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EFFECT OF IMMIGRATION POLICY ON THE PROCESS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS FAMILIES' INTEGRATION
(A case study of Kosovan families in the East End of London, 2003-2004)

Introduction

The paper is based on a case study I compiled with Anne Wells who works with Kosovan asylum seekers and refugees, within the two East London Boroughs of Newham and Barking & Dagenham, one of the most ethnically diverse areas in London. We interviewed fifty people, who responded on behalf of their families, between January 2003 and October 2004, pre-Amnesty and post-Amnesty and we held a limited number of in-depth interviews.

The task of this paper will be to examine the effects of the limits set by the UK immigration policy on the process of integration for asylum seekers' families. This will be achieved by looking at the experiences of Kosovan families in London.

There are three parts to the paper. Part One: introduction to the general idea of integration process of immigrants into a host society, giving the basic concepts, differences between process of integration for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, actual process of integration of refugees, elements of the refugee policy. Part two: situation of Kosovan asylum seekers' families from the perspective of integration - giving basic information about Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4 and a significant part of the Survey showing the characteristics of these 50 Kosovan families and their experiences in UK. Part three: evaluation of the asylum seekers policy in the UK using as a base the Kosovan families' experiences, showing the problem from the perspective of the UK Home Office, the asylum seekers' families and integration followed by a conclusion.

I. INTEGRATION – A THEORETICAL APPROACH

1.1. Integration – basic concepts

According to the authors of the Report 'Mapping the Field'[1], prepared for the Home Office, any discussion on integration *can start with the very general question: how do newcomers to a country become part of society?* In order to do this we must consider how immigrants and more specifically refugees access their immediate needs such as housing, welfare, work and education as well as how they access their more complex needs such as banking, dealing with estate agents and the whole process of renting plus insurance. How immigrants and refugees develop social and cultural relationships both with their own specific ethnic group and also within the wider community in which

[1] Integration: Mapping the Field. Report of a Project carried out by the University of Oxford Centre for Migration and policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre contracted by the Home Office Immigration Research and Statistics Service (IRSS) by S.Castles, M.Korac, E.Vasta, S.Vertovec with the assistance of K.Hansing, F.Moore, E.Newcombe, L.Rix, S.Yu, December 2002, Home Office Online Report 28/03 (The views expressed in this report are those of the authors, not necessarily those of the Home Office nor do they reflect Government policy).

they find themselves, looking at whether they are encouraged to fully participate at all levels of society including politics and whether any particular groups encounter barriers based on their background, be it their ethnicity, race or differences in culture.[2]

The word 'integration' is used in various contexts by both researchers and policy makers, to explain the process through which newcomers on arrival in a country interact with the local inhabitants. The European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE) considers integration to be a process of change that is dynamic and two-way as well as multi-dimensional and puts demands on both the host society and the refugees involved. Refugees need to be willing to adapt to their new surroundings As the Refugee feasibility study on refugee integration explains, *From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the lifestyle of the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity.*[3] However adaptation is not just on the side of the newcomers. The host society also is required to adapt if integration is to take place *From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness to adapt public institutions to changes in the population profile, accept refugees as part of the national community, and take action to facilitate access to resources and decision-making processes*[4].

Obviously integration involves every level and sector of society, not just the refugees and the local inhabitants of an area, the public, but also those involved in policy making, employers, service providers and so on. So integration involves both the informal and the formal sectors of society as Crete Brochmann stated in European Integration and Immigration from Third Countries, *Integration must be a dialogue between two arenas: the formal official system in terms of rules and activities, and the informal processes which are partly invisible, yet nevertheless essential for the process of integration.*[5] Integration is a process that can only be successful *if the host society provides access to jobs and services, and acceptance of the immigrants in social interaction.* The aim of integration is for the minority newcomers while being free to keep their own culture and identity, become equal partners in the society in which they live. *In a multicultural society, integration may be understood as a process through which the whole population acquires civil, social, political, human and cultural rights, which creates the conditions for greater equality* [6]. Rainer Baubock concludes that full integration can only take place when the public culture reflects the fact of immigration and in response transforms its self[7].

Looking at integration from a psychological perspective the process is obviously also long term. It starts when the immigrant/refugee arrives at the destination country and finishes when that person becomes an active member of the host country's society.[8]

While the Refugee Council think that integration should be policy driven and define integration as *'a process which prevents or counteracts the social marginalisation of refugees, by removing legal, cultural and language obstacles and ensuring that refugees are empowered to make positive decisions on their future and benefit fully from available opportunities as per their abilities and aspirations'* (Refugee Council, 1997) [9] some social scientists question the term integration. Preferring to speak of inclusion rather than integration and look at the ways the newcomers are included in the various sectors of society – housing, welfare, education, work. Inclusion is seen as referring to the newcomer's access to, participation in and the benefits they derive from the society they belong to. As 'inclusion' helps agencies to be aware of their areas of specific responsibility, it is a useful concept for the

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[2] Ibidem.
[3] Refugee integration: Can research synthesis inform policy? Feasibility study report Y.Schibel, M.Fazel, R. Robb and P.Garner, RDS On-line Report 13/02.
[4] Ibidem.
[5] C. Brochmann, European Integration and Immigration from Third Countries, Oslo, 1996 Scan Dinavian University Press,112.
[6] Integration: Mapping the Field.
[7] R. Baubock, Public Culture in Societies of Immigration, [in:] Identity and Integration Migrants in Western Europe, ed. by Rosemarie Sackmann, Bernhard Peters, Thomas Faist, Bremen, Ashgate Publishing Limited 2003, 42.
[8] European Council of Refugees and Exiles, Position on the Integration of Refugees in Europe, London 1999, ECRE.
[9] Ibidem.

formation of policy. Other social scientists prefer to use the term participation rather than either integration or inclusion as they ascertain that it implies a more active role for those involved[10].

Alice Bloch in her book 'The Migration and Settlement of Refugees in Britain' describing policies of receiving countries cites Stephen Castles[11] who presents four different ways in which host societies respond to the migration and settlement of migrants. The four models are total exclusion, differential exclusion (the migrant is excluded from some aspects of society such as welfare or politics but is included in other areas), assimilation and pluralism[12]. Germany can be example of a country which operates a policy of differential exclusion. Children born to migrant workers were not granted German citizenship so although they had some cultural and social rights they had almost no political rights this put up barriers and caused segregation preventing integration and thereby making total assimilation impossible.[13]

Assimilation literally means "making similar" In this theory immigrants/minority groups abandon their original culture and societal norms in favour of adapting to the cultural norms of the host country. Therefore all minority groups disappear as they blend into society.[14]

Castles defines his third model as the assimilationist mode. In this model the process of settlement is one sided: migrants are expected to adapt totally to their new society by giving up their own cultural identity in its entirety. This policy was prevalent in the UK until the late 1970s. maintains that *'the socio-economic marginalisation of immigrants and the growth of racism have led to a contradiction between assimilationist policies and social reality'* and has brought about Castle's final model - Pluralism or multiculturalism. In this model immigrants become ethnic minorities, and although part of civil society they are excluded from full participation in all areas - economic, social, cultural and politics. For them citizenship becomes all important because it is the only status that grants them full participation in society and allows them to fully integrate. Until they receive citizenship they will always live with a level of insecurity and cannot fully adapt because the host society doesn't recognize them as full members of that society but only as transient members and therefore only grants them limited rights[15]. As Alice Bloch states *In the context of forced migration to Britain, asylum seekers have the least rights and are excluded from basic political, civil and social citizenship. As we shall see, lack of rights affects integration and in some instances attitudes towards settlement in Britain*[16].

Tariq Modood however holds out a ray of hope *The British, especially the English, are less open to their European neighbours but are less hostile than most Europeans to multiculturalism and to international exchange. This I think gives Britain and especially British multiculturalists a 'mission' in Europe, to make Europe more open to the world and to multicultural situations, perhaps to be a bridge between Europeans and non-Europeans*[17]

1.2. Differences between immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers

The authors of *Integration: Mapping the Field* in their report, discuss integration of immigrants and refugees separately, because although most of the issues involved are the same they see two main difference. Firstly voluntary migrants have usually planned and prepared for their migration and arrive

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[10] Integration: Mapping the Field.
[11] S. Castles, How nation states respond to immigration and ethnic diversity, New Community, 1995, vol. 21, no. 3, 293-308.
[12] A. Bloch, The Migration and Settlement of Refugees in Britain, Palgrave, Macmillan, Houndmills, UK, New York US 2002,82-83.
[13] Ibidem,84.
[14] C. Brochmann, 112.
[15] A.Bloch, The Migration and Settlement of Refugees in Britain,83.
[16] Ibidem,88.
[17] T. Modood, New Forms of Britishness: Post-Immigration Ethnicity and Hybridity in Britain, [in:] Identity and Integration Migrants in Western Europe, ed. by Rosemarie Sackmann, Bernhard Peters, Thomas Faist, Bremen, Ashgate Publishing Limited 2003,87.

with some resources while refugees are unable to plan or prepare and usually arrive with no resources at their disposal while having suffered significant trauma during their journey to safety. Secondly the Immigration Policies and the law in the host countries treats the two groups very differently even if the primary integration process is similar.

