



# From Refugees to Workers

Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures  
for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States

**Volume I: Comparative Analysis and Policy Findings**



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## **Volume I: Comparative Analysis and Policy Findings**

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This study has been produced by the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) at the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute in Florence (EUI). The MPC produces advanced policy-oriented research on global migration, asylum and mobility to serve migration governance needs at European and global levels, from developing, implementing and monitoring migration-related policies to assessing their impact on the wider economy and society.

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# Contents

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Preface: Work is key for integration to work</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Executive summary</b>   | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>I. Introduction</b>   | <b>11</b> |
| 1. A European Challenge  | 11        |
| 2. Scope and aims of the study   | 12        |
| 3. Rationale for the labour market integration of recent refugees                                  | 14        |
| 4. The labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers:<br>evidence and literature review | 16        |
| <b>II. Summary of country case studies</b>   | <b>21</b> |
| 1. Austria   | 21        |
| 2. Denmark   | 23        |
| 3. France  | 26        |
| 4. Germany   | 29        |
| 5. Italy   | 31        |
| 6. Netherlands   | 33        |
| 7. Spain   | 35        |
| 8. Sweden  | 37        |
| 9. The United Kingdom  | 39        |
| <b>III. Comparative analysis, lessons learned and prospects</b>                                    | <b>42</b> |
| 1. Different legal and policy approaches to labour market integration of refugees                  | 42        |
| 2. Common challenges across EU Member States   | 43        |
| 3. Elements for analysis of REFMISMES and success factors  | 44        |
| 4. From REFMISMES inventory to policy conclusions?   | 50        |
| 5. Further research needs  | 52        |
| <b>References</b>  | <b>53</b> |
| <b>The authors</b>   | <b>55</b> |
| <b>Imprint</b>   | <b>58</b> |

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# Preface: Work is key for integration to work



The large number of refugees and migrants arriving in Europe has given the continent a historic challenge and has tested the European Union’s cohesion and decision-making ability. We still do not know whether Europe can rise to this multidimensional challenge. Securing Europe’s borders, setting up resettlement programmes with neighbouring states and agreeing on a fair distribution of refugees within the Union – these are just some of the crucial and difficult tasks ahead. Equally important and challenging are the steps to be taken within our economies and societies: to facilitate the arrival of the newcomers, to integrate their children into our education systems, to integrate those who can work into our labour markets – and to maintain and foster the willingness of the host society to help and welcome those in need.

These challenges are with us; they cannot be ignored or talked away. We need a spirit of pragmatism and action, driven by a sense of urgency, while taking the long-term effects of today’s decisions into account. We need to start by recognising that many refugees will stay with us and must be quickly integrated into our labour markets and the fabric of our societies.

It is time to turn what is too often considered a burden into an asset and to look for opportunities in the present situation. While it is true that European labour markets are still suffering from high levels of unemployment, at the same time there are jobs available. Moreover, Europe is confronted with an ineluctable demographic predicament.

Population ageing and shrinking will inevitably gain momentum in the coming decades, threatening Europe’s capacity to keep its economies strong and its welfare systems sustainable. Migrants are already, and will increasingly be, needed to replace missing natives. In that sense, refugees have arrived in Europe at an opportune moment. Some conditions are necessary, however, for their successful economic and social integration. Creative policy frameworks must be designed for employing refugees in a way that benefits rather than harms locals, public opinion must be prepared for a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multireligious society, and last but not least, refugees must express their willingness to integrate into their new European homes.

The present study, “From refugees to workers: Mapping labour market integration support measures for asylum seekers and refugees in EU Member States”, explores to what extent the first of the above three conditions is being met. What are the policies that specifically address refugee labour market integration and to what extent are policies put into practice on the ground? Nine EU Member States were selected according to three criteria: the relative weight of refugees in the resident population, the existence of a tradition of integrating migrants and their demographic weight. The nine countries were Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. A comparative review and detailed analysis of close to a hundred measures adopted in these countries was carried out, providing a

unique basis of knowledge for informed policy-making and helping to identify what strategies work and which do not. The analysis in this study points to the need for increased multilevel coordination, the conditions for success of private-public partnerships, evidence for the effectiveness of introduction programmes and the adequate sequence of work integration and language learning.

This is a starting point. Legislators act along policy lines at Member State level, but in many regards the decisive problem-solving actors in the field of migrant integration are to be found at the local level – from employers to mayors and fellow citizens. Moreover, nine Member States cannot fully represent the EU-28. Finally, the inventory of policies and practices in the present study does not tell us what the outcomes will be in terms of efficiently integrating refugees and avoiding unintended side effects. The aim of this report is hence to provide recommendations that can guide policy actions. Such policy actions will then need to be accompanied by further research to monitor their impact on both the refugees and their hosts. For Europe to rise to the current challenge, bringing refugees into work will be essential. Work is key for integration to work. With this study we hope to provide the evidence needed to decide on sound policy measures in that direction.

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# Executive summary

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## Policy context

**An extraordinary flow.** According to Eurostat figures, 1.3 million men, women and children (1,260,000 of them first-time asylum seekers) claimed asylum in Europe in 2015, more than double the number in 2014, more than three times the number in 2013 and by far the highest in the last 70 years. Whether or not this trend will continue (and there are indications that, in one way or another, it will for some time), all analysts agree that a large share of these asylum seekers will settle in Europe for good (in 2015, 52% of total asylum applications resulted in positive outcomes, and a standard policy assumption is that at least half of the total number of asylum seekers will remain). There is also a wide consensus that the way they integrate into the labour market, and the time they take to do so, will determine the long-term impact of this inflow of migrants on the European economy (whether they are ultimately an injection of fresh blood or largely a burden for European economies), as well as the chances of social and economic integration in European societies.

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## Study aims

**Objectives of the study.** The overall objective of this study is to identify the policies and practices being implemented in different EU Member States to facilitate the labour market integration of recent refugees and asylum seekers, i.e. those having arrived in the respective country in the last year. An analysis is then carried out in a comparative perspective. The study is based on nine brief country case studies of EU Member States, namely: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. More specifically, the study aims to:

- review the legal and policy framework concerning labour market access of recent refugees and asylum seekers;

- provide an up-to-date and structured overview of different types of labour market integration support measures for refugees (REFMISMES), programmes and initiatives for refugees and asylum seekers, including measures by civil society and private actors (such as NGOs, employers, etc.);
- identify and discuss good practices and lessons learned in the different countries as well as contextual factors influencing the effectiveness of different measures.

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## Key findings

**General policy trend.** In general, it can be stated that, regardless of the political stance concerning the arrival of new asylum seekers (a field where many countries are taking an increasingly restrictive approach), for those asylum seekers who are already in the country, policies are generally being put in place to facilitate their integration into the labour market (with some notable exceptions such as France and the United Kingdom). However, even in countries aiming to support the rapid labour market integration of asylum seekers, the administrative obstacles remain huge, and often render the legal provisions void.

**Common challenges and patterns.** One first conclusion stands out clearly from the comparative analysis of the nine country case studies: despite the differences in social contexts, labour market structures and support measures, the challenges, policy trade-offs and choices involved in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers (the key questions emerging from the country case studies) are relatively similar across countries. There is, then, very real scope for mutual learning, cooperation and even Europe-wide solutions.



**Converging policy response.** The 94 REFISMES identified and analysed in the nine country case studies (see Appendix 10 of Volume II for details on each of them) suggest the emergence of a kind of “standard” package, the emerging “conventional wisdom” perhaps, in the field of labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers. The four key elements of this package are: 1) early skills assessment; 2) “introduction” programme including general cultural orientation, but sometimes also socio-professional orientation and even some training; 3) intensive language courses; and 4) access to general job intermediation services. This “model of intervention” is rarely questioned, and should be subject to testing and closer analysis to ensure that there are no better policy options or policy mixes. One recurrent issue, however, is whether REFISMES are more supply-driven or outcome-oriented, i.e. to determine the extent to which they are offered and implemented regardless of any evidence of their actual impact.

**Success factors difficult to identify.** As noted before, the challenges and policy-response patterns across the surveyed EU Member States are structurally similar. However, it is difficult to draw any conclusion or lesson on the effectiveness of different kinds of REFISMES or the failure or success factors that emerge from policy practice. The first reason is that, in most cases, the REFISMES are too recent for any conclusions about their implementation to be drawn. To this extent, only Sweden and to a lesser extent Denmark (and in a minor way Germany and Austria) provide a sufficient body of time-tested evidence allowing for policy recommendations. In this regard, the analysis of the literature on former research of these experiences is crucial (see Section I.4 and, at greater length, Volume II of this study). But even when REFISMES have already been implemented over a reasonable period of time, in most countries there is no systematic follow-up and impact evaluation of those policy interventions, preventing researchers and policymakers from drawing policy conclusions. This points to another clear need: the systematic generation and the collection of information and the evaluation of policies should be the first step for an evidence-based policy – something which has rarely been attempted for these projects.

**Fragmentation of REFISMES.** The general overview of REFISMES, described in each of the countries studied, shows a high degree of fragmentation and a thorough lack of coordination in their implementation. There are too many actors taking initiatives and intervening at a local, regional and national level without any kind of coherent strategy or actual exchange of information. This has made

our REFISMES inventory particularly difficult. In any case, there is a desperate need for coordination across government levels and between actors.

**Need for specific, tailor-made measures.** One consensual finding emerging from the discussion of the country case studies is that asylum seekers and refugees have specific needs, profiles and incentive structures which explain their systematic underperformance in the labour market in relation not only to the population in general, but also to other migrants. Their labour market integration requires, therefore, targeted, specific support measures. The “mainstreaming” of refugees, i.e. their referral to the general active labour market policies and support measures offered by public institutions to national workers is not enough, even if this is the most widespread policy implemented so far in this field.

**Early intervention has a positive impact on labour market integration.** At the same time, in line with all former research and unanimous expert opinion, the country case studies endorse the principle that the sooner support measures occur, the faster labour market integration will take place. The legal obstacles to the labour market participation of asylum seekers in many Member States is, then, counterproductive. It is important, instead, to remove the administrative and objective obstacles which prevent many refugees from joining the labour market, even once they are legally entitled to do so. In particular, the labour market tests that asylum seekers must pass to take a job in some countries (like France and the UK) run counter to the rationale of considering them as part of the national labour market.

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## Policy pointers

**Policy recommendations hard to draw, but mutual learning possible.** The nine-country REFISMES inventory cannot translate into clear-cut policy recommendations at this stage. It is too early (in most of the countries analysed, systematic implementation of labour market integration support measures is less than a year old), and too little is known about them. But there is comparability, both in terms of the structural challenges faced (see Section II.1) and in terms of the policy response to them (Section II.2). This policy convergence allows for mutual cross-country learning at least at two levels: first, learning from those countries, in particular Sweden and Denmark, which have a long track record of labour market integration

support measures for refugees; second, putting in place mechanisms which allow for the rapid dissemination of promising initiatives.

