises in the rural areas of Guraj district	Islamabad, Pakistan	Guraj Financial Department	1995

Additional information: Enjoys playing football, driving, reading books on sociology and economics, meeting people and socialising

## Education and Training

	Years of study	Subjects/modules	Qualifications	Where?	Other information (including UK equivalences)
<b>Primary</b>	1978-1983	Mathematics, Urdu, Islamic studies, Art, music, Pakistan Studies	<b>N/A</b>	Federal Government Primary School P5/7, Islamabad, Pakistan	
<b>Secondary</b>	1983-1988	Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology Pakistan Studies, English, Urdu, Islamic Studies	Secondary School Certificate	Federal Government Secondary School G-5/3, Islamabad, Pakistan	
<b>Secondary Continued</b>	1988-1990	Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Pakistan studies, English, Urdu, Islamic Studies	Higher Secondary Certificate	Federal Government H-7 College, Islamabad, Pakistan	
<b>Higher</b>	1990-1993		BSc Double Mathematics and Physics	University of Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan	
<b>Higher continued</b>	1994-1996	Fundamentals of marketing Marketing management Research methods Advertising and promotional strategies Market research International marketing Cost accounting Financial Analysis	MBA in Marketing and Finance	Islamabad University, Islamabad, Pakistan	
<b>Vocational (incl. work based training)</b>	2003	Advanced Excel Training in graphical representation	N/A	Raycam, Leicester	
<b>Adult Education (incl. ESOL and IT)</b>					

Certificates available? Yes

Which certificates? All



Has worked as a volunteer researcher for 4 years on behalf of a local organisation conducting interviews and writing reports

**Language Skills** (List competency of all languages used in the following areas)

Speaking/understanding: Urdu, Punjabi, understands Hindi

Reading/writing: Urdu, Punjabi

Fluent in English? No, level not identified as Mayet is not currently undertaking ESOL

**Aspirations**

Mayet would like to undertake ACCA studies to qualify as an accountant in the UK

**Perceived Barriers**

The ACCA exams are costly (approximately £1700) even when studying by distance learning. Mayet will also require a substantial (approximately 18 months) work orientation placement or paid employment (if given permission to work) in a finance department to develop the skills required to undertake the ACCA exams. Organisations are likely to be able to offer a short work orientation placement but will very rarely offer any of this duration. Mayet's English language level could cause added difficulty in finding a suitable placement opportunity.

**Next Steps** (including career options in the UK, placement/learning support required/desired in the UK etc.)

For the ASSET-UK project to try to seek an initial placement to enable Mayet to familiarise himself with UK accountancy procedures ahead of Mayet subsequently trying to find a larger placement suitable for the requirements of the ACCA training

**Outcomes/actions**

Mayet was very lucky in that a local voluntary organisation was able to offer him an 18 month placement suitable to meet the requirements of the ACCA training following the initial placement arranged there by the ASSET project. The voluntary organisation also kindly offered to pay the ACCA fees enabling Mayet to proceed towards his goals of gaining the ACCA professional accountancy exams.

Project worker signature:

Client signature:

Date: 12/2/03

## Attachment 2

**Mayet Sharib**  
**8 Hill Road**  
**Braunstone**  
**Leicester**  
**LE3 0TY**  
**Tel. 0116 2254680**  
**Mob. 07759352973**  
**mayetsharib@hotmail.com**

### Personal Profile

A friendly and approachable person with good interpersonal skills. Efficient, organised and effective even under pressure. Shows commitment and enthusiasm and leads by example.

### Key Skills

- Supervisory and departmental management experience
- Familiar with a wide range of performance measurement strategies
- Familiar with the full range of accountancy procedures
- Computer literate with a working knowledge of Word2000, Excel, Access and Powerpoint
- Familiar with the analysis of accounts statements to track departmental performance
- Networking and building business relationships

### Work Experience

- 2003**                    **Raycam, Leicester, Volunteer Accounts Assistant**  
Maintaining Purchase and Sales Ledgers, providing remittances and remedial actions. Liaising with staff to resolve queries and undertaking general administration tasks
- 2003**                    **Dresalaam Association, Leicester, Joint Finance Secretary**  
Maintaining accounts for a community organisation, managing covenants and submitting completed accounts to the head office

### Employment History

- 1996-1999**            **B and G Company, Lahore, Pakistan, Sales Manager**  
Managing the sales department staff, responsible for determining sales targets and monitoring performance, marketing and sales strategies, attending conferences and sales events, coordinating distributor's sales activities
- 1996**                    **Regional Bank Ltd., Lahore, Pakistan, Bank Operations MBA Training Placement**  
Spent two months observing the workings of the Treasury and Accounts Department.
- 1995**                    **Guraj financial Department, Islamabad, Pakistan, Regional Development MBA Training Placement**  
Undertook a study on the dispersal of small enterprises in the rural areas of Guraj District.