The authors of *Integration: Mapping the Field* cite D. Joly and associates who identified five types of refugee in Europe.[18] The first type they identify are 'convention refugees' those who are recognised on the basis of the 1951 Geneva Convention; then 'mandate refugees' who are recognised by UNHCR but not by their host government; the third group identified are 'humanitarian refugees' who are have been granted the right to stay on humanitarian grounds, then '*de facto* refugees' who are refugees in practice, but for one reason or another have not sought refugee status; and last but not least 'refugees in orbit', those who move from one European country too another in search of a permanent status. Each category of refugees is regulated by different legal constraints and therefore is subject to different rights. The latter three groups- 'humanitarian', 'de facto' and 'in orbit' are constantly subject to more and more restrictions and are denied some basic rights like the possibility of family reunification.[19]

Many authors, while acknowledging the different categories, go on to refer to refugees as one group and tend to concentrate on their similarities creating a few problems. One such problem is the lack of research regarding *the relationship between temporary protection and integration.* This leads onto another problem when attempting to define refugees. At what *point in time* does *a refugee stop being a refugee.*[20] There is also the problem of *blurred boundaries between economic migrants and refugees*. Many EU countries including the UK have put so many restrictions on immigration that it is now almost impossible for anyone, if they were born in a less developed country, to come as an economic migrant so they appear to come as asylum seekers rather than economic migrants.[21]

1.3. Integration of refugees as a process

Those who receive full refugee status receive automatically the right to special protection by the host state. This right includes help to settle and integrate and therefore allows access to social services, help with accommodation, education & retraining if necessary, access to work, not forgetting help to learn the language of the host society.

According to *Integration: Mapping the Field, f*rom 1996 onwards any research carried out regarding refugees in the UK was centered primarily on the practical aspects of integration, with special emphasis on what was available for refugees, ease of access and the quality of services offered. Researchers have experienced problems when studying the integration of refugees not only because refugees expected to integrate in a particular way, but the expectations of the EU States vary considerably and there is even disagreements within states about *the effects of asylum process on the process of integration*[22].

Both the researchers and NGO's believe there is a fundamental link between the length of the asylum process and the process of integration. They argue *how long a person awaits status acknowledgement and what he or she does during that period has enormous repercussions for the integration process. The asylum period may be lengthy, and it has been shown that if the refugee is excluded from all 'integration' services during this time, this will have a highly detrimental effect on long-term integration.*[23]

At the moment in the UK adult asylum seekers are prevented from receiving formal education (apart from English lessons or voluntary courses) and are not allowed to partake in training or work while they await a decision on their status that can take several years. Yet over a third of all asylum seekers in the UK are eventually granted some form of permission to remain in the UK. Waiting for so long

[18] D. Joly, et al. Refugees: Asylum in Europe? London 1992.: Minority Rights Publications.
[19] Integration: Mapping the Field.
[20] Ibidem.
[21] Ibidem.
[22] Ibidem.
[23] Ibidem.

surely puts their future careers at risk and prevents them from fulfilling their potential while denying them the right to contribute to the well being of the host nation.

The UNHCR executive standing committee meeting in July 2004 discussed the problems of refugees who find themselves *in a long-lasting and intractable state of limbo (5 years or more)* in a document entitled *Protracted Refugee Situations.* The Committee explains that while the refugees *lives may not be at risk, their basic rights and essential economic, social and psychological needs remain unfulfilled after years in exile. A refugee in this situation is often unable to break free from enforced reliance on external assistance.*[24]

While being unable to change the immediate situation UNHCR is able to take steps to improve the situation by guaranteeing that refugees are able to benefit from basic human rights. The UNHCR see *Refugee self-reliance is the key element in any strategy dealing with the effects of prolonged and stagnant exile.* They explain that to allow a refugee to be self reliant is not only more dignified for the individual concerned but is less costly for the host country and is a positive actor when it comes to possible repatriation. The essential elements of the UNHCR strategy are firstly the provision for all refugees of *physical, legal and economic security,* secondly removing any barriers that prevent the refugee from being self-reliant and thirdly creating opportunities for the refugee.[25] The UNHCR expresses concern that refugees not given these essential elements may feel the need *to resort to negative coping mechanisms.* The UNHCR declares that it is the responsibility of the host Government to work at removing any barriers or legal obstacles to the limitation of refugee movements or freedom to be employed.[26]

Even if the refugee is allowed to train or re-qualify and work there is no guarantee that the person will actually be able to find work. Some refugees with excellent English find themselves as fully qualified professionals and yet 'socially excluded' by the host community. The refugees find themselves facing various barriers such as racism or the more insidious hostility towards newcomers or refugees that can be embedded in the psyche of some people and difficult to overcome. Sometimes this hostility is due to racism but other times it is due to negative ideas about refugees often gained from the media stereotyping them or it can be simply that people are confused about whether refugees are allowed to work.

Some of the processes of integration are short while others are long but integration always begins on the day of arrival in the host country and therefore the refugees early experiences are bound to have long term effects. Refugees who have been disadvantaged early on, whose rights are denied or they have been given limited opportunities to integrate may find that in the long term they are a marginalized group. If initially the refugee is only allowed low paid jobs in spite of having been a professional in their own country, their initial poor quality of living in the host country may effect not only their future opportunities but even effect future generations. Those confined to detention centers are likely to have even greater mental and psychological problems to overcome. Treated as criminals, with suspicion, even when they are granted full status as refugees, they quite probably will find it hard to feel accepted as full members of society. Even if the refugee manages to overcome all the barriers and become fully integrated into society, the question remains *does this 'integrated' refugee then become a full member of UK society or rather a member of an ethnic minority?*[27]

1.4. Elements of the refugee policy

Brian Ray wrote in 2002 that there are five ways in which any new comer needs to integrate the host society in order to be fully integrated.

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[24] Executive Committee of the Dist. High Commissioner's Programme Restricted EC/54/SC/CRP14. 10 June 2004.
[25] Ibidem.
[26] Ibidem.
[27] Integration: Mapping the Field.

- Linguistic – fluency and competency in language used both informally & formally
- Labour Market – education, training, employment rates, mobility both social & professional, income
- Civic/political – involvement with church and local groups, including political parties and unions, permission to vote and their voting conduct.
- Educational - school choice, performance and drop out rates, higher educational achievement, communication with students from host community and communication with teachers
- Residential - segregated or mixed ethnic locality, size of accommodation for number of occupants, degree of housing mobility, rental discrimination, home ownership [28].

In 2004 the Asylum Rights Campaign (ARC) produced a report entitled *Providing Protection in the 21st Century* with the aim of putting Refugee Rights at the heart of the asylum policy. They made 45 recommendations to the government. Regarding the integration of asylum seekers and refugees, they wrote in recommendation 36: *The government must develop a comprehensive strategy for the early integration and settlement of all those granted leave to remain in the UK. The strategy should be based on the premise that integration starts from the moment asylum seekers arrive. This should be reflected in the provision of English language teaching, vocational and professional training and the entitlement to take up paid or unpaid employment while awaiting a decision on their claim. These measures are, in any event likely to enhance their life if they return to their home country.* ARC went onto say *Asylum seekers must be included within the scope and ambit of government social exclusion, community and race relations policy and legislation and ensure that the integration of asylum seekers is mainstreamed in the planning and delivery of relevant services.*[29]

The refugee Council (who are members of ARC) reiterated this recommendation in February 2005 stating in their own document regarding INTERGRATION **(**4 February 2005), *asylum seekers should be allowed to work while their asylum claim is being assessed. Asylum seekers do not want to be on state handouts, but they have no choice because the government will not let them work. Being able to work would restore pride and self-respect for asylum seekers and allow them to contribute to the economy and society*[30]. The UK government has itself stated that the refugees bring *new blood* that *can be a real source of strength to Britain in our changing world.* The UK has a tradition of welcoming refugees and many have come to the UK and made tremendous contributions to national life. The present UK Government agrees in theory that *Many refugees have skills, talents and enthusiasm that can be real assets to Britain if we can help them make the most use of them. But to give of their best, they have to be able to integrate with the host society as quickly and smoothly as possible. The government has a vision of a successful, integrated society that recognises and celebrates the strength in our diversity*[31].

However when it comes to integration the Government draws a distinction between refugees (people recognised as refugees) and asylum seekers (people whose claims are still under consideration including those who have not been granted full refugee status but only given a limited period of protection - discretionary leave or humanitarian protection). When the UK government speaks about integration, it refers to the process by which refugees (not asylum-seekers) are *empowered to achieve their full potential as members of British society, to contribute fully to the community, and to become fully able to exercise the rights and responsibilities that they share with other residents.* This strategy

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[28] B.Ray, Immigrant Integration: Building to Opportunity**,** Migration Policy Institute, October 1, 2002, http://www.migrationinformation. org/Feature/display.cfm?id=57.

[29] Providing Protection in the 21st Century, researched & written by Anneliese Baldaccini, ARC 2004.

[30] Refugee Council Documents re INTERGRATION, 4 February 2005, http://www. refugeecouncil. org.uk/ news/2005/feb05/relea189.htm

[31] Integration Matters: A National Strategy for Refugee Integration A draft for consultation, July 2004, http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/ind/en/home/laws___policy/refugee_integration0/a_national_strategy.Maincontent.0002.file.tmp/COI_NATI.pdf

is described in *Full and Equal Citizens* 2000 and applies only to England. Scotland and Wales having their own strategies.[32]

II. SITUATION OF THE KOSOVAN ASYLUM SEEKERS' FAMILIES FROM INTEGRATION PERSPECTIVE

To answer the question about situation of Kosovan asylum seekers families from integration perspective we interviewed 50 Albanian speakers of whom forty-four were Kosovans, five Albanians and one Montenegran with one originally from Yugoslavian. Our method of finding interviewees was 'Snowballing'. Starting with Kosovan families we already knew, we relied on these contacts to put us in touch with other Albanian speakers and various NGO Support Centres in the East end of London, who could put us in contact with further Kosovan asylum-seekers.