**More information required.** Another common element to all country case studies is the emphasis on the gap between available and collected information on refugees (both individually and as a group) and the information required to design effective labour market integration measures and policies. In order to ensure a learning curve across Europe on this key development, more systematic collection of information on actions is needed. However, there is also a need for the more systematic evaluation (in terms of impact and cost-effectiveness) of all those actions, and a specific follow-up of labour market outcomes for this specific group of workers.

**Increase of resources commensurate with the social and economic stakes required.** In any case, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this exercise. First, more resources – financial, human and institutional – need to be dedicated to promoting the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Even if all countries have approved successive budget increases in the last year or so, the available resources are not up to the magnitude of the economic, social and even political stakes. Extraordinary challenges require extraordinary responses.

**Need for multilevel governance mechanisms.** The dispersion and fragmentation of labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers highlights the need for powerful multilevel governance mechanisms to deal with current challenges in an integrated way (and this might also include the European level). Labour market and more generally social integration of refugees and asylum seekers takes place at a local level, and initiatives to facilitate that process are often taken and implemented by local and regional actors. However, asylum policy is largely national, and this creates a tension that has to be addressed with appropriate exchange of information, coordination mechanisms and integration across actions.

**Scope for EU-wide action.** Integration is definitely a local process and labour markets largely operate at local or national level, rather than at EU level (even if there is a trend in this direction). However, from the analysis and discussion carried out throughout this study, a few lines of potential EU action emerged. Indeed, the EU is the appropriate level to establish an information exchange platform and to develop a pool of knowledge to improve policy practice for all Member States. This EU-wide

knowledge and exchange platform might work not only as a lever for exchanges among practitioners, but it could also serve as a disseminator of information and analysis initiatives in this field including the evaluation of practices and the development of policy guides. In addition, in some fields, such as the recognition of qualifications or the free movement of workers, the EU legal framework provides a potential venue for EU-wide initiatives. Last but not least, though EU funding covers only a small part of the total cost of the refugee crisis (including labour market integration measures), the European Commission has a leverage in spreading basic standards on policy practices, the collection of information and evaluation of programmes and follow-up on beneficiaries. These are all key dimensions for an effective and efficient labour market integration equation for refugees.

**Further research needs.** As stated in the introduction, the present study was conceived only as a first step aiming to inventory existing REFMISMES in a number of EU Member States and for undertaking a very preliminary analysis of the same. But there is much that can be done in terms of research to better policies in this field:

- There is an acute need for more data and more information on refugees and asylum seekers, on their qualifications and skills as well as on their personal and professional profile and on their spatial distribution (in relation to the distribution of labour demand across the labour market). This can only be done through representative surveys of current and past refugees: the surveys carried out to date among refugees have been too partial and too scattered.
- There is also a need for more tracking studies of refugees, following up their professional records and their labour market outcomes over time.
- Finally, there is a need for more REFMISMES (comparative) case studies, deeper and wider analysis and more detailed analysis of different kinds of labour market integration support measures. It would be extremely useful to extend the comparative country case approach of these studies to more EU Member States, but also to non-EU countries with different but relevant experiences of integrating refugees into their labour market.

REFMISMES and their impact on labour market integration of refugees may seem technical but it will prove key in Europe's future.

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# I. Introduction

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## 1. A European Challenge

According to Eurostat figures<sup>1</sup>, 1.3 million men, women and children (1,260,000 of them first-time asylum seekers) claimed asylum in Europe in 2015, more than double the number in 2014, more than three times the number in 2013 and a by far the highest in the last 70 years. Whether or not this trend will continue (and there are indications that, in one way or another, it will for some time), all analysts agree that a large share of these asylum seekers will settle in Europe for good (in 2015, 52% of total asylum applications resulted in positive outcomes, and a standard policy assumption is that at least half of the total number of asylum seekers will remain). There is also a wide consensus that the way they integrate into the labour market, and the time they take to do so, will determine the long-term impact of this inflow of migrants on the European economy (whether they are ultimately an injection of fresh blood or largely a burden for European economies), as well as the chances of social and economic integration in European societies.

Paradoxically, despite the high stakes, not much is known about these asylum seekers. In terms of nationality, according to Eurostat, the largest groups come from Syria (29% of the total), Afghanistan (14%) and Iraq (10%); 83% of them were under 35, i.e. with the largest part of their active life ahead of them, with 53% being between 18 and 34 years of age; 80% of this younger group were men, whereas among older applicants (35–64) men made up roughly two thirds and women one third. But, as this study and the country case studies suggest, there is no systematic data on their level of education or professional experience, a key variable for planning any labour market integration support measure. Available evidence indicates that up to 15% of the new asylum seekers have tertiary education, around 50% of

them have secondary education and between 30 and 40% are illiterate or have only primary schooling.

In terms of country of application, Figure 1 provides a summary for the main EU Member States for 2015. A total of 476,510 applied for asylum in Germany (36%). Next came Hungary and Sweden with more than 177,000 and more than 160,000 applications respectively, Austria and Italy with more than 80,000 and France with more than 75,000.

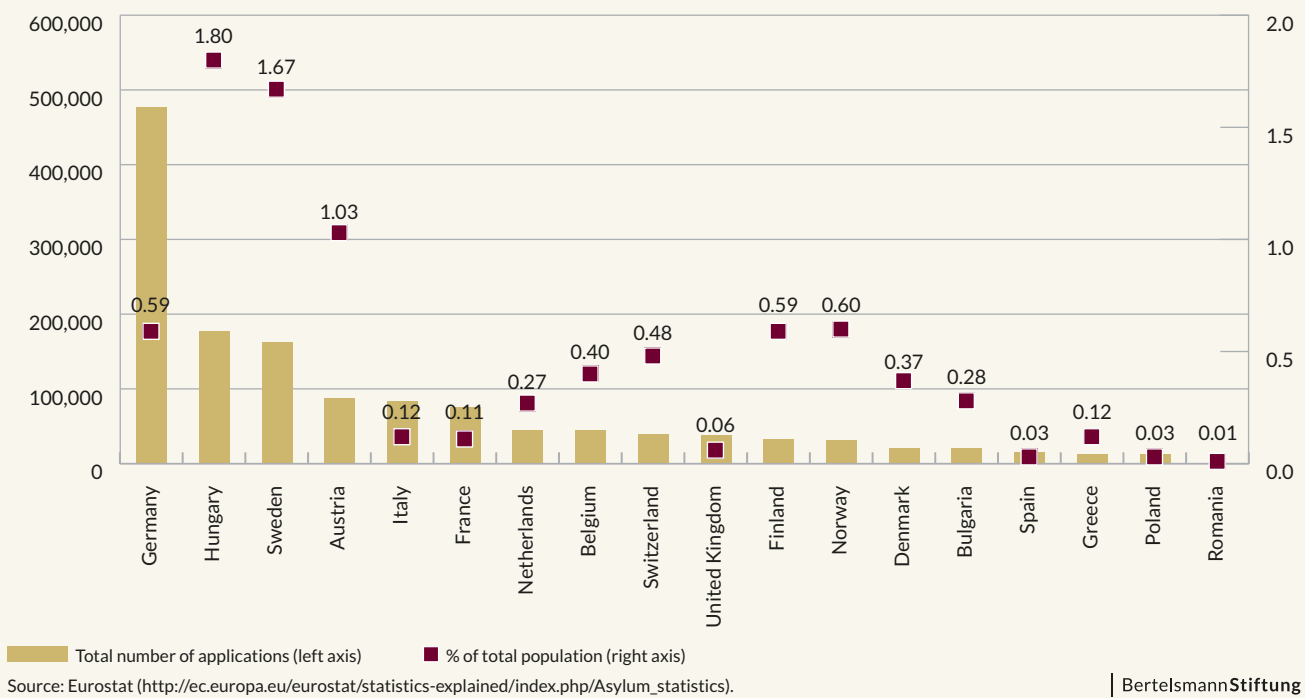
Of course, the degree of pressure varies greatly depending on total population. In terms of ratio between asylum applications received and the population, the average EU ratio was 260 per 100,000 inhabitants for the whole EU. However, in terms of individual countries, Hungary received 1,799 applications per 100,000 inhabitants (1.8%), Sweden 1,667 (1.67%), Austria 1,027 (1%), Finland 591 and Germany 587 per 100,000 inhabitants, against 32 for Spain and Poland and 60 for the UK, 114 for France and 120 for Italy and Greece (see Figure 2). Of course, in terms of the labour market's absorption capacity, other variables such as the unemployment rate, the demographic dynamics in each country and the number of refugees and migrants already present in the country, but also social attitudes towards migration should be taken into account. However, the choice of country of application seems to be determined largely by the perceived chances of finding a job in the respective countries and by refugee acceptance policies – social attitudes towards emigration in the different countries (as measured, for instance, in the European Social Survey) seems not to be a factor.

In any case, regardless of the geographical distribution of asylum applications, it is clear that this is largely a European challenge, even if the first order policy response to it is largely national and sub-national, as seen in the nine country case studies carried out for this study. The final section of the study will also touch upon the extent to which there is scope for a Europe-wide answer not only in relation

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<sup>1</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Asylum\\_applications\\_\(non-EU\)\\_in\\_the\\_EU-28\\_Member\\_States,\\_2005-15\\_\(%C2%B9\)\\_\(thousands\)\\_YB16.png](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Asylum_applications_(non-EU)_in_the_EU-28_Member_States,_2005-15_(%C2%B9)_(thousands)_YB16.png).

FIGURE 1 Asylum applications received in 2015 (total number and % of total population)



to flow management (the arrival and reception of asylum seekers), but also in relation to labour market integration policies.

After the first shock of the arrival and reception of more than one million new immigrants, in 2015 (whatever their legal status), governments and societies had to face the much more lasting challenge of facilitating their smooth integration in their societies. Here, labour market integration is the key lever for it. As this report will show, many initiatives have already been taken and substantial resources mobilised, often without the necessary planning or knowledge to ensure their success. A first stocktaking of the impact and effectiveness of these measures and the search for good practices would markedly increase the chances of succeeding in this European challenge.

## 2. Scope and aims of the study

In this context, the overall objective of the study is to identify the policies and practices being implemented in different EU Member States to facilitate the labour market integration of recent refugees and asylum seekers (i.e. those who have arrived in the country in the last year) and to analyse them in a comparative perspective.

**Objectives.** The study is based on nine brief country case studies of EU Member States selected on the basis of the number of refugees hosted and their proportion as a percentage of total population, but also of country size (and hence participation in the ongoing EU relocation scheme), tradition of integration of refugees and balance of countries across the EU. The countries selected were: Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Because of resource limitations and a tight deadline (the whole study has been implemented in four months), this is just a first approach to the issue identifying directions and requirements for further research, as well as first lessons in this relatively new policy area.

More specifically, the study aims to:

- review the legal and policy framework concerning labour market access of recent refugees and asylum seekers;
- provide an up-to-date and structured overview of different types of labour market integration support measures for refugees (REFMISMES), programmes and initiatives for refugees and asylum seekers, including measures by civil society and private actors (such as NGOs, employers, etc.);

- identify and discuss good practices and lessons learned in the different countries, as well as contextual factors affecting the effectiveness of different measures.