**Education**  
**2003**

**Raycam, Leicester**

Advanced Excel training in graphical representation

**1994-1996**

**Islamabad University, Islamabad, Pakistan**

MBA in Marketing and Finance covering:

- Fundamentals of marketing
- Marketing management including a project on small business start-ups
- Research methods and report writing
- Advertising and promotional strategies including a project developing the Indus Motor Company Ltd. marketing plan and advertising campaign
- Marketing research
- International marketing
- Cost accounting
- Analysis of financial statements

**1990-1993**

**University of Islamabad, Islamabad, Pakistan**

BSc Double Mathematics and Physics

**1988-1990**

**Federal Government H-7 College, Islamabad, Pakistan**

Higher Secondary Certificate including studies in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Pakistan studies, English, Urdu, Islamic studies

**1983-1988**

**Federal Government Secondary School G-5/3, Islamabad, Pakistan**

Secondary School Certificate including Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Pakistan studies, English, Urdu, Islamic studies

**Additional Information**

Worked as a volunteer researcher for 4 years on behalf of a local organisation conducting interviews and writing reports

.

**Interests**

Enjoys playing football, driving, reading books on sociology and economics, meeting people and socialising

**Date of Birth**

17/10/1972

**References supplied on request**

**Mayet Sharib  
8 Hill Road  
Braunstone  
Leicester  
LE3 0TY**

REF:

05 December 2001

Dear Ms Sharib

**Re: Comparability of Qualifications from Pakistan**

Thank you for your recent enquiry.

Further to your enquiry, I am able to confirm the following:

The Higher School Certificate from the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education, 1991, is generally considered to be comparable to GCSE standard (Grades A, B and C) if marks of over 50 percent have been obtained, regardless of the pass-mark in each subject, with the exception of English language

The Bachelor of Science from the University of \_\_\_\_\_ 1993, is considered to approach GCE Advanced level standard.

The Master of Business Administration from the \_\_\_\_\_ University, 1996, is considered comparable to British Bachelor (Ordinary) degree standard. Exceptionally, students with very high grades may be considered for admission to postgraduate study.

The service provided by UK NARIC, although based on informed opinion, should be treated only as guidance - it is not an authoritative ruling.

I hope this is of assistance.

Yours sincerely



Richard Budd  
Information Officer  
For the UK NARIC



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

If you do not wish to receive information about employment or study from our associate companies, please tick this box and return a photocopy of this letter. Do not return the original letter.

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**ECCTIS**

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on behalf of the Secretary of State  
for Education and Skills



# UK NARIC

The National Academic Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom

certifies

that


Mayet Sharib

has presented us with documents indicating that he/she holds

Master of Business Administration from the \_\_\_\_\_, Pakistan, 1996

which is comparable to

British Bachelor (Ordinary) degree standard

Signature:  .....

Name: David Boynton .....

Position: Head of UK NARIC .....

Date: 6 December, 2001 .....

01RB609  
Certificate Number:

## 5. SETTING UP AND RUNNING THE SKILLS AUDIT PROCESS

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The Development Partnership work referred to in this document has been funded through EQUAL, which has required that individual DP's comply with EQUAL procedures. The different make up of each partnership has also influenced the approach of each skills audit process. Suggestions for those who are considering the use of a skills audit are provided within the descriptions of the Danish Want2Work and ASSET UK projects below.

### Want2Work DK

The initial aim was to develop a methodology for individual development, which also had mainstreaming potential. The method needed to be realistic and sustainable, as well as financially viable given the limited resources available.