2.1. Description of the Questionnaire[33]

In all there were 70 questions in the original Questionnaire, with 8 questions in the March 2004 update and 23 in the October 2004 update for those granted the Amnesty and 21 for those who had not received the Amnesty but had been granted either Refugee Status or Exceptional Leave to Remain (ELR), Humanitarian protection, Discretionary Leave or were either still awaiting the Home Office decision or were appealing against a refusal.
In the Original questionnaire the following topics were covered:-

- Profile of family: age, marital status, children, household, education and occupation in country of origin, affiliation to any faith group
- Choice of the UK, way of arrival legally/illegally, application processes for asylum
- Assimilation: English lessons, children's education, accommodation, medical & legal care, present status in UK, permission to work, help by Church/ Faith groups, treatment received from other people in London
- Well being, health, material situation, help from voluntary and state groups
- Links with home country & future plans, hopes regarding a future immigration policy.
- Affects of the Amnesty on status, wellbeing and occupation

In the March 2004 update the questionnaire covered the following topics: -

- Present Status
- Changes to family's material situation since the spring of 2003
    - accommodation
    - Immigration lawyer
    - Children – another baby, school
- Benefits / problems with benefits

The October 2004 update the questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Present status, date of arrival in UK
- Date granted Amnesty
- Accommodation , condition, number of rooms, settled or required to move, any problems when moving from Social Services/NASS to housing provided by Local Council, emergency accommodation
- Benefits,
- British citizenship, passport, travel documents

2.2. Country of origin and whether they came from a rural/urban area.

[32] Ibidem.
[33] Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4.

Firstly, we looked at their country of origin. Secondly, we looked at their background, was it mainly rural or urban? In our group we discovered the majority of asylum seekers were from villages rather than cities. 24 of the respondents were from villages, while only five were from towns and 17 from cities. Two informants who came to the UK from Kosovo grew up in Serbia originally but married Kosovans. Another stated that she was Yugoslavian but married a Kosovan. One had been studying Ecomonics at a Serbian University and taken part in a big demonstration in 1981. She was asked to leave and because she also wanted to be free of the Serbian regime she went to Kosovo.

2.3. Sex and age of Respondents

Although we were interested in the family we only interviewed one member of that family who responded on the family's behalf. The majority of respondents were women (45) (Table 1.) this was mainly due to two facts. Firstly most of the interviews took place at Refugee centers where the women were receiving English lessons and had formed support groups for themselves and their children. The second reason appeared to be quite simply a certain reluctance on the part of the men to attend these classes and therefore it was more difficult to make contact with them. We asked the respondent's age (Table 1.). By far the majority of 33 were in the age group 31-40, while 11 were aged 21-30, there were 3 aged 41-50 and only 1 aged 16-20. There were only two people over 50 at the time of the first interview.

Table 1. Sex and age of Respondents

Years old	Male	Female
16 – 20		1
21 – 30		11
31 – 40	3	30
41 – 50	1	2
51 – 60	1	1
Number of respondents	**5**	**45**

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.4. Marital status

All the respondents had been married although two came to the UK single, one of whom came to join her boyfriend and married once they arrived in England. 40 were still married and living with their partners, while five of the women's husbands had died during the conflict in Kosovo and circumstances had forced five couples to live apart, of whom two husbands had been deported.

2.5. Number of children per family

We concentrated on families, the majority of whom have very young children. The average number of children in a family was two. 24 families had 2 children. 2 families had no children, 9 families had 1 child while 14 families had 3 children. Only 1 family had 4 children.

2.6. Ages and sex of children

The majority of the children, 67 were under 9 years old, while only 36 were over 9 years old. Interestingly the families had 58 boys and only 45 girls (Table 2.). Not all the children were with

their parents. One respondent told us that her son, aged 15, was missing in Kosovo and another told us that as she and her husband were separated their son spent 4 days with her and 3 with his dad. Two respondents were pregnant. Both had baby boys who arrived after the initial interviews – one child in late June 2003 & the other in late July 2003. Not included in Table 2 are three new arrivals - a baby girl born in February 2004 and another two babies (a boy and a girl) born in August 2004.

Table 2. Ages and sex of children

Age in Years	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11	12-14	15-17	18+	Total
Boys	6	13	15	10	4	6	4	58
Girls	10	10	13	2	5	3	2	45
Total number of children	16	23	28	12	9	9	6	103

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.7. Education received in home country

The majority of the respondents said that they and their partners had received some education although they admitted at times it had been isporadic due to the situation in the country. (Table 3.) The majority of respondents (42) received at least 8 years of intermittent education while 11 of those went onto some form of higher education and 8 received 4 years or less. Eight respondents were unable to say how long their partners had been in school. However the questionnaires showed that often the wife appeared to have received more education than her husband. Possibly the reason for this was an emphasis on the husband needing to go out and earn a living as soon as he was old enough.

Table 3. Education received in home country

Number of Years of Education	**2**	**3**	**4**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**11**	**12**	**14**	**16**	**17**	**18**	**19**	**Total**
Respondent	1	1	6	11	2	2	1	15	1	4	3	2	1	49
Partner			2	13		4		15	2	3		1	2	41

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

Naturally some of the older children also received some education in their home countries but that also was sporadic and we did not attempt to quantify how much education the children had received.

2.8. Occupation in home Country

The respondents were asked about their and their partner's occupation in their home country.

Table 4. Occupation in home Country

Occupation	Respondent	Partner
Studying	2	1
Housewife	18	3
Plumber	1	
Brick layer	1	
Carpenter		1
Electrician		2
Architect		1
Teacher/child care	7	
Business person	3	6
Shop owner	1	
Engineer	3	3
Government worker	2	2
Policeman		1
Work in a bank	2	
Accountancy/economics	1	
Doctor	1	1
Nurse	1	
Vet		1
Agriculture	2	6
Shepherd		3
Mechanic		1
Driver		4
Hairdresser	1	
shop assistant		1
Factory manager		1
Unemployed	2	2
Not specified or n/a	2	9

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

As we can see the respondents and their partners came from a vast range of work experiences. The majority of women (21) were housewives, with seven women directly working with children, either teaching or in childcare. The most popular occupation for men appeared to be working either in business or agriculture, while we have an architect, a plumber, a carpenter, a bricklayer and two electricians. One husband and wife were doctors while another man was a vet and another woman a nurse. Six people were engineers, four people were working for the government in their home countries with one policeman. Four of the men were drivers. One woman was a hairdresser. Someone worked in a shop, while another owned a shop and two worked in banks. Some (9) of the women respondents did not specify what work, if any their husbands had done, while some admitted they had only been promised in marriage and didn't know what their husbands actually did for a living before they left Kosovo. In Kosovo and Albania they have arranged marriages. It is traditional for the young peoples' parents to choose a husband or wife for them before they reach 16 years old. They are then promised in marriage although they might not actually marry for a few years. The young women are not allowed to mix socially with any young men unless with their parents and family present and cannot go out alone even with their husband to be. They are allowed to meet the man chosen for them but only while chaperoned.

2.9. Members of family respondent left in Home country & those who fled abroad

Table 5. shows how many of the Respondents' family members stayed in their home country and how many fled abroad. Due to fear and poor communication available within their home countries, most of the respondents could only say where their family members were when they left their home country

and had no idea actually how many members were still at home, had fled abroad or had died. Those who managed to keep in touch were only aware of the situation of their parents or in laws, having little idea of the position their brothers and sisters found themselves in. Therefore Table 5. gives us a very unclear picture of the truth.

Table 5. Members of family respondent left in Home country & those who fled abroad

	Mother	Father	Mother in law	Father in law	Husband	Children	Your sisters	Your brothers	Partner's Sisters	Partner's brothers
Number still in home country	34	23	20	19	3	2	35	28	32	41
Fled abroad	4	4	2	3			18	12	7	11
Died	3	8	3	5						

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.10. Year respondent arrived in England

All the families interviewed arrived during the period 1997 to 2003. (Table 6.) As we can see the majority arrived immediately before the intervention of the NATO in the Kosovan conflict or during the conflict or immediately after it, with thirteen arriving in the UK between March 1998 and December 1998 and twenty-six arriving during 1999 while only six arrived in 2000, one in 1997, 0ne in 2001 and 2003 with two in 2002.

Table 6. Year respondent arrived in England

	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Jan-Mar		1	3	1			
Apr-Jun	1	3	6	3	1		1
Jul-Sept		3	9	1		1	
Oct-Dec		2	5	1		1	
Not stated		4	4				
Number of families	1	13	26	6	1	2	1

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.11. Motivation to leave country of Origin

The respondents were asked to give no more than five reasons for leaving their home country although some gave more than five and others less (Table 7.). The majority forty gave 'war 'as the main motivation to leave their own country, twenty-four cited 'people being killed' while twenty-two people cited 'death threats' as another reason and twenty cited 'their own house was burnt down'. Nineteen declared 'it was unsafe' and fourteen also declared 'women raped' as a reason for leaving. Many of the women admitted feeling unable to tell their husbands that they also had been raped. A third of the group cited 'political persecution' as a reason, while eleven cited 'religious persecution' as

a reason for leaving. A small number (3) said they hoped for a better life. Some gave another reason to those listed – fear for their children's safety.

Table 7. Motivation to leave country of Origin

Reasons given for leaving country of origin	
War	40
Religious persecution	11
Political persecution	15
People being killed	24
Houses burnt down	18
Own house burnt down	20
It was unsafe	19
People assaulted	9
Death threats	22
People arrested	8
Women raped	14
Hope for a better life	3
Famine	2
Poverty	2

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

The only asylum-seeker we interviewed from Montenegro, a man told us "We had helped the Kosovan Albanians so the Serbs threatened us with death. I was arrested twice and released as there wasn't enough evidence however when I was summoned to the High court for a third time I decided I must leave the country. My wife had been tortured in our country."

Only one respondent said her husband's brother had joined them in England. The majority (40) of the fifty respondents said no family member had joined their family in England and they had not joined family members already in the UK.

However, seven of the respondents said that they had joined other members of their family in England. Two had come to join their husbands, the other his wife. He had been in hiding when his wife and son escaped and only joined her in Feb 2002. The third respondent had come to England in the hope of finding her teenage son who had fled with a group of teenagers after the death of his father when he, too, was threatened with death. Another respondent said she came to join her mother & father.

One family said the other members of their family were scattered over many countries. Many of the families expressed sorrow that no family member had been able to join them but said that it was impossible now with the Government's new legislation. With great joy one of the Albanian interviewee announced that her mother had just come to England. She had easily obtained a visa to visit their family for one month.