**Target group.** In terms of the group analysed, the study will cover all phases of international protection:

- **Refugees**, i.e. beneficiaries of international protection who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. According to the EU recast Qualification Directive, those persons are authorised “to engage in employed or self-employed activities subject to rules generally applicable to the profession and the public service, immediately after protection has been granted”<sup>2</sup>.
- **Asylum seekers** who have applied for international protection. According to the 2013 recast of the Reception Conditions Directive, “Member States shall ensure that applicants have access to the labour market no later than 9 months from the date when the application for international protection was lodged if a first instance decision by the competent authority has not been taken and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant”<sup>3</sup>.
- **Persons in need of international protection.** To the extent applicable, prospective applicants for international protection (for instance those temporarily in transit in a Member State) who may benefit from some form of tolerated access to the labour market, even in the informal sector, or some support measure that might contribute to their future labour market integration.
- **“Tolerated”** (in Germany) or other categories of “non-returnable” refused asylum seekers who remain legally in the State’s territory.

**Definition of REFISMES.** For the purposes of our study, REFISMES are measures aimed at supporting the current or future labour market integration of refugees or asylum seekers. REFISMES here do not include support measures such as housing provision, cash allowances, psychological assistance or intercultural skills development. Such

- 2 Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted (recast). See in particular Articles 26 and 28.
- 3 Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.

measures clearly have an impact on the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers, but they are more concerned with their legal and social integration rather than their labour market integration.

## Types of REFISMES

For the sake of analysis, labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers have been classified, in relation to their field of intervention, in the following categories:

### SKILLS AND NEEDS ASSESSMENT

- Skills and qualifications assessment and profiling

### SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

- Language courses
- Access to vocational education and training (VET) and further education
- Specific professional skills development programmes for labour market integration
- Access to traineeships, apprenticeships and internships
- Promotion of entrepreneurship
- Mentoring

### JOB INTERMEDIATION

- Labour counselling and professional orientation
- Access to labour market information, job matching and placement services

### RECOGNITION OF SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS

- Validation and certification of skills (including informal and non-formal skills)
- Recognition of qualifications

### INCENTIVES FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

- Support for self-employment and entrepreneurship among refugees
- Incentives for employment of refugees or asylum seekers

Table 3 below, in Section II.2, provides a summary of the 94 REFISMES analysed in the nine country case studies by types of intervention.

**Labour market integration.** Ager and Strang (2008) developed a framework for examining and measuring the access and achievement of migrants and refugees in employment (but also education, health and the housing sector, rights and citizenship, community and social connections, and associated structural and cultural barriers). This integration framework has been adapted and used by policymakers in several countries. The UNHCR (2013c) study discussed below, in fact, defines a set of integration indicators/measures including:

- Labour market participation and employment rates
- Earnings
- Poverty
- Occupational status
- Employment commensurate with experience and qualifications
- Diversity of occupations and non-separated labour markets
- Job retention
- Job advancement and occupational mobility
- Employment contracts and/or benefits
- Employment satisfaction

However, for the purposes of this study, the different dimensions of labour market integration enumerated above will be simplified to three key variables (even if data are generally not available for any dimension other than employment):

- Employment (the fact of having a job, even in the informal sector). This can be measured through labour market participation and employment rates
- Earnings level (in relation to other migrant workers and in relation to local populations)
- Skills matching (utilisation of the skills of the refugee or asylum seeker in his or her employment)

In this regard, labour market integration should be seen as a spectrum going from labour market exclusion, to more or less tolerated informal employment, to formal employment, to the full use of skills and qualifications of the worker. For the analysis of the impact of REFISMES on the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers, it should be remembered that their impact is often long-term and not immediately evident.

### 3. Rationale for the labour market integration of recent refugees

In the wake of the refugee crisis, there is, throughout Europe, growing policy interest in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The first-order reason for this is straightforward: the cost for public institutions of working refugees is much lower (or zero) than the cost of non-active or unemployed refugees (all of which typically receive some kind of social benefits).

**Macroeconomic benefits.** The benefits of activating refugees are not only budgetary. In macroeconomic terms, the IMF (2016) has estimated the positive medium-term impact of the additional labour supply brought to the labour market by refugees. It assumes, consistently with refugee flow figures in 2015 and early 2016, that there is a 1.5% increase in the EU population (0.8 million) in 2015–2017 and of 1% over the following two years. It also assumes that it takes two years for asylum seekers to be eligible to work and that they have lower participation rates (5 percentage points lower, declining by 2020 to 3 percentage points) and higher unemployment rates than natives (an initial gap of 15 percentage points going down to 12 percentage points by 2020). Taking these reasonable assumptions as given, then, the aggregate impact on EU GDP could be as high as 0.25 percentage points by 2020, and in the main destination countries such as Germany, Sweden and Austria it could be as high as 0.5 to 1.1 additional percentage points. This is huge for EU growth standards: a level equal, for instance, to the estimated impact of EU Structural Funds in the growth rate in Spain in the 1990s. But it is, of course, dependent on the above-mentioned assumptions about the labour market integration of refugees. Hence the interest in facilitating integration through REFISMES.

**Demographic dividend.** Refugees may also provide at least a short-term answer to the demographic crisis in Europe. According to Eurostat figures, between 2015 and 2035 the EU-28 population with 20–34 years of age will decline by almost 32 million (from 166.3 to 134.3 million), and the EU-28 population with 35–64 years of age will decline by 8 million (to 131.3 million), whereas the population with 65 years of age or more will increase by 37.7 million (to 133.6 million). Over the same period, the average age of the European population would increase from 42.8 to 47 years. Since the large majority of refugees are below 35 years of age, they will contribute to reduce the dependency rate (non-active/active population ratio) at least over the next 25 years. Of course, the condition for this to happen and not to exacerbate the problems created by the ageing of

TABLE 1 Employment rate of first generation of immigrants by reason for migration

| Reason of entry/<br>Country | Total | International<br>protection or asylum | Family<br>reasons | Education<br>reasons | Work, no job found<br>before migrating | Work, job found<br>before migrating |
|-----------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|-------------------|----------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Belgium                     | 53.9  | 47.1                                  | 46.3              | 55.6                 | 67.1                                   | 86.8                                |
| Spain                       | 52.3  | 40.6                                  | 40.8              | 60.8                 | 63.2                                   | 64.8                                |
| France                      | 58.0  | 58.4                                  | 52.4              | 69.8                 | 72.7                                   | 73.1                                |
| Italy                       | 59.1  | 61.3                                  | 42.5              | 60.9                 | 74.5                                   | 78.8                                |
| Austria                     | 64.9  | 60.2                                  | 63.4              | 55.2                 | 66.4                                   | 81.6                                |
| Finland                     | 63.6  | 43.4                                  | 62.5              | 73.7                 | 80.2                                   | 85.9                                |
| Sweden                      | 65.4  | 58.2                                  | 64.2              | 78.9                 | 64.4                                   | 88.5                                |
| UK                          | 69.3  | 51.8                                  | 58.8              | 65.9                 | 85.9                                   | 92.8                                |
| Norway                      | 69.1  | 56.4                                  | 65.1              | 68.2                 | 74.6                                   | 86.0                                |
| Switzerland                 | 76.5  | 78.1                                  | 69.0              | 74.3                 | 82.1                                   | 89.9                                |

Note: The table includes only countries for which information regarding the performance of those entered for the reason of international protection or asylum is available.

Source: Eurostat EU LFS 2014: lfso\_14l1empr.

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the European population is for the new refugees to enter the labour market. The low-skill profile of recent refugees and asylum seekers should not be a major obstacle in this respect, to the extent that, according to most analyses of current and forecast labour shortages in European labour markets, the vast majority of identified shortages are indeed related to low-skilled occupations (see Martín et al. 2015, chapter 2).

**Path to integration.** Research also shows that employment is the key factor in facilitating general social integration, more important even than language acquisition (as a matter of fact, employment is the best way to acquire the local language) and certainly than vocational education (see Section 3 below, and in particular Lemaître, 2007). Hence there are social cohesion reasons as well to implement labour market integration support measures. In addition, to facilitate labour market integration, the sooner the support measures are activated, the better chances they have of achieving their objectives. It makes sense, then, to give asylum seekers access to labour markets even before they are granted refugee status, in line with a general policy trend observed in the country case studies, but with notable exceptions such as France and the UK, and with many obstacles in practical implementation in countries that have gone down this road.

**Lower labour market integration for refugees.** However, the challenge is daunting: according to figures from the EU countries with the longest experience of integrating asylum seekers (Sweden and Denmark), less than one third of refugees are employed after three years (see country case studies in Volume II, in particular Table 9.1; for the

case of refugees in Amsterdam, in the Netherlands, see Table 7.3 in Vol. II). The recently published 2014 wave of EU Labour Force Survey contains an ad hoc module on migration which provides some precious information regarding the entry channel of migrants. This allows us to compare the labour market performance of migrants entering through international protection or asylum system with other groups of migrants. Table 1 demonstrates that migrants entering through international protection and asylum in average have employment rates lower than migrants in general and similar to those who entered the Member States through the family unification channel. This is mainly due to their qualification and skills profile, but also to psychological trauma many of them have suffered before reaching the country of asylum. Finally, economic incentives to access the labour market may be distorted by the benefits to which refugees (and asylum seekers) are entitled; this is a factor to be considered in the design of any potential labour market integration support measure.

**Mainstreaming vs. specific measures.** This increased difficulty of labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers points to one key policy choice regarding the configuration of REFMISMES: whether to provide special labour market integration support measures for refugees (and eventually also asylum seekers) or simply to “mainstream” them into the general active labour market policies offered to all workers (and perhaps in particular to migrant workers). Differentiation may create some degree of social segregation or a sense of privilege, and trigger social reactions. However, research shows that for different reasons (from attitudes and incentives to skills), refugees

have more difficulties in integrating into the labour market. They have more difficulties, in fact, not only than workers in general, but also than migrant workers (see also Table 1 in Section I.2 above). So they have specific needs that have to be met with specific measures (and probably dedicated budget resources and specific labour intermediation services) if the aim is to maximise their labour market integration. Extraordinary challenges require extraordinary responses, both at the individual and group level.

#### 4. The labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers: evidence and literature review<sup>4</sup>

Before going into the findings from the country case studies and the inventory of REFISMES in each of the countries, it will be useful to look at prior research on the labour market integration of refugees. Migrants' integration has gained the attention of European policymakers due to the recent sharp increase in the number of migrants arriving to the EU. This is reflected in numerous reports and publications produced by international organisations (Eurostat, OECD, MPI, ILO, UNHCR) in recent years. However, most studies consider migrants without focusing on the entry channel and hence ignore an important layer of integration complexity. Instead, there is strong empirical evidence that the entrance channel defines the integration path of migrants in European countries; the employment rate of refugees is significantly lower than for other migrant categories (OECD, 2015; see also 1 in Section I.2 above). Whereas labour migrants start working almost immediately after arrival, family and humanitarian immigrants for whom employment is not the main reason for moving to a new country need more time to become part of the host country labour market (OECD 2014b).