The Want2Work skills auditing process was inspired by the 'Work Capacity Method' which is increasingly used in Danish municipalities. LGDK, a confederation of Danish municipalities and the Copenhagen Municipality are Development Partners in Want2Work and were involved in the development of the Want2Work skills audit tool. Collaborating with the municipality has had the advantage of encouraging locally based caseworkers to use this method to ascertain the hard and soft skills of individuals who have recently been granted asylum. The database that was developed for matching asylum seekers with relevant internships/work opportunities thus includes the same subjects, fields and data for the skill audit as that which is used by the municipality. Want2Work decided upon a two-part strategy for the development of a full scale Want2Work skills audit process:

- Development and use of educational guidelines that support and encourage the individual to better understand their "soft" qualifications, work identity, social skills and performance expectations.
- Development of a registration and visits procedure that identifies the asylum seeker's "hard" qualifications with respect to language skills, educational background, former work experience etc.

All Want2Work courses build upon the following key values:

- *High quality:* Want2Work aims to develop quality courses. After being piloted at local asylum centres, the educational material and teachers' manuals were mainstreamed to asylum centres with limited resources, throughout the country.
- *Effective:* Short and effective courses have been developed. Positive results have been achieved through courses that combine focused vocational training, on-the-job training, skills training and an on-going skills auditing.
- *Realistic:* A realistic approach to managing asylum seekers work and study expectations both in Denmark and within their home country. Cost-effective courses have been developed which encourage effective mainstreaming.

## **ASSET UK**

The skills audit project was set up by NIACE, a large UK NGO which promotes adult learning. NIACE undertook research in 2001, which illustrated the range of skills, qualifications and experiences of asylum seekers living in one part of the UK. A number of barriers to using and building upon these skills were also discovered.

NIACE gained the support of regional and local government agencies working in the fields of economic development and education and training to build upon the research with the help of an EQUAL initiative grant. Project workers with experience in job seeking fields, volunteering and asylum and immigration were appointed and based in a variety of agencies in the region. They built contacts with local organisations to raise awareness of the untapped talents of asylum seekers and the possibilities that a skills audit approach could provide.

Asylum seekers are referred to the project or are self-referred. Skills audits are undertaken and tailor made placements are arranged. Financial support is available to enable asylum seekers to enrol on appropriate courses or travel to appropriate volunteering and work shadowing placements. The project workers have established a large range of local contacts with referral agencies, placement providers and community organisations.

For a skills audit project to be successful, skills workers must be effective in the following: building relationships of trust; networking and communicating successfully; acting as advocates and; be open to exploring a multitude of potential opportunities. Resources are also needed for interviewing spaces and to provide beneficiaries with a little financial support to participate in mainstreaming opportunities as they arise. This can be used, for example, to purchase books, find childcare, employ translators, find examination fees and even buy appropriate clothing for work experience. Experience in and knowledge of the local community helps to establish relationships and identify opportunities. The project aims to build the capacity of organisations in the region to enable the work to continue when the EQUAL funding comes to an end.

## **6. DP PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS**

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### **DP Want2Work, DK**

The DP has developed a methodology that incorporates skills auditing through continual feedback, reflection and self-evaluation that is carried out during vocational training and courses. By embedding different 'eye-opening' exercises into the teaching, the asylum seekers are taught to recognise both traditional and less obvious job-related skills that they have gained through specific professional backgrounds. The exercises include SWOT-analyses (recognising Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), Buzz-exercises (groups consisting of two or more people reflecting on a given subject) and reframing-exercises. In addition to this, the keeping a personal journal has been encouraged through these courses and CV workshops have been held during which each participant prepares a complete CV. The combination of all these elements significantly contributes to the empowerment of each Asylum Seeker during the course. After each course, there is a follow-up to the Asylum Seeker's skills auditing in a skills audit database that has been developed by the project in close co-operation with labour market organisations and the Confederation of Danish Municipalities. The skills auditing process, therefore, is a continuous activity. When EQUAL has ended, the programme is likely to be continued through the Red Cross and other institutions.

The formal skills audit output includes an individual action plan, a follow-up course and written scenarios and plans for the next six months. These focus on education, skills development and job training. On completion of the course, participants receive letters of recommendation from employers and internships as well as a diploma from the Want2Work course.