2.12. Reasons for Choosing the UK

Table 8 shows the various reasons the respondents gave for arriving in the UK. As we can see in thirty-six of the respondents said they had come to the UK with their families by chance. When they boarded a lorry in their home country there one and only aim was to get their families to safety and as long as they left Kosovo they didn't mind where they were taken. Of those who said they had chosen the UK, six already had relatives in England, one of whom chose England in the hope of finding her husband while another came to join her boyfriend. Four also gave political reasons, while only one thought it would be easier to stay here. The overwhelming reason given for choosing the UK was for

the freedom it offered. No one said they had chosen England for economic reasons although one lady declared that she used to dream of travelling to England because she had heard that it had a great name in democracy. Before she arrived she heard that England gave benefits etc and she thought it would be good to go to England. She had already learnt some English in Albania.

Table 8. Reasons for Choosing the UK

Reasons	By chance	For Economic Reasons	It is easier to get permission to stay	Relatives already in England	Political reasons	Freedom
Number of interviewees	36		1	6	4	7

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

Forty-six of the families arrived illegally without documentation while only four arrived with documentation, legally. Since the respondents arrival no one had been given a passport apart from one informant's son who was born here. There was no explanation for this. Other children born to asylum seekers in the UK have not been granted passports.

2.13. Transport used to reach UK

The respondents were asked how they had reached the UK. What forms of transport they had used. (Table 9.) Gathering clear information about the asylum-seekers methods of transport proved fairly difficult to obtain. While 43 families were sure they had made at least part of their journey by one or more lorries because many of them had been unable to leave the lorry at any stage on their journey they had no idea whether the lorry had gone by ferry to the UK or by Eurostar neither were they aware to which port they had entered the UK as they had disembarked from the lorry for the first time 'in country' and many were unaware of where they disembarked.

Table 9. Transport used to reach UK

	Boat	Car	van	lorry	Ferry	Plane	train
Number of respondents	9	4	1	43		3	7
Total journeys	9	4	1	53	4	4	11

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

At least 53 different lorries were used by the asylum-seekers. Others were surer about their journey saying they had first traveled by a tiny boat (9) – a hazardous crossing from Albania to Italy and then got on a lorry while others were aware of traveling by ferry (4) or even train (11) or by plane (4).

To the question: "Did you know you would have to apply for asylum when you came to England?" only 11 of the respondents knew that they would have to apply for asylum when they reached England, while 19 of the respondents had no idea that they would need to apply for asylum. Two respondents did not need to apply. While 20 either did not understand the question or chose not to answer it.

Three-quarters of the group (38) registered either immediately on arrival or the next day. Forty-four people had registered within 3 days while only six people took longer to register, with one person unable to remember when her family had registered. Twenty-seven respondents registered in Croydon and one in Liverpool, one in London and three in Waterloo that is thirty-two 'in country' while

twelve registered at 'the port' and five couldn't remember where they registered. Only one did not need to register.

Considering the very difficult conditions the young families travelled under plus the fact the families were under extreme stress and were unaware they would have to register as asylum- seekers, and couldn't speak any English it is incredible that so many registered within two days.

2.14. Help respondents received on Registration

The respondents were asked what they were given when they registered. (Table 10.) All respondents (48) who required documents agreed that they were given IND. Only twenty-two claimed to have been given accommodation, seventeen were given food and fourteen were given money. Some were unclear about what they had been given probably due to the fact they were traumatized and exhausted when they arrived in the UK and some did not include the help they received from the Social Services department they had been sent to upon registration, later the same day.

One interviewee told us that on registration in Croydon (July 2000) they were given an interview, had their photographs taken and were then told to go to the Refugee Council in Brixton for accommodation and money. No one gave them any money for the fares to get to Brixton. The refugee council sent them to temporary accommodation in Kentish Town. Another interviewee with his wife and 2 young boys told us that they were initially given £284 to last them two weeks.

Table 10. Help respondents received on Registration

	Identity	Food	Accommodation	money	Other not specified	N/A
Number of families	48	17	22	14	2	1

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.15. Treatment by authorities (police, Home Office)

The majority of families (36) claimed to have been treated either very well or well by the authorities, police and immigration personnel. (Table 11.) Six said they had been treated okay while only two complained that they had been treated badly. A respondent who arrived initially in Portsmouth declared "*We were treated well by Authorities in Croydon but very badly in Portsmouth."* Another said with anguish *"They didn't believe me."* Describing her interview one Kosovan said, "*At the first meeting they took my finger prints – people were very nice to me. There was an interpreter there. I was given some letters however I wasn't told they must be returned within 28 days or I would receive a negative. I waited one month and then went to solicitor but I wasn't given a negative*." (19) One respondent said sadly, *"Although some officials were polite, I didn't feel respected even by the Kosovan interpreters."* For most the experience was more positive, "*Social services were very respectful."*

Table 11. Treatment by authorities (police, Home Office)

Sent to	London	Southend	Aldershot	Rother	Family	Total
Treated Very well	24			2	1	27
Well	12				2	14
Okay	4	1	1			6
Badly	2					2
Very badly						
n/a					1	1
Number of respondents	42	1	1	2	4	50

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.15. Where the respondents were sent to on Registration

Table 11. shows where the respondents were sent to after registration. On registering, forty-two of the respondents were sent to London, one to Southend and another respondent to Aldershot. While four respondents were staying with relatives and returned to their homes. Another two were sent to an unspecified destination. However it wasn't always a simple procedure. One family told us they were initially sent to Brixton. From Brixton they were sent to High Street Kensington and then onto a hotel in Kilburn. One respondent told us *" We were given Ind. Later when our son was born we went to register him with Immigration but our papers were never returned so now we have no Identity papers. Because we have no Ind we have had great difficulty accessing benefits."* Social Services however acknowledged they were aware of the problem and eventually gave them benefits.

2.16. Documentation from Home Office

The respondents were asked in the questionnaires which documents they had received from the Home Office. There was a little confusion as a few respondents were unsure of the legal terms of their status but their responses can be seen in Table 12.

Table 12. Documentation from Home Office

Documentation from Home Office	Spring 2003	Spring 2004
Identity	46	
Temporary residence	2	
Permanent residence	2	1
Exceptional leave to remain	2	2
Discretional Leave	1	2
Humanitarian protection		1
Refugee status	3	3
Travel document	1	2
Passport		2
Awaiting decision from home Office	34	16
Received Amnesty Questionnaire		3
Granted Amnesty		6
Case closed	1	
Husband deportation	2	
Other	1	

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

On registration forty-six families received Identity documents (IND) that consisted of a single sheet of Home Office paper with the declaration that the family claimed to be …(with their name and nationality) and then the husbands name and age, his wife's and his children. It included photographs. Four families already had documentation and didn't require IND. By the time the families were interviewed in 2003 there were only three who had received refugee status and one a travel document, one had received temporary residence, two permanent residence and two exceptional leave to remain, while one family had their case closed and another family claimed they had received other documents but the language barrier made it impossible for them to be more specific. Of the group of 50 an astounding thirty-four had no status whatsoever and were in a state of limbo awaiting a decision from the Home Office. In the Spring of 2003 there was some question about whether one family had exceptional leave to remain or not. The judge had granted it on appeal but then the Home Office had refused. The family were eventually granted the amnesty in February 2004. By the Summer of 2004 just under half that group (16) had been granted the amnesty and three had received the questionnaire regarding the amnesty but were still awaiting the outcome. Another two respondents husbands had been deported while they were left behind.

When the respondents were re-interviewed in the Spring of 2004, twelve were unavailable to be interviewed as they had been relocated or deported and consequently we were no longer able to contact them. Of the thirty eight we were able to interview, only six had been granted the Amnesty introduced by the Government in October 2003 and only three other families had received the Amnesty Questionnaire and were awaiting its outcome while sixteen were still awaiting a decision and had not received the Amnesty questionnaire, while five respondents had arrived after Oct 2000 and therefore did not qualify for the Amnesty. Two had been granted exceptional leave, one discretionary leave and one permanent residence, three had refugee status and one humanitarian protection. Two of the group had also received travel documents.

2.17. Treatment received from people in London

When asked how they had been treated by other people in London when they first arrived almost 80% said they had either been "welcomed as friends" or were treated "okay". (Table 13.) One said, *"I was lost. People felt sorry for me. I couldn't communicate."* Nine complained they had been ignored as strangers, while one actually felt unwelcome. She is a Catholic but declared, *"When looking for housing I received religious discrimination – was asked 'Are you a Muslim' before a landlord offered me housing,"* and one felt she wasn't trusted, "*I didn't feel trusted."* Only one declared she had not been treated well, *"I had my window broken."*

Table 13. Treatment received from people in London

	Welcomed as friends	okay	Ignored as strangers	Made to feel unwelcome	As scroungers	As terrorists	Not trusted	Not good/well
Number of families	31	7	9	1			1	1

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.18. Necessity of English lesson and Ease of Access

With the exception of one respondent every other person needed English lessons. (Table 14.) Nearly half the group (23) found it difficult to access English lessons. Those who were not attending classes at the time of the interview gave a variety of reasons. One lady in her early fifties stated *"I feel I am*

too old to learn English." A more common problem was illness or unspecified problems as one respondent said, *" I am very sick and unable to attend lessons."* and another *"No, I don't attend lessons. I want to sort out a few problems first."*

Table 14. Necessity of English lesson and Ease of Access

	Yes	**No**	Not needed	Not stated
Did you need English lessons?	47	1		2
Was it easy to get English lessons immediately?	21	23	1	5

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

Many of the women expressed a desire to learn English but lack of available childcare came high on the list of difficulties. One man said *"My wife went two days a week when we arrived here but since our baby arrived it hasn't been possible for her to attend. I feel unable to take lessons."* A lady declared *"No, I'm not attending English lessons at present. It is difficult with a young child and pregnant."* While another said "*It's not easy to attend lessons because I have to look after my child.* Another lady has a handicapped child aged four who needs her presence 24 hours a day. She is desperate to learn English and asked if there was anyone who could teach her in her home.