Several reports produced by international organisations are important sources of information regarding the practices related to the integration of refugees such as ECRE and Caritas Europa (2007), IOM (2013), UNHCR (2013a,b,c). UNHCR (2013c) provides an extensive literature review and synthesises the current knowledge regarding labour market integration of resettled refugees in different countries. The study identifies existing challenges, promising practices and factors favouring labour market integration in the host country. OECD (2016), in turn, is the first of the “Making

<sup>4</sup> The full version of the literature and research review can be found in Volume II of this study.

Integration Work” series which summarises the OECD countries' experiences in the integration of humanitarian migrants (see box). Through examples of good practice, the study highlights ways in which policymakers can facilitate integration of humanitarian migrants, removing any barriers in the way of that goal.

#### TEN LESSONS ON LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES

- Lesson 1: Provide activation and integration services as soon as possible for humanitarian migrants and asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay.
- Lesson 2: Facilitate labour market access for asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay.
- Lesson 3: Factor employment prospects into dispersal policies.
- Lesson 4: Record and assess humanitarian migrants' foreign qualifications, work experience and skills. Provide for alternative assessment methods where documentation is missing.
- Lesson 5: Take into account the growing diversity of humanitarian migrants and develop tailor-made approaches.
- Lesson 6: Identify mental and physical health issues early and provide adequate support.
- Lesson 7: Develop support programmes specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling.
- Lesson 8: Build on civil society to integrate humanitarian migrants.
- Lesson 9: Promote equal access to integration services to humanitarian migrants across the country.
- Lesson 10: Acknowledge that the integration of very poorly educated humanitarian migrants requires long-term training and support.

Source: OECD (2016) Making Integration Work: Refugees and others in need of protection. OECD Publishing, Paris. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264251236-en>.

Several recent publications by the European Migration Network (EMN) also provide valuable up-to-date information regarding labour market access and measures on the labour market integration of asylum seekers as well as existing policies and good practices in the field in the EU Member States through a series of ad hoc queries (EMN,



2015a,b, 2016). The European Parliament (2015) assesses the economic impact of migration in terms of the potential contribution of the current flows and short-term costs related to reception. The study stresses the crucial role of early access to the labour market in overall integration. According to IMF (2016), though most European countries made an effort to harmonise the reception conditions and comply with the rules set up by the Asylum Reception Conditions Directive, the main difficulties go beyond the legal framework. This might include such issues as the low awareness among employers that refugees are allowed to work, lack of language skills and an absence of mechanisms enabling recognitions of qualifications and establishing equivalence of certificates obtained abroad. The failure to recognise qualifications leaves much of refugees' and asylum seekers' potential unused. Moreover, most Member States are characterised by high unemployment especially among those searching for their first job, which makes the absorption of refugees and asylum seekers by domestic labour markets still more challenging.

Though the majority of academic studies focus on measuring the labour market integration of migrants in general, there is a limited but extremely important part of literature that considers refugees as a separate group. It is worth individuating two interconnected study tendencies: studies measuring labour market integration and studies on measures targeting the labour market integration of (resettled) refugees (and asylum seekers).

How can the relative scarcity of research on the labour market integration of refugees be explained? Part of the reason might be the lack of information which principal documents on general EU labour market performance, such as EU-LFS or EU-SILC datasets, provide regarding visa categories which allow immigrants to reside in the host country. Still, available evidence points to differences in the labour market outcome for refugees with respect to other groups of migrants. Refugees frequently do worse than both natives and other groups of migrants: low employment rate, high over-qualification rate, etc. This is so at least over the short term (Cangiano, 2012). These findings are also confirmed in country-specific studies. However, OECD/EU (2014), drawing on the EU-LFS 2008 dataset, demonstrates that, over time, the employment rate of persons entering for international protection increases significantly. Also, long-settled immigrants are more likely to participate in the labour market and less prone to unemployment than more recent ones; the difference is particularly striking for refugees. The risk of over-qualification also seems to fall among employed immigrants born in a lower-income

country at the rate of one percentage point per year (OECD 2014b).

### Common factors for success and failure

Though the literature on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market is still limited, some obstacles preventing integration and some policies favouring it are emerging. The evidence comes mainly from studies evaluating the experience of integrating resettled refugees in the USA and Canada as well as from those concerned with the labour market integration of previous waves of refugees in Northern European countries. Studies on the labour market integration of migrants in Europe in general also provide important insights for refugees. Some common factors of success/failure identified in the literature can be summarised as follows.

According to OECD (2015) the relatively poor performance of refugees in the labour market can be only partially attributed to the lack of qualification or skills. A detailed analysis of the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in three European countries (the UK, Ireland and Germany) presented in RISE (2013) provides important insights regarding the barriers/obstacles to labour market integration identified in each country considered in the study. The barriers identified are summarised here:

- Language (including literacy), especially vocational (major priority)
- Lack of work experience in host country
- Lack of host country references
- Lack of appropriate training or unrecognised educational and professional qualifications
- Lack of access to networks which would strengthen employment prospects and knowledge of recruitment methods
- Lack of knowledge/awareness of fitting current experience to the roles applied for
- Lack of understanding of host country employment culture and job application procedures
- Cross-cultural misunderstandings causing suspicion or hostility
- Lack of awareness of cultural nuances and etiquette in the host country
- Racism and negative stereotyping
- Uncertainty (caused by a lack of life and work perspectives)
- Boredom and frustration leading to loss of self-esteem (caused by the lack of meaningful occupation, especially work)

As for the factors facilitating refugees' and asylum seekers' integration in the labour market, they can be summarised as follows.

**Employment is more important than vocational education.** The faster refugees move into the labour market, the faster their integration will be. Successful integration is associated with early contact with the labour market, as Swedish work experience is rewarded by employers (Lemaître, 2007). Also, early employment experiences are much more conducive for later employment than is vocational education in Sweden.

**Host country language knowledge is key for successful integration.** The growing literature on the relationship between migrants' language skills and their achievement in the labour market shows that knowledge of the host country's language contributes to higher attainments in the labour market (Chiswick and Miller, 2007, 2009). Given the crucial role of language, all nine destination countries considered in this study provide humanitarian migrants with publically (co-)financed language programmes and, with the exception of Italy, special language training for the poorly educated (OECD, 2016).

**Language instruction is important if it does not delay labour market entry and corresponds to occupational needs.** Many reports underline the importance of adopting language programmes that are integrated with workplace experience (see Lemaître, 2007; Carrera, 2006; Åslund and Johansson, 2011, Andersson Joona and Nekby, 2012). According to OECD (2016), on-the-job language training enables refugees whose foreign credentials are not equivalent to domestic qualifications to acquire the missing skills that will help them achieve full equivalence and eventually practice their occupation in the host country. This type of programme is quite promising as it offers real-life language practice, helps to build soft skills such as relationships and increased confidence and promotes employment over welfare usage (UNHCR, 2013c). For instance, language-training programmes in Finland see part of each workday spent in language classes. In Norway there are similar "language apprenticeships" that are frequently part of individualised employment plans. Refugees spend two days in a workplace to learn work-related vocabulary and gain Norwegian labour market experience. Language courses integrated into work training is not a new idea but is being increasingly emphasised. Though highly effective, the application of on-the-job training is limited due to the fact that it is costly and requires co-operation from employers (OECD, 2016).

Skill assessment is the first step for successful integration. According to Aldashev et al. (2010), among four types of training that migrant welfare recipients might be assigned to under the "integration contract" in Germany, only two have had a positive effect on employment: aptitude tests (assessment of the skills, capability and labour market opportunities for specific occupation) and skill provision (practical training in specific working techniques)<sup>5</sup>.

**Recognition of qualifications is beneficial but not always.** Employers tend not to trust foreign qualifications or foreign work experience. The recognition of qualifications equivalent to local ones appears to be beneficial (Lemaître, 2007). However, this is not always the case. Correa-Velez et al. (2013) estimate that recognition of overseas skills and qualifications decreased the chances of finding employment for refugee men living in South East Queensland (Australia). The recognition of qualification per se, the authors argue, does not help employers to overcome the concern about foreign education. Another plausible explanation is that refugees with recognised formal qualifications might look for a job that suits their qualifications, which postpones their employment, at least in the short run.

**Customised approach (gender / age / education / family status) is key for integration in the labour market.** Assessment of qualifications and needs, and developing an individual employment plan are key elements in employment support for resettled refugees in Norway. The refugee "develops an individual career plan consisting of an aim – normally a type of job – and various schemes deemed relevant to achieve this" (Hagelund, 2005). The evaluation of the Life CV programme in the UK also demonstrated that an individually tailored approach helps refugees "to consider new ways of knowing themselves and presenting themselves to potential employers" (Schultheiss et al., 2011). The measures designed for taking gender into account have also proven to be successful. Refugee women might be self-excluded from cultural orientation, language training, employment training and employment due to childcare needs and cultural expectations (Riller, 2009).

**Fiscal mechanisms are effective, though not for everybody:** The result of quasi-natural experiments aimed at assessing the effect of lowering income transfers to refugee immigrants points to several interesting facts. First, the lower-income transfer has a positive effect on the job-finding rate after two years in the host country. Second,

5 The other two types of training, addressing the long-term unemployed and aiming at improving the applicant's presentation and job search abilities, demonstrated no effect.

income transfers during the early phases of the integration process positively affect the exit rate from the labour force. Finally, the experiment has shown that refugees, being the weakest in the labour market, are almost immune to such policy changes (Rosholm and Vejin, 2007).

**Subsidised employment schemes are (more) effective if the employer is a private entity.** Denmark, among European countries, has one of the best-established integration frameworks and hence potentially can provide important insights into the effectiveness of labour market integration. The three-year integration programme for migrants offered by Danish municipalities consists of Danish language training for all and six types of active labour market policies (ALMP) for immigrants receiving social security benefits. Though the programmes demonstrated significant lock-in effects of training due to involvement in language courses (the probability of finding employment falls while being part of the programme), this disadvantage diminishes over time. Also, those ALMPs with direct involvement in the private sector (subsidised private sector employment and employment with wage subsidy in private sector firms) markedly increased employment probability, whereas other components were either negative or had no effect (Clausen et al., 2009). In Norway, non-Western immigrants are most commonly involved in work practice programmes, labour market training and wage subsidy programmes. According to Kvinge and Djuve (2006), wage subsidised employment programmes had perhaps the largest impact in terms of improving the employment rates of participants.

**Start-up subsidies** to secure the initial phase of self-employment for externally approved business plans were proven to have a significant positive effect on employment, income and occupational satisfaction especially for the disadvantaged groups in the labour market in Germany (Caliendo and Kunn, 2010; Wolff and Nivorozhkin, 2012).