### **DP Fluequal, DE**

DP Fluequal works with the concept of socio-grammes and individual portfolios. The socio-gramme describes the participant's social networks, both in the country of origin and in the host country. Taking account of intercultural skills is an important part of the programme, and the AS discuss their experiences from the host country, which add value to the portfolios. The AS receive 10 hours of individual advice sessions, provided by the Refugee Department of the municipality. NGOs are also involved. Modules including education and training courses as well as introduction to the labour market are offered. The DP aims at involving 200 AS in the 1st phase. After EQUAL, the institutions currently involved might take over the programme. The first results are expected in March/April 2004.

### **DP Perspectief, NL**

The DP Perspectief has developed a digital portfolio, which the asylum seekers fill in on computers with the assistance of their teachers. The DP has undertaken piloting, and is currently implementing the portfolio, with the aim of involving 300 people. The digital portfolio can be used at a low level of language comprehension, part of it rather language independent and uses for instance smilies (figures with happy/sad/indifferent faces) to illustrate how the asylum seeker assesses different competence/skills areas.

The digital portfolio is part of a broader skills auditing programme known as the SCOUT assessment. The 1st phase consists of a 3-month language course (languages other than



Dutch, since asylum seekers are prohibited from learning Dutch before they get permission to stay) and vocational skills. The 2nd phase combines on-the-job training with education, and the last phase includes vocational training classes. The Skills Audit is undertaken as early as possible in the process and all individuals have ownership over their portfolio. The first results were expected at the end of 2003.

#### **DP RE-KOMP, SE**

The DP has set up a project entitled “Asylum seekers in introduction”. As part of this project the DP is working with a validated portfolio that was developed and is owned by the “Portfolio project” and “Valideringscentrum” in the city of Malmö. An independent education company, Lernia Ltd, was contracted by the city of Malmö to educate immigrants and refugees with a residence permit in Sweden and to deliver the portfolio project. The portfolio is a coherent approach to be used during all stages of the process, part of its content is language independent by drawing on the use of figures and photos.

Work undertaken by DP RE-KOMP has given asylum seekers the opportunity to participate in the city of Malmö’s introduction programme along with other immigrants who have already received their residence. The participants are recruited after discussion between the National Board of Migration, the City of Malmö and the Public Employment Service. Participation in the programme gives asylum seekers a chance to both sustain and develop their educational and professional skills and to learn Swedish. In this way, Asylum seekers are being given opportunities to improve their capacity to self-support, regardless of whether their application for asylum in Sweden is approved or not.

The purpose of offering this professional, educational programme is to reduce the malaise and anxiety amongst asylum seekers that can be caused by the insecurity and alienation brought about during the period that an asylum seeker awaits their ruling. At the end of February 2004 about 20 asylum seekers were participating in the introduction programme at Lernia Ltd.

#### **DP Asset UK**

ASSET UK works to support the vocational and social integration of asylum seekers across the East Midlands in the UK. Project workers do this by auditing the skills, qualifications and experiences of asylum seekers, and then facilitating tailor made packages of learning, volunteering and labour market orientation opportunities for them. In this way, individuals are able to develop skills and gain insight into the UK labour market, as well as to obtain references and gain experiences that could lead to paid employment when and if permission to remain is granted.

In order to carry out this work, successful partnership networks have been set up in five areas of the region – Derby, Leicester, Lincoln, Nottingham and Northampton – with referral agencies, educational institutions, employers and voluntary organisations. Outreach surgeries have also been initiated in a number of locations to allow beneficiaries easier access to the project. Financial support is also available to cover the cost of expenses incurred.

The project is designed to enable asylum seekers to use and develop their skills whilst waiting for a decision about their future. Around fifty per cent of asylum seekers are given



permission to remain and work in the UK, and it is therefore important to discover and utilise their skills, especially in areas of skills shortages.

The vast majority of asylum seekers are not allowed to work until they have been given permission to remain in the UK. They are, however, encouraged by the Home Office to take part in learning and volunteering activities during this waiting period. By facilitating such opportunities, ASSET UK provides asylum seekers with an opportunity to further develop their skills, knowledge and qualifications, as well as to gain insight into the UK labour market, obtain references and gain experiences that could lead to paid employment after permission to remain has been granted.

By May 2005, ASSET UK will have audited the skills, qualifications and experiences of 850 asylum seekers across the East Midlands and facilitated tailor made packages of learning, volunteering and work orientation opportunities for over 500 of these asylum seekers.

## 7. REFERENCES / CONTACTS

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