2.18. Acquiring English Classes and Attendance at lessons

Twenty-nine respondents are at present attending English lessons, nineteen attending at least three times a week and almost half (14) of the twenty-nine were taken by a friend to English lessons. One lady expressed the opinion of many when she declared, "*The Form to apply for English lessons could not be completed by a non- English speaker."* Another lady on arriving with her daughter in the UK said, "*I was very sick for the first three years after I arrived here. My daughter encouraged me to get out and helped me to find English lessons."*

2.19. Ease of Access for Children to local schools

While 26 families (Table 15.) had found it very easy or fairly easy to place their children in school and eight of the respondents' children were too young to require school when the family arrived in the UK, there were still fourteen families who found it difficult or very difficult.

Table 15. Ease of Access for Children to local schools

	Very easy	**Fairly easy**	**difficult**	**Very difficult**	**N/A**	**No comment**
Number of respondents	12	14	12	2	8	2

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

One respondent said, *" When our daughters started school, we had been in the country over five months."* A second respondent said they were here three months before they could get the children into a school. One respondent stated *"We had to wait three months. We tried schools in Ilford & Stratford."* While another respondent had had to wait six-seven months for a place. Another respondent said, *"It was difficult to get our oldest son into school but since then everything has been fine."* In another family the mother said *"It took about six months to get into a school, because of temporary accommodation. Eventually our Son looked for schools on the internet and found a school himself - St. Bonaventures."*

Some parents were more fortunate as one said, " W*e had to wait a few days for a place in a Catholic school, meanwhile children were placed in a local state school."* One Catholic family were dismayed to discover they had to prove they were Catholic before their child was given a place, as the parent proclaimed *"It is very difficult when you have no documentation."*

2.20. Present Accommodation

The respondents were asked how many rooms (including the kitchen and bathroom) their present accommodation has for their own' families sole use. (Table 16.) There appears to be little logic in the allocation of housing, with a family of four with seven rooms while another family of four has just four rooms. Two families of five had only two rooms each, while nine families of four had five rooms each and six families of four had six rooms each.

Table 16. Present Accommodation

	1 room	**2 rooms**	**3 rooms**	**4 rooms**	**5 rooms**	**6 or 7 rooms**
B & B		1		1		
Council Mouse/Flat			2	2	1	2
Emergency Accommodation	1					
Private rented house/flat				6	8	4
Social housing		1	1	3	11	5
Total number of families	1	2	1	12	20	11

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.20.1. Number in Family compared to Number of Rooms in present Accommodation

Table 16.1. Number in Family compared to Number of Rooms in present Accommodation

Number in family	1 room	2 rooms	3 rooms	4 rooms	5 rooms	6 rooms	7 rooms
2	1		2	2			
3		1		7	3		
4				3	9	6	1
5		2	1	1	7	3	1
6							1
Total	**1**	**3**	**3**	**12**	**19**	**9**	**3**

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.20.2. Length of time in and condition of present accommodation

As we can see in the Table 16.2. below while a staggering thirty respondents had been in the present accommodation less than 3 years, nine of those had had to move house within the last 6 months. Only six respondents had been in the same home for five to six years. When we consider the remarks of the respondents to the state of their accommodation we must bear in mind that while some were basing their evaluation on their comparison of housing in Kosovo (which is considerably poorer than in the UK) and seeing the accommodation here as at least adequate if not good or very good, others were basing their judgement on the type of housing they would aspire to with twelve stating their accommodation was either fair or poor.

Twenty-seven respondents declared they found their present accommodation either good (16), very good (10) or excellent (1). While eleven declared it was adequate, six said it was fair and six described it as poor. Among those who thought their accommodation was good we hear the comment, "*Children*

like the garden. The house is in good condition." while others were far from content. The following comments were expressed among many, *" The bathroom is very poor. Water from the shower goes through to the kitchen,"* and another stated, *"We have a very small kitchen with no window. It is difficult to cook as I*

Table 16.2. Length of time in and condition of present accommodation

	Time in Present home				
Description of home	Less than 6 months	6 months to less than one year	1-2 years	3- 4 years	5-6 years
Excellent	1				
Very good	4	1	3	1	1
Good	2	4	4	3	3
Adequate			3	6	2
Fair	1		5		
Poor	1		1	4	

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

have asthma." "*It was empty with no furniture and needed cleaning."*Another respondent sadly told us*, "We are waiting for permanent accommodation. We spent 4 years in Tower Hamlets before we moved here. It upset my son very much at move – he doesn't smile now"* and *"We live in emergency accommodation with another family who are from Iran".*

While many have described their accommodation as good they have also been tolerant of many problems a family born here would not tolerate. For example one couple with three children under 6 years old, are living at present in a flat for a single person. A few months ago the ceiling in their hall way collapsed on top of their 2 year old daughter who suffered cuts on her face plus a headache for days. The landlady instead of looking into the cause of the collapse asked the man in the upstairs flat to plaster over the ceiling and hide the damage. Whenever it rains, they have water flooding through their flat roof by their bathroom and are infested with cockroaches and mice. Discovering they had been without hot water for a month, Sr.Anne persuaded the landlady to take immediate action and within 12 hours she had installed a new boiler. Environmental health have declared their home unfit to live in and a health and safety risk. They visited the Homeless Centre on 25th February 2005 with a letter of eviction from their landlady, saying they had to vacate the house within three weeks. They are waiting to be placed in emergency accommodation until they can be rehoused.

Although thirty-eight respondents appeared reasonably content with their accommodation, in reality accommodation has proved to be a major problem for the asylum seekers and not just on arrival in the UK but a problem that continues even after they have been granted refugee status or indefinite leave to remain after the Amnesty. One family spent their first night in a park and then three days in a hotel before they were given accommodation. Another family Spent 6 months in a hotel in Dover. A family of four, although initially fortunate because they were invited to stay for three nights by a Kosovan family – who heard them talking on the street in Ilford to the children and recognised their language, were less fortunate once they approached the authorities. They had to spend their first 8 months in the UK in one room in a hotel. One respondent told us, "*For ten months I stayed with friends without money. I spent two years in Forest Gate and one year in Plaistow."* Another respondent told us, *"We spent two weeks in a hotel for homeless people in Liverpool and then social services gave us a flat. We stayed there for two years and then came to London to stay with a cousin who was sick. He has since been sent back to Kosovo."* Another lady told us, *"We spent eight hours at a Detention centre. They questioned my husband for seven hours and myself for two hours on my own.*

After that we received our Ind and were allowed to go to London that afternoon at 4pm. We stayed one night with friends." One lady told us of her distress when NASS wanted to send her to accommodation in Glasgow. *"I was afraid to go. If I wanted to stay in London they said they would have to place us in another hotel with no benefits. My daughter had become sick in the hotel as she could not eat the food so my cousin helped to pay for me to supplement NASS and live in a house with him."* Another lady told us *"When we first arrived in England we were placed in a one bedroom flat with my husband. There were 5 of us – my sister & brother in law, my son and my husband and I. There was just one bed. Three of us slept in the bed and two on the floor."*

Another respondent related her experience to us, *" We arrived in the Uk one day in January at 1am in the morning, a friend had a brother in London. We waited at Brixton station but the man never came. We had no money. We went to the police station and talked using their hands but the Police sent us away. 'No one helped us.' We were crying. A 16 year old boy took us to a house and gave us one room but no food. There was no heating. In the morning the landlady came and told us we must leave. She said ' Get out, It's my home!' We went back to the Home Office and were sent to Aldgate. We phoned 999 and the police took us to overnight accommodation. There was one single bed with not even a sheet for the three of us and we stayed a week. We looked for church people who gave us food but wouldn't let us sleep in the church. For seven days in January we slept anywhere we could, at the station, in the underground, on a church bench. Each day we went to social services in Hackney eventually we were housed in Plaistow".*

2.20.3. Time spent living in Hotel Accommodation.

Many families spent time living in hotels or Bed and Breakfast (B & B). Some were actually placed in one hotel and then moved to another or even to a B& B. (Table16.3) Two respondents are at present living in B&B's. One has been in a B&B for 4 years and has lived in a hotel for a year before she moved to the B&B. She hasn't lived anywhere else in the 5 years she has lived in England. In total thirty-five respondents were accommodated in hotels/B&B's and four of those spent time in more than one establishment. Only one respondent felt able to describe her hotel accommodation as excellent, while seven said their hotel accommodation had been good. The majority (15) described their hotel as poor. Eight had had to stay in a poor hotel for at least five weeks and four had been in very poor hotels for six months to a year. Sixteen respondents had stayed in B & B accommodation.

Table 16.3. Time spent living in Hotel Accommodation**.**

Time	Excellent hotel	Good hotel	Poor hotel	Bed & Breakfast
Less than a week			1	2
1-2 weeks		1	5	4
3-4 weeks		2	1	1
5-10 weeks	1		4	4
6 -8months		2	2	
1 year		2	2	1
2 years				
4 years				1
Not stated				3

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

The respondents were not asked to evaluate their B & B accommodation but I did visit a family of three - a husband & wife (both ill), with their 16 year old son (who was sitting his GCSE's). On being granted refugee status they were told to leave their NASS accommodation and were put into emergency accommodation for almost 6 weeks in a one room in a B & B hotel in Ilford, Essex. It was

dingy and dirty. Their room was a double room with a single bed squeezed in. They hardly had room to turn around. It had a wardrobe and a chest of drawers. The bedding was stained and looked filthy. Breakfast was provided but they had to fend for themselves for all other meals. They had to eat out which is very expensive and difficult when you are also having problems obtaining benefits as they were and having to rely on friends to lend you money. Another lady told us, *"I was sent to social services and I was given accommodation in a hotel for one year with my husband and son."* However, some experiences were different.

2.20.4 Accommodation since arrival in UK

When asked "How many flats/houses/hotels have you lived in since you arrived here?" some families did not include the first property they were placed in; the time they stayed with friends or in a hotel or B&B so the number in the above chart is a little misleading. For example a family who stated on the questionnaire that they had lived in three properties when listing their homes in the UK, for me recently, actually had lived in five properties and are about to move again as their present home has been declared a risk for health and safety. Twenty-three respondents said they had lived in two properties, twenty-one in three properties, three respondents had lived in four properties and two respondents declared they had lived in five properties.