**Temporary agency employment** programmes have a positive impact on the employment outcome of migrants in terms of the transition to regular employment in Denmark, the Netherlands and Sweden. The studies demonstrate that the impact of the programmes is more positive for immigrants and ethnic minorities than for natives. In Denmark it has significant positive effects on the transition rate to regular employment for both natives and immigrants, but the effect is stronger for immigrants (Jahn and Roshol, 2012; De Graaf-Zijl et al., 2011; Andersson and Wadensjo, 2004).

## Remaining literature gaps

Studies considering the measures targeting the labour market integration of refugees are frequently characterised by several crucial shortcomings:

- The existing studies reviewed above are prevalingly of a descriptive nature and lack a quantitative component.
- The vast majority of them lack design enabling an evaluation of analysed measures, hence only a few explore the effectiveness of specific labour market integration policies or programmes. The absence of controlled trials and quasi-experimental design, hence absence of comparison groups, makes the causality of any effects found questionable. This is an important shortcoming as the population/refugee samples subject to active labour market policies are usually characterised by different selection and self-selection mechanisms, not to mention severe attrition rates.
- There is an important theoretical gap related to programming. Only a few programmes explain the mechanism through which the designed activities lead to better labour market integration. So far, there is no clear theoretical framework that could propose the sequence of steps that a refugee should go through or an optimal combination of measures that should be implemented to achieve the desired outcome.
- Usually it is difficult to estimate the impact of a concrete measure, as migrants are frequently part of more complex multi-component programmes. For instance, the Integration Programme for Immigrants (open to refugees too) introduced in Finland in the late 1990s had a significant positive effect. It greatly increased the employment and earnings of immigrants and reduced their dependency on social benefits (Sarvimäki and Hämäläinen, 2010). However, the programme consisted of an individualised sequence of training and subsidised employment, with non-compliance sanctioned by a reduction in welfare benefits. Hence, though the overall impact of the programme is estimated to be positive, it is hard to distinguish between the importance of its various elements or single out the best sequence.
- Existing studies are mainly based on resettled refugees in the USA, Canada and Australia, and due to the lack of theoretically grounded and empirically robust results, the findings are only partially relevant for the recent flow of humanitarian migrants to Europe.

The above-listed shortcomings also indicate the direction in which this strand of the literature should develop. First, refugee-related data collection ought to be addressed in a more systematic, harmonised and structured manner in all EU Member States. This will allow the situation to be monitored constantly; the stock of data will boost academic (including quantitative) research in the field, which in turn will provide the policymakers with important insights. Second, the way labour market integration measures are designed should take into account the necessity of evaluating their effectiveness afterwards: controlled trials and quasi-experimental design. This would allow researchers to better understand the impact and effectiveness of given measures. Finally, more efforts should be made to develop a theoretical framework to explain the role of a given measure, the channel through which it affects the labour market integration of (resettled) refugees and asylum seekers as well as the combination and sequence of measures leading to the best outcome for a given group of beneficiaries considering skill level, gender, age and marital status.

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## II. Summary of country case studies<sup>6</sup>

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### 1. Austria

#### Refugee profile

In 2015 the number of asylum seekers in Austria quadrupled from 2014 levels (UNHCR and BMI as of January 2016). The number of asylum seekers per inhabitant – 1 in 128 – means that Austria ranks as the third main receiving country among the EU-28 per head of population, after Germany and Sweden. Compared to previous periods, the share of final positive decisions (43%) on applications was unusually high in 2014, almost twice the 2002–2013 average. Crucial here was the high acceptance rate of refugees from Syria (88%) and Afghanistan (53%) (source: BMI). A parliamentary inquiry revealed that the average decision on asylum in Austria took 5.3 months in September 2015.

The recent influx of asylum seekers, in 2015, consisted predominantly of Afghans (29%), Syrians (28%) and Iraqis (16%) who together accounted for more than 70% of all asylum applications. In terms of gender distribution, almost three quarters of applicants were male. At the end of October 2015, around one third of asylum seekers were younger than 18 years and half of them were between 18 and 34 at the time of their application. As Austrian social insurance data do not indicate whether a registered employee is a refugee, it is impossible to calculate the unemployment rate for refugees. However, available data on registered unemployed refugees and persons under subsidiary protection from the Austrian Public Employment Service (Arbeitsmarktservice – AMS) indicate a clear upward trend over the past five years. In December 2015, 21,154 recognised refugees were registered as unemployed.

#### Policy and legal framework

Recognised refugees and persons under subsidiary protection enjoy the same regulations on entering the labour market as nationals. In 2015 the Public Employment Service provided support to 21,195 recognised refugees, and 6,170 persons were found jobs. By contrast, the employment of asylum seekers is subject to the Austrian Alien Employment Act (AuslBG). Accordingly, the only way for asylum seekers to access the labour market is seasonal work after a waiting period of three months, starting from the submission date of the asylum application. Access is restricted by a special decree of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Labour (2004) – the so-called Bartenstein Decree (Bartenstein-Erlass) – to selected occupations with quota-regulated work permits, i.e. tourism, agriculture and forestry. These seasonal jobs are limited by a yearly quota for each federal province and cannot be issued for more than six months. In order to take up employment, the local AMS has to issue a work permit. Applications have to be submitted to the AMS by the employer. The possibility of obtaining access to the labour market is restricted by a labour market test (Ersatzkraftverfahren). Experiences with the seasonal employment of asylum seekers shows that, in practice, only a small number had access to seasonal jobs within the quota system in 2006–2014 (Bock-Schappelwein and Huber, 2015). Since July 2012, asylum seekers up to the age of 25 years may take up an apprenticeship in shortage occupations. The access of young asylum seekers to an apprenticeship in shortage occupations, however, has so far been little used. As of January 2016 there existed about 120 such apprenticeships. Asylum seekers may take up work in charitable and non-profit institutions as well as community service. Asylum seekers are not registered with the AMS as unemployed persons and, therefore, are not entitled to support measures provided by the AMS, such as educational training.

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<sup>6</sup> The full nine country case studies can be found in Volume II of this study. Bibliographical references in this section can also be found in the respective lists of references in Volume II.

The Austrian authorities still believe that the current legislation allows even earlier access to the labour market than stipulated by the relevant EU regulation. They argue that, even when granting full access to the labour market, labour market tests would be maintained and thus put a limit on labour market entrance. Politicians oppose the removal of restrictions due to the high and growing unemployment rate. NGOs, by contrast, call for an opening of the labour market to asylum seekers six months after the submission of the asylum application. Restrictions, they argue, would contribute to rising poverty, social exclusion and the degradation of skills. Austrian social partners have been following the same political line.

In a regression analysis, Bock-Schappelwein and Huber (2015) found that, controlling for other relevant variables, e.g. education, the risk of unemployment for refugees and asylum seekers is higher than that for labour migrants. Qualitative research on the subject provides some insights into the practical issues refugees face as they enter the labour market. The problem of obtaining missing documents (e.g. education certificates) from the home country is one of the major difficulties reported by refugees (Scheiber, 2007). The recognition of foreign certificates generally involves substantial costs, which refugees often cannot afford (Riesenfelder et al., 2011). Other problems, such as a limited command of the German language, can also pose difficulties in the labour market (Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber, 2009). Current asylum seekers tend to prefer countries with low unemployment rates, including Austria (IMF, 2016). Accordingly, Austria might consider, first, the abolishment of the labour market test and, second, active labour market policies, such as training and apprenticeship contracts. The former would contribute to the removal of barriers to employment, while the latter would facilitate and accelerate integration into the labour market for refugees and asylum seekers.

### Main REFMISMES

In 2015, Austria adopted a series of new labour market integration support measures for asylum seekers and refugees: in September 2015 the Austrian government announced additional funding (€145 million) for the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. A budget of €75 million has been allocated for the newly created Pot for Integration and €70 million were dedicated for active labour market policy measures. Two months later, in November 2015, the Minister of Foreign Affairs presented 50 Action Points – A Plan for the Integration of Persons entitled to Asylum or Subsidiary Protection in Austria. Overall, the

focus of labour market activities will concentrate on better and faster recognition of education and qualifications acquired in the sending countries, the continuation of competence checks that started in Vienna in 2015, the self-employment of recognised refugees, integration/qualification support for recognised refugees, intensification of labour market programmes as well as a voluntary integration year for persons granted refugee status.

There are numerous ongoing projects related to the labour market integration of refugees, financed partly through the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Many of those are provided by NGOs such as Caritas, Diakonie and Volkshilfe and concentrate on German language courses, coaching, counselling and labour market access support. Apart from these well-known organisations there are also numerous smaller providers offering integration programmes for refugees. The main ones and those covered in the country case study are the following:

- German language courses. Even if these are key to labour market integration, available funds will very likely not be sufficient for this year.
- Competence checks by the AMS are considered a very useful measure, providing comprehensive information about the target groups and also focussing on women.
- Better and faster recognition of education and skills acquired in the home countries are considered, jointly with the German language courses, to enable faster entrance into the labour market.
- Voluntary integration year. Starting in 2016, there is the possibility of a voluntary integration year (freiwilliges Integrationsjahr – FIJ). This is comparable to the voluntary social year, for persons who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status, who have had this status for a maximum of two years and who are beneficiaries of the needs-based minimum income. The FIJ is similar to job training and may last between six and twelve months; apart from a charitable activity in a recognised organisation, it also envisages training and integration measures. Recognised organisers are those employing civilian servants or offering jobs for the voluntary social year. This measure starting in April 2016 is considered a good example for training on the job and the transition to work, but with a relatively low number of participants.

- Nationwide apprenticeship placement may help to reduce the current mismatch on the apprenticeship market as well as the uncertainty on whether the potential candidates are willing to move within the country.
- Self-employment of recognised refugees faces many legal obstacles and the problem of insufficient knowledge about business culture. Currently there are only individual cases, but these might be interesting over the longer term.
- Mentoring for migrants proves very effective due to individual support, but is relatively small in number.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The labour market integration of refugees has become an increasingly important topic recently. This is reflected in the funding made available for the integration of recognised refugees and persons under subsidiary protection. The amount spent by the Public Employment Service (AMS) on labour market integration measures for this target group increased from €43 million in 2014 to a projected €70 million in 2016.

The lack of refugee-related data is the main obstacle to evaluating past and recent measures aimed at the labour market integration of refugees.

Overall, stakeholders believe that German language skills are of the utmost importance for further qualifications, which is reflected in all programmes announced by the government, in stakeholders' position papers, surveys among companies and by expert statements. But it is also important to continue with qualifications and other measures after language courses, otherwise the newly acquired skills will be lost. Also, the fast recognition of previously acquired qualifications is seen as an important element of labour market integration. The AMS, responsible for the labour market policy of the federal state, emphasises that recognised refugees and persons under subsidiary protection should not be driven into the (crowded) low-skilled labour market just because of their poor German language skills. Rather, efforts should be made to consider their earlier professional careers and educational attainment and their actual competencies.

Finally, successful labour market integration will be greatly dependent on the willingness of enterprises to employ refugees. A recent survey among Austrian companies gives rise to cautious optimism here.

