

5. United Kingdom

5.1 Introduction

The United Kingdom has a long tradition of migration. Because of its history with a the large amount of colonies all over the world, the UK has been a destination for asylum seekers, working immigrants and refugees. Recently, in contrast to other continental European countries the UK adopted laws regulating immigration to the UK. However, today migration policy is a highly discussed issue in the UK and several reforms of asylum, immigration and alien law have taken place until today.

5.2 The national institutional framework and its responsibilities

From the official side the British Home Office initiates measures to support returnees in their countries of origin, in particular in their vocational reintegration. These offers are also open to minority affiliates. There is an interesting aspect to mention with respect to these activities: For example in Afghanistan the vocational trainings subsidised by the Home office are not limited to Afghans returning from Great Britain also open to local job seekers.

5.3 Definition of a minority in the United Kingdom

In the UK ethnic minority is usually used with regard to the large immigrant community. In opposite to other usages of the term, like it is done in Germany, in the UK the term ethnic minority generally points at members of the large immigrant community in the first, second or third generation without regarding to his/her status of nationality.¹ The term ethnic is officially used to register statistics in the UK regarding provenience and ethnic belonging of its inhabitants. In addition to this also skin colour and origin of parents are criteria for statistical surveys.

Due to the differentiated statistical surveys of UK's population, there can be found different groups of minorities. The non-White minority in the UK shares 7,9 % of the overall population, nearly 50 % of them have Asian (predominantly Indian and Pakistan) proveniences, followed by Black Caribbean's, Africans and Bangladeshis.² Between 1993 and 2002 the net-immigration (inflow minus outflow) to the UK constitutes 1.1 million. Although this decade the largest amount of immigration took place since recording, the number of immigrants decreased in 2002.

5.4 The national Institutional Framework and its responsibilities

All questions dealing with ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees or return the Home Office or its subordinate institution implement laws and directives.

Under supervision of the Home Office the Immigration and Nationality Directorate (IND) decides on asylum and naturalisation requests, provides advises and manages programmes dealing with return. IND works closely with the immigration authorities in other countries, and in addition to their operational role, it is their duty to support the Government in the development of immigration policy and law.³

Within the IND the National Asylum Support Service (NSS) provides accommodation, legal advices and other forms of aid for asylum seeker during their application.

¹ See Migrant and Ethnic Minority Volunteering: "Summary: Final Report The United Kingdom".

² All Data refer to the Office for National Statistics: "People and Migration".

³ See MbA Training, Research and Development: Reintegration Policies and Approaches at EU Level – A Report for the UK, p. 14.

IOM implements the governmental programme Voluntary Assisted Return and Reintegration Programme (VARRP). The Programme provides means for returnees but no additional resettlement or reintegration efforts.

To promote return of refugees from specific countries of origin, like refugees from Kosovo or Afghanistan, the UK government additionally draws up special programmes.

5.5 The United Kingdom's Organisation supporting minority groups

The NGO Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants as well as the Immigration Law Practitioners Association act in the field of representation of immigrants interests, legal counselling and provision of aid in the UK. The largest organisation is the British Refugee Council providing advise, career guidance, vocational training and operations on integration issues.

The Refugee Council is financed by a variety of sources including government departments, the European Commission, trusts and members. It is the largest organisation in the UK working with asylum seekers and refugees. Registered as a charity they work independently giving help and support, but also work with asylum seekers and refugees to ensure their needs and concerns are addressed: They work with refugee community organisations, helping them grow and serve their communities, care for unaccompanied refugee children to help them feel safe and supported in the UK, offer training and employment courses to enable asylum seekers and refugees to use their skills and qualifications, campaign and lobby for refugees' voices.

The Refugee Council is a membership organisation governed by a Board of Trustees, which includes strong refugee representation.

Refugee Action was founded in 1981 to provide a new approach towards resettlement in the UK of refugees and asylum seekers. This approach is based on supporting, promoting and working in partnership with refugee communities. Their work included practical advice and assistance, reception and settlement of refugees from Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo.

Refugee Action is an independent national charity working with refugees in the UK.

Since April 2000, Refugee Action's Asylum Advice teams have provided a reception service for newly arrived asylum seekers supported by the National Asylum Support Service as well as successful asylum applicants who need help in accessing mainstream services and accommodation. They also implement a voluntary return project offering independent advice and information to refugees and asylum seekers who are considering whether to return home and want to discuss their options.