2.21. Benefits

All the families in Table 20. have permission to stay in the UK and therefore are on main stream benefits. Due to their low incomes they are entitled to free prescriptions plus free school meals. The benefits are worked out on a very complicated system that means the amount given is dependant not only on status, but family circumstances that can appear to be the same but be perceived differently. If you receive Refugee status or the Amnesty you receive the same benefits as any UK citizen but if you receive Refugee status (in 2004) you still had the right to back dated benefits that you lose with the amnesty and that can be considerable of money. It can be as much as £7,000 which is enough to give the family the opportunity to settle and get on with their life and shows how little they have been paid during their time in the UK.[34] A couple with a little girl aged three, with refugee status told us they receive £88 a week housing benefit, £15.75 a week child benefit and £150 Income support. Another respondent who also has refugee status, with 2 children under 11, told us they get £26.80 a week child benefit and £68.64 Working Tax Credit. They also get free prescriptions & free school meals.

Two of the families in the table below had been without benefits for a time.

Table 17. Benefits

Number of children in family	Status	Support received	Mount a week	Housing Benefit a week	Child Benefit a week	Child Tax Credit
4	Amnesty	Income Support	£142.10	Yes	Yes	
2	Exceptional leave	Job Seekers	£151	Yes	Yes	
2	Amnesty	Job Seekers	£151	Yes	Yes	
2	Humanitarian protection	Income Support	£97	£110	£26	
2	Discretionary	Income	£97	£160	£16	

[34] Elane Heffernan, Refugee Resettlement Worker, Newham Council

	leave	suport				
2	Refugee	Job Seekers	£85	Yes	£15	
3	Refugee	Income Support	£119	£90	£37.50	£93

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.21. 1. Benefits for Asylum-Seekers

Asylum seekers receive a fraction of main stream benefits. Some of the respondents elaborated for us a little on the state support they were receiving. Those families still awaiting status are mainly supported by NASS or Social services as we can see below. (Table 18). There doesn't appear to be a set amount given by Social Services or NASS for a family of 3 or less children. A family with 2 children over 18, who are still awaiting a decision from the home Office told us they receive £130 a week Job Seekers allowance, housing plus free prescriptions. A lady with two children under 10, declared, "I receive Support from NASS of over £150 a week. We also receive free accommodation, school meals and prescriptions." Another respondent told us that although her child receives free school meals she hasn't received any kind of financial support for the last year.

Table 18. Benefits for Asylum-Seekers

Number of children under 16	Support from Social Services / NASS	Child benefit (amount per week)	Free housing, prescriptions & school meals	Have you ever been without benefits?
4	£120	£37.50	Yes	8 months for New baby
3	£127	£31	Yes	1 month
3	£147	yes	Yes	No
3	£147	£26.50	Yes	No
3	£148	yes	Yes	2 months & 3 months
3	£156	?	Yes	No
3	£170	?	Yes	No
3	£138	yes	Yes	3 months for New baby
2	£121	yes	Yes	No
2	£117	?	Yes	No
2	£97	?	Yes	No
2	£112	yes	Yes	6 months for new baby
1	£108	yes	Yes	No

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

One family told us that they were in Ilford for two weeks and then placed in rented accommodation in Manor Park. Shortly afterwards they were moved to another house and then after approximately one year they were evicted by their landlord because their Housing Benefit hadn't been paid for months due to the disorder and consequent backlog that had built up in the Benefits office. They moved to a privately rented flat over a shop, with most of the rent being paid by the State in the form of Housing Benefit. Another respondent told us that their rent is £205 a week. They receive £140 in benefits. Their present landlord is evicting them because they wanted to return to Liverpool and because they

told him they had found alternative accommodation, he found new tenants but their new accommodation in Liverpool had fallen through so they are now homeless. A third respondent told us that they have to move shortly as their landlord wants to sell the property. The asylum team will help them to find housing near the children's schools. (13) *Another respondent said, "We have to share the bathroom, kitchen and living room. It is dirty. I'm afraid my baby son will catch something. He wants to touch everything."*

2.22. Contact with own Country

When asked how much contact the respondents have with their own country (Table 19), one respondent declared, *"My family never write. My mum didn't like my marriage. I left home without permission. I was 23."* Another respondent, whose husband had been deported, told us that she had spoken to her mother recently but she didn't know where the respondent's husband was. One lady declared that she would like to return home to live because she missed her family but she couldn't return because it was still unsafe in her area, Mitrovica.

Table 19. Contact with own Country

		I hale contact		
I have no contact with my own country	**I have contact with my own country**	**By Letter**	**By Phone**	**Through relatives & friends**
15	35	5	31	3

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.22.1.Desire to return to Home Country and reasons given

Forty-six of the respondents expressed no wish to return to their home country to live (Table 19.1.) with only four wanting to return home. The main reasons for desiring to return home to live was because they missed their family and friends, while three expressed this in terms of being homesick.

Table 19.1. Desire to return to Home Country and reasons given

		Reasons I want to return home				
I do not want to return home to live	**I would like to return home to live**	**Miss family**	**Miss friends**	**Home Sick**	**Prefer home culture**	**Prefer home climate**
46	4	4	3	3	1	1

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.22.2.Reasons Respondents cannot return to their own Country to Live

Most of the respondents indicated that they had reasons (Table 19.2.) for not wishing or being able to return to their home country but few actually specified their reasons. Six declared they could not return because they had been subjected to religious persecution, while four declared they had suffered from political persecution. Five said they faced death threats and one ethnic persecution in their home country. Others (4) couldn't afford to return home, while five stated that they would find readjustment too difficult. Four said they now have family commitments in the UK. Among other comments we heard were, *" It is very difficult to live there."* Another gave the reason, *"My house was burnt down. I*

have a daughter over here and I am married. I am ashamed of my community and the horrible things that happened in Kosovo." While another explained that a Muslim wife who separates from her husband, loses all rights to see her son if she lives in Kosovo while here she has equal rights. As she said *" Because of my son. If I lived in Kosovo I would have no rights over my son. I would never see my child. The father has all the rights. When parents separate both parents should see their child. I want my child to spend time with his dad as well as with me."* Although not wishing to return another stated, *"We would like to be able to visit."* An Albanian respondent sadly proclaimed *"No, we wouldn't wish to return there to live. Many people sleep in Albania with a gun under their pillow. We never had one. There was a danger it might be used it in anger."*

Table 19.2. Reasons Respondents cannot return to their own Country to Live

I am prevented from returning home by	
Religious persecution	6
Political persecution	4
National/ethnic persecution	1
Death threats	5
Family commitments here	4
I could not afford to move home	4
Readjustment too difficult	5
Other reasons not specified	
No reason given	

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.23. Permission to stay in England indefinitely

Only six of those interviewed had permission to stay in the Spring of 2003 that number rose to 17 a year later, the Spring of 2004. In the spring of 2003 forty-four were awaiting the decision of the Home Office.(Table 20) By the spring of 2004 we were only aware of 19 still awaiting the decision of the Home Office however we were unable to gather information from 14 of those in the study group. The whereabouts of the 14 were unknown. It is possible that some had been deported. Among the comments we collected were *"I have no permission to stay indefinitely but my husband has full refugee status with travel documents,"* and *"My partner has permission to stay from NASS but not from the HO. He is living somewhere else in London. He is scared because if he was found living with me, he would be arrested. It is unlawful. We have always lived separately but we are legally married."*

Table 20. Permission to stay in England indefinitely

	Yes, permission to stay	**Awaiting decision of Home Office**	**Information unavailable**
Number of respondents in Spring 2003	6	44	
Number of Respondents in Spring 2004	17	22	11
Number of respondents in Autumn 2004	28	11	11

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.24. National Insurance Numbers

In Table 21. We can see that the majority of the respondents (27) and the same number of their partners had not been granted a National Insurance Number. Twenty-three respondents had been granted a National Insurance number and eighteen of their partners, mainly for the purpose of obtaining benefits. Five of their respondents were widows so that accounts for the five that were not applicable.

Table 21. National Insurance Numbers

	Yes	No	N/A
Number of respondents with National Insurance number	23	27	
Number of Partners with National Insurance number	18	27	5

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.25. Permission to work and Type of Job held.

Although nineteen of the respondents were allowed to work only four were actually doing so (Table 22.) The same number of partners (19) had permission to work and a slightly higher number (8) were doing so. Only one respondent was willing to admit that her husband was working illegally. Of those allowed to work many were unable either to find work that wasn't illegal or had not enough English to succeed when interviewed. The others who were not working claimed it was either due to their own ill health of the need to assist their partners who were suffering from ill health. One lady told us that her husband received permission to work first and was granted a National Insurance Number, now she also has a number. He was encouraged to work by the State and works part time but she cannot work while her youngest is still so young. Another said, *"My husband is allowed to work but is unable to due to ill health."* The majority of female respondents who were permitted to work explained that they could not because of very young children not yet at school.

Table 22. Permission to work and Type of Job held.