## 2. Denmark

### Refugee profile

In 2014 the number of refugees arriving in Denmark rose dramatically, reaching almost 15,000, and in 2015 the number increased to over 21,000. While Syrian asylum seekers currently make up the largest share of those coming to Denmark, the pattern of asylum seekers has changed over the last six months, so that Syrian asylum seekers currently make up about a third of the arrivals, whereas the number of Afghan asylum seekers has increased substantially. In terms of gender, the trend for the total of all nationalities is that there is a significant majority of male applicants, particularly aged 15–39, peaking at 25–29 years old. As for the characteristics of those refugees, data for the first half of 2015 indicates that, in terms of level of qualifications from country of origin, 40% have no schooling or a very low level of schooling from their country of origin, or they are illiterate in the Latin alphabet. A total of 50% has just some schooling and 10% has a middle- or long-term school and educational background (this also applies to Syrian refugees). In terms of levels and patterns of current employment in 2014, among refugees 25–64 years old who have been part of the integration programme of refugees, 29% were employed after three years in Denmark. The number was 52% among people who had come to Denmark for family reunification.

### Policy and legal framework

Asylum seekers over 18 can, subject to certain conditions, seek a work permit (full-time or part-time, paid or unpaid, with or without public subsidy) until their case is determined (approved or rejected). The conditions are: six months must have passed from the time of application for asylum, the Danish Immigration Service must have decided that the asylum seeker's case will be tried in Denmark, the Danish Immigration Service must approve labour conditions, asylum seekers must – as part of the contract – contribute to aid the Danish Immigration Service in the treatment of their case and the work must also match the normal conditions of the Danish labour market and conditions for other employees. No “self-employment” is allowed, and certain requirements also exist regarding the criminal record and the treatment of the asylum case.

Asylum seekers whose case will be determined in Denmark can, in addition, seek unpaid internships, or unpaid humanitarian/voluntary work. Additionally, an asylum seeker who is offered a job on the so-called “Positive

List” can look for permanent residence on this basis. An asylum seeker who is offered a high-paying job can apply for permanent residence following “Beløbsordningen”, which roughly translates as “the pay limit scheme”. In the period between the introduction of the previous law in 2012 and 17 January 2016, 73 such cases were approved by the authorities.

The overall political responsibility for the integration of refugees currently lies with the Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing. Newly arrived asylum seekers must participate in a course in the asylum centre, in which, among other things, they receive language training and are informed about the Danish labour market and the educational system. After the initial three-year “period of integration”, responsibility for employment is passed to the Ministry of Employment. The legal responsibility for activities including refugees in the labour market lies with the municipalities. Several organisations (such as the Red Cross and the Danish Refugee Council) cooperate with the municipalities in organising activities aimed at assisting refugees’ entry into society and the labour market. Additionally, private companies and organisations working as intermediaries between the municipality and employers are part of the efforts to integrate refugees into the Danish labour force. The municipality must offer refugees over 18 an “integration programme” consisting of activities aimed at facilitating integration, including Danish language courses and other activities for helping them obtain employment (“employment-oriented activities”). Refugees’ participation in this programme is mandatory, and it is personalised to match the specific needs of each individual. The precise nature of the programme is determined by an “integration contract” signed by the refugee and the municipality. The integration programme lasts up to three years, while the Danish language courses can last up to five years.

There is one significant change in the conditions for refugees, introduced by the current government’s new laws regarding conditions for asylum seekers and refugees, adopted in autumn of 2015 and expanded in the so-called “Asylum Package”, adopted on 26 January 2016. This is the change in the amount of monthly benefits refugees receive from the government. The recent cuts in the benefits for refugees were introduced by the government to deter immigration and encourage refugees to find employment quickly.

## Main REFISMES

The different REFISMES implemented by different levels of government and actors can be summarised as follows.

**Government:** The goal of the government is to have all refugees of working age either active participants in an education programme or in employment as quickly as possible. As the government pays subsidies to unemployed refugees, it makes financial sense for the government to activate refugees. At this level, one of the REFISMES stands out: the recognition of (non-)regulated fields of employment and education. The Danish Agency for Higher Education, a government body under the Ministry of Education, evaluates the education of immigrants, including refugees, often from applications by the immigrants themselves, but municipalities and employers can also ask for evaluations. There is an online database in which it is possible to search for particular foreign qualifications and match them to the Danish system. The average time of evaluation – be it for refugees or for others – was, in 2014, 32 days. The government finds that the earlier an evaluation of skills is made, the more effectively it can be included in the integration efforts. The agency has, therefore, sought to spread awareness among municipalities and other actors, such as job centres, language schools, etc. about having diplomas evaluated for life in Denmark.

**Municipalities:** When part of an integration programme, the municipality is to make sure the refugees are offered REFISMES to help introduce and integrate them into the Danish labour market. This can take the form of 1) guidance and training to strengthen their qualifications, including specific employment qualifications; 2) internships in companies; or 3) short-term salaried subsidised employment. These subsidised options will typically be less well paid than normal jobs. The offers should ideally be made within fields where there is a need for employment and should be based on the wishes and preconditions of the refugee, with the goal that the refugee may get lasting employment and can (fully or partially) provide for himself or herself as quickly as possible. In terms of measuring the effect of the REFISMES, not much data has been produced. One study by KORA from 2014 about refugees who were granted license to stay between 2007 and 2011 showed that, regardless of some uncertainty of the data, the probability of quickly getting employed or seeking an education is observed to decrease the later the arrival in Denmark. The better refugees are at speaking Danish, the better their chances are of being employed quickly. With regard to educational and vocational backgrounds,



those arriving with a vocational or higher education degree tend to get employment more quickly than people arriving with only elementary or high school diplomas. This goes for immigrants in general as well (KORA, 2012). However, the data is to be taken with reservations, as the information about the educational background of refugees is limited.

#### **Non-governmental organisations and private companies:**

To bring together the authorities responsible for the integration of refugees – the hosting municipality – and employers, non-governmental organisations and companies can work as facilitators. One example is the concept of “branchepakker”, which might be translated as “industry packages”, an initiative developed in cooperation between Vejle Municipality and the consultancy firm LG Insight, to integrate immigrants and refugees into the workforce. The process is supported by the non-profit Foreningen Nydansker (Association New Dane) representing a large number of public and private employers with the aim of integrating immigrants into the Danish labour market. The concept of “industry packages”, which is spreading in a growing number of municipalities and which is recommended by Local Government Denmark<sup>7</sup>, builds on a structure consisting of five modules. These are: 1) an introductory course where the refugees are introduced to the different business areas included in the programme and where they choose their field of interest; 2) a short-term internship in businesses within the selected business area to test whether it is a good match; 3) the refugee’s first extended stay in the business, in which the basic competencies are developed, including vocational, linguistic and personal competences; 4) the second business stay, in which more general competences within the business area are covered, with supplementary courses specific to the area of the labour market; and 5) the third business stay, in which the learned competences are sustained and where the refugee is placed strategically in the geographical area and specific part of the business area in which there are a higher number of job openings (Local Government Denmark, inspiration catalogue).

Refugees can also take on internships and government-subsidised employment in the public sector. There is strong evidence that short-term subsidised employment in the private sector has a significant positive effect on future employment, even if the person searches for fewer jobs while actively employed. Contrarily, similar programmes in the public sector have a limited impact, as the effect

after the end of the programme is smaller, and people are also likely to search for fewer jobs while active in the public sector (KORA, 2013; Local Government Denmark 2016). Among non-Western immigrants, the most positive results are found when REFMISMES are combined, so that subsidised employment follows other efforts. The most positive outcome seems to come when subsidised employment in the private sector comes after a regular education.

In order to boost labour market integration, the website “Good Reception” was created by the Danish Immigration Service, the Red Cross, Local Government Denmark and the Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing. This website gives examples of successful cases of REFMISMES and suggests how local authorities might best approach the issue. There are programmes focused on integrating women, targeting broader issues than the labour market. But the major targeted subgroup are young people, in efforts to promote their enrolment in education or their inclusion in the labour market.

There has been a significant problem with activating refugees (and non-Western immigrants in general) successfully. A majority remain in the three-year “integration programme” for the full three years, without being employed by the end of the period. Only around three out of ten refugees provide for themselves after the three-year period is over. As regards asylum seekers, from May 2013 to November 2014 only 39 permits for employment were approved by the Danish Immigration Service. Several factors can make it difficult to integrate asylum seekers into the labour market. For the employer it has been noted that the fact that it often takes several weeks to have the application for a work permit approved by the Danish Immigration Service can be a disadvantage. The Red Cross has, for instance, recommended improvement in the flexibility of case processing, and better information given to the asylum seekers about options for seeking employment.

#### **Conclusions and recommendations**

The data on the effect of the various REFMISMES is still quite limited, and the actors involved in the integration process are hesitant to give numbers and conclusions about the effectiveness of the efforts. Nevertheless, some conclusions as to what helps and what impedes integration are emerging. The following points appear to be among the most significant in the efforts:

<sup>7</sup> The interest group and member authority of Danish municipalities.

- Learning Danish has a significant effect on the chances of getting employed.
- A proactive approach by the responsible authorities (typically the municipalities) is advantageous in terms of outreach and their ability to facilitate contacts between the refugees and the employers. Some municipalities have been criticised for being too slow at integrating refugees in actual jobs.
- The housing of the refugee takes into account where in the country the chances are greatest of matching the skills and employment interests of the refugee with the needs of the labour market.
- Subsidised short-term employment in the private sector seems to be the most effective REFMISMES.
- Finally, activities directed to actual inclusion in the labour market should take place as quickly as possible. The more time people spend without being integrated, for instance by following courses in Danish and other courses oriented towards more “general” social integration, the harder it will be for refugees to get active employment.

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### 3. France

#### Refugee profile

Preliminary data released by OFPRA (2016) shows that in 2015 France registered an increase in asylum applications (+24%), with some 70,000 new requests being presented. While significant, this rise remains less sharp than the increases registered in other European countries, including Germany and Sweden. The countries of origin also changed in the last year, with Syrians being for the first time the second-largest national group (+64.2% compared to 2014) after the Sudanese (+184%). In the very last months, Afghan applications have also increased, almost surpassing Syrian ones by the beginning of 2016. People in need of protection in transit as well as failed asylum seekers who remain on French territory are invisible to statistics. It is estimated that several thousand people are staying in the “jungles” at Calais in 2016.

Data on the employment situation of asylum seeker and refugees in France is scant. OFPRA and OFII reports do not include information on the socio-professional profile of

asylum seekers, and refugees are registered as “clients of foreign origin” in the national files on the unemployed. The only statistical data available on refugees comes from two studies that include refugees in their sample. First, there was the study “Migrants’ Trajectories and Profiles”. It interviewed some 6,000 signatories of the contract of integration, of whom 10% were refugees (DARES, 2011). Second, the Ministry of the Interior launched a study in 2010 to measure the integration of new arrivals: next to foreign nationals holding long-term residence permits, the sample included some 600 refugees who had entered France in 2009 (Ministry of the Interior, 2010). These studies show that refugees tend to be less educated than other foreign nationals – mainly due to the poor possibilities for education in the countries of origin. In terms of performance in the labour market, refugees (along with beneficiaries of family reunification) are more likely to be unemployed and are more often employed in low-skilled occupations such as construction, cleaning and personal care. According to the “Migrants’ Trajectories and Profiles” study, only 34% of refugees were employed in 2006 (DARES, 2011). However, these studies also highlight how this gap tends to shrink over time.

A number of major themes run through the scarce academic research on the employment situation of refugees and asylum seekers in France, which were widely confirmed by interviews carried out for this study: 1) there is a lack of studies on the professional integration of refugees and asylum seekers; 2) for asylum seekers it is basically impossible to enter the formal labour market; 3) in spite of their high motivation to find employment as soon as possible, refugees face numerous difficulties in accessing the French labour market, the main non-legal obstacles being language, social isolation, unfamiliarity with the recruitment and job search system, discrimination, the relation between housing and employment and administrative obstacles (see below); 4) once they obtain protection, the change in legal status often does not entail a change in social status; 5) refugees are mostly employed in low-skilled, precarious and hard occupations and often they work on the informal labour market, where their vulnerabilities are exposed; 6) most employed refugees face professional downgrading, which typically has psychological costs.

#### Policy and legal framework

A reform of the asylum law was approved in July 2015. The period after which asylum seekers can apply for a work permit was reduced from twelve to nine months in line

with the minimum provisions of the EU Directive – the only major change relating to the labour market. Asylum seekers are not allowed to work while waiting for their asylum request to be decided upon in France. Access to the labour market is allowed only if OFPRA has not ruled on the asylum application within nine months from the registration of applications and only if this delay cannot be attributed to the applicant. There is no official data on the work permits requested by and granted to asylum seekers. Interviews indicate that in practice very few asylum seekers apply for a work permit. This is due first of all to the difficult requirements, including an offer of employment (*promesse d'embauche*). It is hard for an asylum seeker to find an employer willing to recruit him or her when his/her residence permit is valid only for three months and states that the holder is not authorised to work. Interviews also indicate that the vast majority of requests for a work permit are denied based on the unemployment rates recorded in the requested sector. Article L. 744-11 of CESEDA establishes that once asylum seekers have entered the labour market, they can benefit from professional training. However, *de facto* asylum seekers have a lot of difficulties in accessing such vocational trainings.

Refugees enjoy, instead, the same rights as French citizens. Refugees have free access to the labour market and to the services offered by *Pôle emploi* (employment centre). However, several professions are limited to French nationals, and a number of occupations are regulated (*réglementées*), i.e. their practice is conditional on authorisation by a professional association and the possession of a diploma obtained in France. Based on the interviews and on the studies under examination, further legal obstacles to the integration of refugees in the job market include: (i) recognition of professional titles and qualifications: often refugees cannot provide documentary evidence of their qualifications, as they may have lost the certificates or left them in the country of origin. Moreover, in France there is no principle of juridical equivalence between diplomas obtained abroad and those delivered by the Ministry of Education; (ii) refugees who are younger than 25 are not entitled to receive either unemployment benefits or *Pôle emploi*'s allowance for asylum seekers. If unemployed, they are left without revenue; (iii) the length of the administrative procedure to obtain the refugee card that authorises work.

In terms of policy, the French authorities have not, to date, considered the integration of asylum seekers and refugees a priority. The interviews and reviews of a number of recent reports (Ministry of Interior, 2013; Tuot, 2012; Karoutchi,

2014) confirm that the refugee issue is addressed with a short-term approach and with a focus on the asylum procedure and on the reception of asylum seekers: reception is difficult because of a constant situation of emergency and of a chronic shortage of accommodation. The logic of political renewal, budgetary reforms as well as the wish for France not to become an attractive destination within the EU are further factors that may explain this stance. The French authorities have consistently maintained that asylum seekers should not be targeted with integration measures. The position of the French authorities is that once an individual obtains international protection (i.e. becomes a refugee), he/she enters the regime of common law (*droit commun*). Thus, there is no need for specific measures targeting refugees besides the REFISMES listed below.

### Main REFISMES

The country case study has identified 14 REFISMES in France, none of which targets asylum seekers. These include those provided by the French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII) to all foreign newcomers and individual support provided within temporary accommodation centres for refugees. There are also a plethora of programmes and initiatives run by associations and private actors, mostly at the local level. Individual counselling is the most widespread form of support offered to refugees. According to most interviewees, a number of good practices and effective initiatives can be identified (such as the *Accelair* programme). However, considering both the limited number of refugees targeted and reached by these measures as well as the important barriers to employment, this set of initiatives cannot decisively tackle the obstacles that refugees face trying to integrate in the job market.

- Assessment of professional skills for signatories of the integration contract who are not employed at the time of the signature, aimed at favouring the professional insertion in the labour market.
- Language training for signatories of the contract of integration whose language skills are considered weak by the OFII officer during the initial interview. Courses are free and can last up to 400 hours.
- Information session on life in France.

In the period 2010–2014, between 100,000 and 110,000 contracts were signed each year. The beneficiaries of the skills assessment decreased from 60,000 in 2010 to 37,000

in 2014, and language training was recommended and provided to some 23,000 individuals per year (OFII 2015). At the beginning of 2013, the Interior Ministry asked the General Inspectorate for Administration and the General Inspectorate for Social Affairs to carry out an assessment of OFII integration policy. The assessment mission report concluded that services provided as part of a reception and integration contract are too standardised, and lacking a sufficient evaluation of new migrants' individual needs. Several interviewees pointed out that for the refugee population, these measures conceived for newly arrived foreigners reach them late – often two years or more after their arrival in France. Regarding the skills assessment, interviews indicate that its usefulness is undeniable but limited, as OFII officers give information but no direct support and some refugees may perceive the meeting as a mandatory administrative procedure rather than an opportunity.

Among the other REFMISMES identified, one stands out:

**The Accelair programme** run by Forum Réfugiés offers customised support for those looking for accommodation, job and vocational training for newly recognised refugees (in the first year after recognition). Regarding the professional component in particular, the NGO's staff offer support for preparing applications for unemployment allowance, a skill assessment, developing a professional project, the job search, linguistic training and keeping a job. The project activities also target actors on the territory, offering mediation and translation services and raising awareness of refugees among local authorities and companies. According to the data provided by the NGO, in 2014 some 800 households (around 1,200 adults) of 55 nationalities received support, and two thirds of the beneficiaries of the Accelair project received training or got a job. On average it took 4.9 months to get on a training programme and 8.7 months to get a job.

### Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the perceptions of interviewed stakeholders and elements highlighted in the studies published so far, the following factors can be identified as helping or hindering migrants.

#### Factors of failure:

- The fact that asylum seekers are kept out of the labour market delays the integration of future refugees. Considering the pre-application period, the asylum procedure and the OFPRA administrative procedures

to release a refugee card, several years can pass from the moment a refugee arrives in France to the moment he/she obtains the authorisation to work. Several years spent in a situation of segregation, destitution or employment in the informal labour market may trigger a vicious circle and hamper access to the formal labour market once protection is obtained.

- Associations argue that given the specific vulnerabilities of refugees and the obstacles they face in integrating, access to common law (*droit commun*) is not enough and refugees should benefit from specific measures aimed at supporting their integration, including integration in the job market.
- Several interviewees highlighted the serious shortage in the offer of language training.
- The fragmentation and bottom-up nature of the initiatives favouring integration is not a weakness in itself, because local initiatives are more likely to fit the local context. The problem is that state funding is limited and that local authorities are not always committed to becoming involved in programmes that foster refugee integration. This hampers new initiatives as well as efforts for consolidating, expanding and making viable initiatives that prove effective (see APRS, Accelair).

#### Good practices:

- The content of REFMISMES – individual support, network development, language training – seems suitable and responds to actual needs.
- The Accelair and Reloref projects (REFMISMES 6 and 8) show the importance and the added value of building extended partnerships. The network that Forum Réfugiés has been building over the past 15 years in the Rhône Department, in particular, brings together institutional actors (Pôle emploi, OFII, prefectures, local public authorities, social housing landlords), private actors and actors specialised in assistance to refugees. This has proven a key factor in the success of the Accelair project.
- Many observers highlighted the importance of linking housing and employment.
- Most refugees are not accommodated in reception centres, thus finding a way to reach the population that lives outside these centres is important.

- The specialised, individual support provided by professionals in the medical sector through AFPR appears particularly effective, not only for the expertise that underpins the counselling, but also because dealing with colleagues offers a form of psychological support.
- Initiatives that target French society, like SINGA's activities aimed at fighting fears, racism and discriminations through social events, appear important to compound REFISMES.
- While the popularity of the right-wing Front National is increasing, new initiatives of solidarity are mushrooming throughout the country, led by a wide range of actors (grassroots volunteers, private actors, local authorities). These actions constitute an incubator of new ideas and commitment that would deserve to be looked at more closely and capitalised upon.

## 4. Germany

### Refugee profile

In 2015, Germany experienced a massive influx of asylum seekers that was unprecedented in contemporary German history. About 1.1 million persons were registered that year. Most asylum applicants came from Syria, followed by applicants from Albania, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, Serbia and Eritrea. In addition, there are those asylum seekers whose application has been refused but who cannot be deported to their country of origin for various reasons. They usually get a short-term residence title card which has to be renewed by the Foreigners' Authority not later than three months after its issuance and does not entitle them to most of the official integration measures. These so-called "tolerated refugees" form a substantial group which comprised about 100,000 persons per year between 2008 and 2013 (Wendel, 2014). New refugee immigration to Germany is predominantly young and male. In 2015, 71.1% of asylum seekers were under 30. More than two thirds of applications were made by men. There is no representative data on the qualification of these asylum seekers. Information gathered from the asylum seekers themselves taken by random sample and delivered voluntarily by the interviewees indicates that about 20% have a professional education; about 30 to 40% of them have practical work experience (of at least one year) which can be adapted to the German labour market.

Currently there is no representative data available about the employment of refugees (comprising all legal categories). In German labour market statistics, refugees are not identified as a particular statistical group. A random study based on information from the German Socio-Economic Panel found that a number of years ago only 8% of refugees gained regular employment within the first year of stay in Germany, 50% within 5 years, 60% within 10 years and 75% within 15 years. And many of the migrants from countries affected by war and economic crisis are employed in sectors with lower skill requirements, such as the hotel and catering business and other services (Brücker et al., 2015, pp. 9–10.). In addition, earlier fieldwork showed that asylum seekers and refugees are often employed in the informal sector (Aumüller and Bretl, 2008, pp. 36, 66). A recent study has estimated that in the medium term up to 300,000 refugees may be employed in informal occupations.