	Permission to work	No permission to work	Legal Full time	Legal Part time	Illegal Full time	Illegal Part time	no work or n/a
Respondents	19	31	2	2			46
Partners	19	26	3	5		1	41

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.25.1.Preferred Job

It is possible to see from Table 22.1. that although almost half of the females (21) were housewives in their home country, only 1 wished to remain so in the UK. The most attractive occupation for women appeared to be childcare or teaching (8) while the most attractive occupation for men appeared to be as drivers (9) with builders (5) and businessmen (5) tying for second place. A few of the women (4) wished to receive further education. The respondents who we must remember were mainly women, had down a number of different jobs in their home countries including a hairdresser, a nurse, 2 who worked in banks, 3 engineers, 3 business persons and 7 ladies who had worked with children either as teachers or in child care. The men also had various occupations. At least 9 worked in agriculture, 3 of whom were shepherds and 6 worked in business, 4 were drivers and 3 were engineers, one husband and wife were doctors and a man a vet. The vet had also worked for a time as a builder and has now acquired legal work on a building site. One husband very keen to get a job as a driver has been

receiving driving lessons. His wife commented, "*My husband received driving lessons. He has taken his test 5 times."*

Table 22.1. Preferred Job

	Respondent		Partner	
Occupation	In home Country	In the Future	In home Country	In the Future
Dress making/hand crafts		3		
Plumber	1	1		1
Painter				
Builder		1		5
Brick layer	1			
Carpenter			1	
Electrician			2	1
Architect			1	1
Government worker	2	1	2	
Engineer	3	1	3	2
Social worker		2		1
Policeman			1	
Military				1
Teacher/child care	7	8		
Full time education/further education	2	4	1	
ESOL Tutor		1		
Work in a bank /Accountancy	3	2		
Secretary		1		
Factory manager			1	
Business person	3	2	6	5
Shop owner	1	1		
shop assistant		3	1	1
Hairdresser	1			
Driver			4	9
Mechanic			1	1
Working in a hospital		1		
Nurse	1	1		
Doctor	1	2	1	1
Vet			1	
Agriculture	2	3	6	3
Shepherd			3	
Any Job		4		1
Housewife	18	1	3	1
Carer for partner				1
Not specified or n/a	2	7	9	15
Unemployed	2		2	
Disabled				1

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

2.26. **Attitudes towards England**

When asked the question "What do you like about England?" three quarters of the respondents (36) said they liked the freedom in the country and three fifths said they liked the language. Maybe surprisingly, considering the difficulties many experienced with immigration almost half said they liked the Law and nearly a quarter said they favoured the culture. When asked, "What don't you like

about England ?" almost half stated "the climate" as not being favourable, five stated "the Law" although one qualified the dislike as being "Immigration Law" while at least 20 of the respondents found nothing to dislike about the country.

Among the comments were the following: *"The Law is good but the administrator is not always so good"* and *"This country is for lucky people.* Another said *"We don't like being dependent on the benefits system in this country. We would rather have the freedom to work and support themselves."* Another person stated *"There is no consistency about the law."*

The respondent was asked " How did you and your family live five years ago in your own country, compared to how you live now?" Half the group (25) said they had lived much worse or somewhat worse, while 6 said the same and 19 said they lived either much better or somewhat better. One person elaborated for us, "*We lived much worse - Father worked in a metal production. Didn't have money like here to support your children. No social services to help support the family."* When asked "Do you think in the next year you and your family will live better than today or worse?" the majority (31) said "they hoped they'd live somewhat better" and 11 stated "much better," while 8 sadly declared that their standard of living would probably be "the same" as now.

The respondents were asked "If you are not already a British citizen would you like to apply to become one?" One respondent is already a British Citizen the other 49 would all like to become British Citizens as one respondent when asked, exclaimed, "*Yes, It would be a gift from God."*

2.27. Suggestions for an UK Immigration Policy

In Table 23. we see that although some respondents gave two or more suggestions regarding the UK's immigration policy, over half (28) of the group thought that people should be allowed to work on reception of identity. Nearly everyone cited that either there should be 'quicker processing of claims' or 'asylum-status should be granted within one year.' Almost a quarter (12) of the group supported the idea of short-term support centers for new arrivals, offering accommodation, interpretation, medical and language courses. They didn't see these as detention centers but support centers. Many arrived traumatized and feeling totally lost. They found themselves in a strange city not understanding anyone they were sent to register at one center and then to another center for accommodation and then often elsewhere all within a few days or weeks and with no English felt even more confused, lost and frightened. They thought a single center that could cover all immediate needs would be helpful.

Table 23. What would you suggest regarding an immigration policy?

I would suggest:	
On reception of identity given right to work	28
Quicker processing of claims	28
Asylum status granted within one year	28
Travel documents so when someone is working they can travel around	1
On arrival – short term support centers – accommodation, interpretation, medical & language courses offered	12
Read and consider applications faster	1

Source: Kosovan Families Survey 2003-4

One respondent told us *"The real problem is status – not knowing if you can stay or not. If I have a document to stay I'd be happy with one room. I am willing to work. I don't want benefits."* While one teenager interpreting for her mother said angrily, *"They (the Home Office) should decide about status*

in one year not 5 years." Another adult said , "*We are not happy with the lack of decision. We have plenty of documents, medical reports. The Immigration authorities should give people a chance. The middle of Kosovo's capital is safe now but not the countryside. It is fine if you have money but every village, factory is gone. We can't go back."* One respondent thought the UK did not act according to the Geneva Convention, *"Asylum seekers should be treated much better and according to the Geneva Convention."* However while many vented their frustration on the time it was taking to be granted status, an independent support worker declared *" I am proud of how England is helping asylum seekers with benefits and NHS*."

***

Looking on the situation of Kosovan asylum seekers families from integration perspective it's possible to see positives and negative elements:

Positive:
1) respectful treatment by authorities
2) help received from state
   a) identity
   b) accommodation
   c) benefits
   d) entitlement to education for children
   e) English language lessons
   f) legal aid (although the finance for that has been cut recently making it more difficult to obtain
3) welcomed as friends by local people
4) freedom to mix with own ethnic group and everyone else without fear

Negative:
1) no permission to work, yet keen to do so to support own family
2) having to be dependent on State
3) length of time waiting to receive status causing anxiety and ill health
4) difficulty actually accessing English lessons (finding & applying for a course)
5) difficulty getting children into school for same reason as (4) plus schools over subscribed in London area
6) constant change of accommodation causing family to be unsettled and not allowing them to develop long term relationships
7) having to wait until they receive amnesty or refugee status for a National Insurance Number
8) lack cultural understanding (eg Kosovan men will not approach support groups run by women, it is not seen as appropriate so they cannot access help from own ethnic support groups if group initiated by women).

III. EVALUATION OF THE ASYLUM SEEKERS POLICY IN THE UK ON THE BASE OF KOSOVO FAMILIES EXPERIENCES

In order to evaluate the asylum seekers policy as regards integration we need to consider both the perspective of the UK Government and the asylum seekers' experience over the last 5-6 years.

3.1. UK Home Office perspective

Regarding the UK Government perspective it is necessary to take into consideration the fact that a great number of illegal immigrants have been and continue to come into the UK. The UK Government like other EU countries tries to stop and control that flow. Between 1989 and 1998, over four million people applied for asylum in Europe. As the numbers seeking asylum grew the Western European governments felt pressurized into tightening their regulations regarding asylum. People who formerly could have entered legally as asylum-seekers or even as contract workers now found themselves with

no choice but to seek alternative, illegal ways of entering Western Europe and many took to availing of the services of people smugglers.[35] In 2001 the total minority ethnic population in the UK was 4.6 million (7.9% of the total population)[36]. It would be impossible to estimate how many initially came as asylum seekers. Many, naturally were economic migrants and many skilled immigrants had been invited to the country to aid the ailing, ageing work force.

Looking at the last five years: in 2000 there were 80,310 applications for asylum in Great Britain; there was a drop of approximately nine thousand applicants for asylum in 2001 with a total of 71,025 applications. In 2002 there was a steep rise of thirteen thousand applications, bringing the total to 84,130. In 2003 this number dropped to the lowest figure recorded in recent years 49,170. However 2004 is set to have an even lower total with 8,940 new applications in the 1st quarter of the year, a decrease of 17% since the end of last year and 44% less than the same period in 2003.

During the four years 2000 – 2003 the majority of people who applied for asylum in the UK were refused after full consideration. The largest number to be refused came in 2001 (66,070) with 50,145 refused in 2000, while 41,710 were refused in 2002 and 42,345 in 2003. Over the four years a total of 272,310 people were refused asylum in the UK.

In the same four years (2000-2003) just 33,705 people were granted refugee status, 55,446 had been refused refugee status but granted Exceptional Leave to Remain – permission to reside in the UK for a temporary period, 135 people had been granted Humanitarian protection for a number of years and 3,105 had been granted discretionary leave to remain. Of those granted refugee status 10,375 had been granted status in 2000, a slightly larger number 11,180 in 2001, in 2002 the number dropped to 8,270 and in 2003 a 50% drop to 3,880.

Refugee status is the best possible status that an asylum seeker can be granted in UK law. Those granted refugee status are immediately entitled to Social assistance benefits equal with those available to British and EU citizens. Refugee status also allows for immediate family reunions with spouses and children and has a sympathetic approach to parents wishing to be reunited with their adult children. It includes access to nondiscriminatory education, equal economic rights and a right to permanent residence.[37]

The UK Government has over the last 10 years found themselves with a huge problem regarding asylum issues. Between 1993 and 2002 there were approximately 526,000 applications for asylum not counting dependants. Although the majority received refusals only 31,565 were deported. By October 2003 the backlog had reached such a colossal size the Government were desperate to solve the problem. Mr Justice Maurice Kay in the High Court criticised the way Mr. David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, handled the asylum system, saying *the lack of an "efficient decision-making procedure" was the main reason why courts were flooded with an "almost unmanageable" number of asylum support cases*.[38]

In an attempt to seek an answer to the growing problem on the 24th October 2003 Mr. Blunkett announced an asylum amnesty for approximately 50,000 asylum-seekers, mainly from Kosovo, the former republic of Yugoslavia and Turkey, allowing them to stay in the UK. Most of the 15,000 families affected lived in London and the South East. These families have suffered from the historic delays in the system and although they have exhausted the appeals system the Government had not managed to deport them.[39] Under the amnesty families who had sought asylum before 2nd October 2000 would be eligible for indefinite leave to remain in the UK and in 5 years time would be eligible

[35] K.Hailbronner, Immigration and Asylum Law and Policy of the European Union, Kluwer Law International, The Hague, London, Boston 2000, 15.
[36] Home Office, National Statistics Online 2001 by ethnic group.
[37] E. Guild The United Kingdom: Kosovar Albanian Refugees in J. Van Selm, ed Kosovo's Refugees in the European Union, Pinter, London, New York 2000, 78
[38] Richard Ford, Amnesty on asylum opens door to 50,000, 'The Times' (UK), October 25, 2003.
[39] Ibidem.

to apply for British Citizenship. (The cut off date was not chosen at random but marked the introduction of new legislation preventing rejected asylum seekers from making multiple appeals against being removed from the country.) Many of the asylum seekers' families covered by the amnesty had already been in the UK for seven years and yet were still entitled to challenge official removal directions in the high court under human rights legislation which means they could remain in the UK until 2008 even without the amnesty. The Home Office claimed it would save the taxpayer money as the country was supporting 12,000 families who were not allowed to work, costing the tax payers £180 million a year. However it stated that another 3,000 families already allowed to work would also be eligible for the amnesty.[40]

Maeve Sherlock of the refugee Council declared :*"It is the right and moral thing to do. It is utterly unfair on families - and especially children - to leave them in limbo, unable to rebuild their lives for years on end. Now the government must focus on getting decisions right much earlier, so people are not left in years of uncertainty."*[41]

3.2. Asylum seekers families perspective

The Kosovan families in our survey came to the UK as a result of the conflict in Kosovo. There had been a great exodus of Kosovar-Albanians from the province of Kosovo prior to and during the Kosovan conflict and NATO bombing campaign of March – June 1999. Approximately eighty percent of the entire population of Kosovo, of whom ninety percent were Kosovar Albanians were actually displaced. The United Kingdom had recognised and accepted as refugees Albanian Kosovars, since 1996, on account of their ethnicity and the fact they had a history of persecution. From the start of NATO's bombing the Home Office had been processing all Kosovars without a great deal of consideration of the individual cases. However, from June 1999 the Kosovars were no longer granted refugee status but rather granted automatically 12 months exceptional leave to remain (ELR). In December 1999, the Home secretary declared that Kosovars would no longer automatically be granted ELR. The Province of Kosovo was declared secure and the Kosovar Albanians were no longer in danger of persecution and should return to Kosovo. However as the Home Office was experiencing administration difficulties, they were not immediately returned and thousands of Kosovar Albanian families found themselves left awaiting the decision of the Home Office regarding their status. As was mention above, the Home Office announced, on the 24th October 2003, an Asylum Amnesty for approximately 50,000 asylum-seekers, between them families from Kosovo, allowing them to stay in the UK.

The families we interviewed came to UK between 1997 and 2003. (Table 6.) The military intervention of NATO started on the 24th of March 1999 and ended on the 20th of June 1999. Less than half arrived before the intervention or during the intervention (23 families). Eighteen families came to the UK in the second part of 1999, after the military conflict although many of those who arrived in the UK in the summer and autumn of 1999 had actually left Kosovo earlier in the year. While only six arrived in 2000, one in 2001, two in 2002 and one in 2003.

In our survey approximately three quarters of the families interviewed, had entered the UK by chance and the majority had arrived illegally that is without papers. Almost four fifths of the group had registered for asylum within two days of their arrival.

By early November 2004, twenty-eight of the fifty families had some form of status: five had been granted refugee status plus one husband (his family had applied separately and were among those numbered who had been granted the Amnesty; nineteen in all had been granted the Amnesty, that is they are allowed to stay in the UK indefinitely, outside the normal rules of immigration; two had been

[40] Ibidem.
[41] Alan Travis Asylum amnesty for 50,000 heralds tough new measures, 'The Guardian' (UK), October 25, 2003.

granted Exceptional Leave to Remain, temporary residence in the UK; one had been granted Discretionary Leave and one had been granted Humanitarian Protection until 2006. One had been refused the Amnesty and was appealing against the decision; while eleven were still awaiting the decision of the Home Office. The remaining ten families were no longer in any contact and had either been relocated or deported.

Up to a point the UK asylum policy is understandable. Many in the UK feel threatened by the large number of immigrants wanting to settle in the UK. The UK has been very generous towards newcomers and it appears to many that those who initially came from Kosovo before, during and immediately after the war should return to Kosovo now the hostilities have ceased and NATO is present in the territory maintaining the peace.

Our survey shows that most of the Kosovan asylum seekers had very traumatic experiences that do not appear in this paper. When they initially came, many fleeing for their lives they were treated a group rather than individual cases so many who would have been automatically granted refugee status if they had come from another country were left with decisions pending for years in the hope they could eventually be returned to their homeland. Having a personal contact with them it was obvious that it would be not right to do return them from a humanitarian perspective. Besides in Kosovo there is still no peace, there hasn't been enough time for reconciliation with deep seated fear and anger between neighbours with different ethnic or national groups. The way the asylum seekers came to the UK was very often dangerous and an extremely difficult and hazardous journey. The majority travelled with very young families. They travelled for many days in closed lorries, with little food or water, unable to leave the lorry even to go to the toilet. It shows desperate families with tremendous determination to get away and means their reasons were very strong.

3.3. Integration perspective

As mentioned above, the UK Government appreciates the importance of helping new comers to integrate when they arrive in Great Britain, but on the principle that this process starts after a person receives a refugee status. As a consequences asylum seekers are deprived from accessing this process. The UK government's motive is logical and understandable because before asylum seekers have permission to stay for good in the country they cannot really settle and build new lives nevertheless that creates a problem regarding integration. When we looked on our Kosovan families experiences we saw that because the UK's integration policy was limited to refugees, the asylum seekers lost a few years of opportunity for integration with the host society.

It's clear that these 50 families and thousands of others will stay in Great Britain for good and should integrate with British Society. Looking from this perspective we could ask a question if it was possible to predict this fact and start the process of integration much earlier, immediately after the asylum seekers arrived? When we asked the question: How were the Kosovar asylum seekers families treated by UK authorities? We discovered in the majority of cases the respondents were treated very well (27/50); well 14; okay 6 and only 2 badly. Maybe the UK policy was not in contradiction with Human Rights and international conventions, however, on the question about suggestion regarding an the UK's immigration policy (Table 23), over half (28) of the group thought that people should be allowed to work on reception of identity. Nearly everyone cited that either there should be 'quicker processing of claims' or 'asylum-status should be granted within one year.'

As was mentioned above, between 1993-2002 there were about 526.000 application for asylum, not counting dependents and although the majority received a negative decision only 31.500 were deported. The Government needs to take these facts into account when formulating an asylum seekers' policy. Statistically speaking, the asylum seeker's family should be treated as a potential unit of the host society. The policy should be based on individual cases, looking at the history of the family in their own country. In the case of the Kosovan families, through our personal contact, it was easy to discover what level of education they had attained and their professional skills so to assess how they

could benefit British society even though they had arrived illegally. We know that the asylum seekers were treated well by the authorities, given housing and benefits so they were helped to integrate in many ways, even if that wasn't the direct intention of the Government. Their children were entitled to education and the adults were able to receive free English lesson. All these were positive factors encouraging integration however the whole process of integration was hindered by the fact they were not allowed to work.

Full access to education, the learning of a language and access to the labour market, can make the process of integration faster. Giving asylum seekers the right to work could be very beneficial for the state both in the asset they could be to the work force and because it would save the Treasury many thousands of pounds which are paid out in benefits. However, according to the Government, there is a danger that if a policy is too liberal economic migrants might be encouraged to come to the UK and abusing the UK's generousity make it more difficult for genuine asylum seekers to gain refugee status. Also if asylum seekers are seen to receive too many privileges the host community may protest.

There are authors who criticize temporary protection, because of its limited character. They say that temporary protection can actually prevent refugees from fully integrating and therefore is actually acting against their human rights. According to Gondek this argument does not hold any ground because it is the function of the international protection of refugees to assure them safety and protection from persecution, not the creation of better living conditions and was always meant to be temporary[42].

Most countries take this point of view that asylum seekers residence has temporary character, and this can be seen in their asylum seekers policies but reality shows that majority of asylum seekers are potential citizens of the receiving country.

Conclusion

Looking at the experience of Kosovan asylum seekers' families from the East End of London it is possible to make the following conclusions: Even the families who came to the UK illegally were treated as potential receivers of refugee status and received accommodation, financial support, the possibility of learning English and education for their children. However, the process of integration was hindered because of the following facts:

- The Integration policy in the UK is aimed specifically at refugees not asylum seekers. Asylum seekers while encouraged to integrate are not encouraged to fully integrate until they have refugee status. In fact those who have been granted the amnesty have given up the right to refugee status and although entitled to apply for British Citizenship will never qualify for the Refugee Integration programmes.
- They were denied the basic human right of work (sometime for a few years) thereby forbidden from contributing to society and prevented from fully integrating.
- Receiving limited benefits they found themselves financially disadvantaged. They had the choice of either being poor and totally dependent on the State or working illegally.
- Unsure of their future in the UK, there was little incentive to learn English and with worsening health problems plus young children to care for, the women found difficulty accessing English classes
- There appears to be a lack of clarity and a rather haphazard approach to Immigration policies in the UK. This has meant the families process of application for refugee status has been unending, resulting in a lack of stability and no sense of belonging and has failed many of the genuine asylum seekers, forcing many families to suffer unnecessary stress and trauma.

[42] M. Gondek, Polityka azylowa Unii Europejskiej po Traktacie Amsterdamskim, Szkice z prawa Unii Europejskiej, t. 2, Prawo instytucjonalne, pod red. E.Piontka i A.Zawidzkiej, Kantor Wyd. Zakamycze, Zakamycze 2003, 182.

- The Amnesty was promising and in many ways beneficial and gave many asylum seekers after years of distress real hope for the future.

As we saw above, the exclusion of the asylum seekers family from the integration policy programs which apply only for refugees effects the process of full integration of all those who will become future refugees as well. As the process of acquiring refugee status often takes years it seems to be too high a price for keeping the principle that only *integration in the full sense of the word can take place only when a person has been confirmed as a refugee.* It is necessary to recognize that the process of integration begins on the day of arrival in the host country.

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