### Policy and legal framework

The right to enter the labour market depends on the migrant's actual legal status (refugee, subsidiary protection status, asylum seeker, tolerated refugee). For many years, asylum seekers and tolerated refugees were banned from employment. This political strategy of excluding asylum seekers from the labour market has gradually been abandoned in the past few years. Since 2014, the employment ban on asylum seekers has been reduced to three months after having formally applied for asylum or having been registered after border crossing. Once this period of time is up, asylum seekers are entitled to engage in gainful employment on condition that there are no nationals or EU citizens who can do the job instead – the so-called priority review. Persons who have been granted either refugee or subsidiary protection status obtain a residence permit (Aufenthaltslaubnis) and are entitled to gainful employment without any restrictions.

On 3 February 2016 the federal government announced that asylum seekers who start an apprenticeship will obtain a guaranteed residence permit limited to the duration of the apprenticeship plus two additional years for gaining job experience. This also means more reliable planning for the company offering the apprenticeship compared to the situation before. Though a number of restrictive regulations concerning labour market access have been scaled back recently, in practice asylum seekers and tolerated refugees still encounter many bureaucratic obstacles. Local foreigners' registration departments often work very slowly when granting an employment permit. Employers who are willing to employ asylum seekers or refugees thus often feel

insecure if a job applicant passes the priority review or if he or she is expelled after three years with a residence permit.

There are no comprehensive studies which enable a compact and differentiated overview of the labour market integration of asylum seekers, recognised refugees and tolerated refugees.

In the German federal system, labour market policies exist at the federal, state (Bundesländer) and local levels. Employment policy in general does not differentiate between nationals and foreigners with legal access to the labour market. The same instruments are provided for both. However, migrants have a much weaker position in the labour market.

The federal government and the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs in particular currently focus on opening access to general and vocational language courses, on the recognition of formal qualifications acquired abroad, while including this target group in all regular measures of labour market policy. Therefore, all political and economic programmes that are relevant for labour market integration are mainstreamed with regard to the needs of these groups. The instruments that are most important for the labour market integration of refugees are the so-called “integration courses”. These comprise 600 hours of language tuition and 60 hours instruction on German culture and politics. There are, in addition, the so-called vocational language courses focusing on German in an employment context (ESF-BAMF-Kurse). Finally, the government is fostering the identification and recognition of job qualifications which asylum seekers and refugees have acquired in their home countries.

### Main REFISMES

The key institution for an active labour market policy in Germany is the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit; BA) with its ten regional directorates (Regionaldirektionen), 156 local employment agencies (Arbeitsagenturen) and 303 job centres (Jobcenter). Asylum seekers are entitled to job counselling from the employment agencies as soon as they have applied for asylum. Besides the strategy of opening up existing measures to a number of specific national groups of asylum seekers, the Federal Employment Agency has developed some projects which explicitly focus on asylum seekers. In 2014–2015, the “Early Intervention” pilot project was implemented in nine German cities. In this project, asylum seekers were coached by the respective

employment agency. They received special placement assistance, language courses, practical job training and an assessment of their skills and qualifications. Through this project, about 10% of the participants (1,400 persons altogether) could be transferred into an apprenticeship or regular employment. An additional consequence of the project was the fact that the employment agencies’ staff were trained to work more successfully with the target group of asylum seekers: in so doing they acquired new intercultural competencies. An evaluation of the project revealed that the improvement in the agency staff’s intercultural competencies and knowledge concerning the asylum laws was an important challenge in itself (Büschel et al., 2015). The insights and experiences gained in the pilot project are now disseminated in some federal states and cities. Another programme by the Federal Employment Agency for refugee migrants is “Perspectives for Refugees” (Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge; PerF), which is also designed to facilitate early labour market access for asylum seekers. Within twelve weeks, participants are involved in practical skills assessment, training in job application and in job intermediation.

By the end of 2015, most of the 16 German federal states (Bundesländer) had launched their own programmes and measures to support the labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees; or at least these were in preparation. There are different types of programmes and measures:

- Language courses
- Measures for an early skills and needs assessment
- Job coaching for asylum seekers
- Mediation of young asylum seekers into apprenticeship
- Establishment of task forces in the government to steer the labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees
- Legal information and support of employers who are willing to employ asylum seekers and refugees
- Comprehensive programmes for the labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees
- Establishment of service points for asylum seekers and refugees.

At the communal level, measures for employment promotion are usually initiated when persons have already been granted asylum. This is due to the fact that labour market policy at the local level is essentially the task of the communal Jobcenter. By the end of 2015, a number of cities and administrative districts had already started to establish one-stop facilities for the job-coaching of asylum seekers and refugees.

Although active employment promotion is now considered for asylum seekers, there are still some substantial challenges on the way for the successful labour market integration of hundreds of thousands of refugees. To mention some of the most urgent challenges:

- Formal vocational formation is still an important precondition of entry into the German labour market. However, the high degree of formality, which also assumes a very good proficiency in German, seems far from appropriate. The challenge is to connect practical work with vocational qualifications.
- The prevalent strategy of “mainstreaming” refugee migrants into the general support schemes for the job-seeking proportion of the population means that asylum seekers need information and orientation in the German vocational system.
- Employers willing to employ refugees still face legal obstacles and bureaucratic delays that prevent them from educating or employing asylum seekers, tolerated refugees and even recognised refugees.
- Women, unqualified persons and handicapped refugees should not be forgotten in labour market integration support measures. They will need specialised support schemes to get a chance to enter the labour market.
- For many immigrants, self-employment is an important option in becoming independent from state subsidies and in improving their social status. Up to now, the self-employment of refugees has hardly been considered.
- Although it is not known exactly how many asylum seekers and refugees are currently beneficiaries of REFISMES, it is obvious that the number of newly arriving asylum seekers by far exceeds the numbers that can be absorbed by existing support schemes. Regarding this disproportion, concepts are needed to avoid the future long-term unemployment of asylum seekers. One possibility could be job opportunities outside the private labour market in combination with language tuition, skills development, job application training, etc. Such measures will enable better integration into German society than a long period of waiting for regular integration courses and formal vocational training.

## Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, knowledge of the long-term labour market integration of refugees is currently scarce. As soon as persons are granted asylum, they “disappear” in official labour market statistics, which only differentiate between nationals and foreigners. Concerning asylum seekers, there is still very little experience about good practices of labour market integration. There are some innovative measures which are promising for the future. According to our interview partners, the modular programme PerF (“Perspectives for Refugees”), implemented by the Federal Employment Agency, may be a good starting point for new practices in skills assessment. Furthermore, individual job coaching such as was started in some German states (see above) as well as the establishment of regional and local job service points for asylum seekers and refugees (see above) are new concepts in labour market support which seem to be well matched to the needs of this target group.

## 5. Italy

### Refugee profile

Italy’s role as a key transit country for asylum seekers and refugees was confirmed in 2014 and 2015, with 170,100 arrivals in 2014 and 153,842 in 2015 and over 80,000 asylum applications in each of those years. Since 2011, less than 50% of the people who received support remained in the country; the rest left in search of a better future in Northern Europe, mainly Germany and Sweden, where they frequently had relatives who could help them. As a consequence, the first priority of the Italian government was reception and first-instance assistance, which was provided by the centres for assistance of migrants (CDA/CPSA/CAS). Later the government focused attention on the second assistance phase, which was mainly managed through CARA (centri di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo), the Reception Centres for Asylum Seekers, which hosted in general 100 people with the notable exception of the Mineo CARA, which hosted 2,000 people. In 2003 the SPRAR System for the Protection of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (Sistema di protezione per richiedenti asilo e rifugiati) was formalised, and in 2013 it was expanded and became a pillar for the second assistance of asylum seekers. Initially it was able to host 6,000 persons, now 22,000 and it will soon be expanded to 44,000.

In the meantime, Italy came to understand that it was not only a transit area but the third European country in terms of refugees hosted, and that a broader and more integrated approach should be taken to determine the most appropriate programme to integrate asylum seekers and refugees both economically and socially.

In 2014, of the 170,000 arrivals, the highest number were Syrians (42,000) and Eritreans (34,000). In 2015, there were 153,842 arrivals: the highest numbers being Eritreans, followed by Nigerians, Somalians, Sudanese and Gambians; Syrians (7,448) were only sixth in terms of numbers. The composition of asylum seekers is typically different from that in other EU countries. In Italy the share of women and children is very small: for 2014, 7.6% women and 6.8% children (against an EU average in 2014 of 29.7% women and 25.5% children).

### Policy and legal framework

The Decree No. 142 of 15 July 2015 extended the permit that the asylum seeker receives by six months. Article 22 following the EU Directive on reception conditions allows entrance into the labour market after only two months (before, it was six months) once the application for international protection has been given – but it cannot be transformed into a work permit. The asylum seekers who receive refugee status or subsidiary protection are granted a residency permit for five years, which is renewable and can be transformed into a work permit. It allows refugees to be treated as natives in terms of paid employment, self-employment and inclusion on professional registers, vocational training and on-the-job training. The holders of subsidiary protection receive a two-year permit and are treated as labour migrants for the purposes of family reunification and access to public employment.

The holders of international protection have the same rights as natives: equal access to training courses, to job placing offices, housing services, health assistance, school for children, etc. In addition, they have equal access as other labour migrants to certain language and training courses. Until now, even if forecast with the programme INSIDE, there are only occasional tailored programmes for the labour market integration of foreigners holding international protection, and the 2015 report of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on “Migrants in the Italian labour market” does not present any information on the assimilation of asylum or international protected individuals. At the national level there is only the coordination of support measures provided for refugees

and, in general, for the unemployed, which are both a competence of the regional governments.

### Main REFISMES

The attempt to favour the integration of migrants starts in the second assistance phase, when they are still asylum seekers. During this phase two types of systems are at work which imply different actors: CARA (centri di accoglienza per richiedenti asilo), the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers, which is managed by the government at the local level and coordinated by the prefects which uses public or private infrastructure typically in large buildings; and SPRAR, which is based on projects financed by the National Fund for Asylum Policies and Services (FNPSA) in the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) and a non-governmental association. Very little research exists on how these different structures function. The former is perhaps less efficient because the massive scale of the structure seems less able to give tailored assistance, and quality controls for services are more difficult and very diverse.

The key characteristics of SPRAR’s success seem to be: 1) small groups, in general ten to twenty persons, if possible families, and special projects for unaccompanied minors and psychically handicapped individuals; 2) distribution across the country by ANCI in small areas; 3) organisation by specific projects (463 in 2015) jointly managed by the local municipality and a local voluntary association which is in charge of the everyday management of the adult foreigners. The projects are not imposed locally, but negotiated with mayors who accept the project, namely the arrival of a group of unknown asylum seekers, in their municipality. The success of the project can be measured by the rate of recognition of the status of international protection, which is 70% – much higher than the national average. It should be recalled, however, that migrants that enter the SPRAR system are self-selected: they are people in search of the recognition of their status as asylum seeker, thus they are invested in it. The success of the SPRAR projects can be explained by the project being tailored to the needs of the destination municipality as well as those of the asylum seekers. Indeed, it is clear from the list of the successful projects in the report by the Ministry of the Interior (2015), in the prefecture report and in the SPRAR documents, that there is no single strategy; the winning strategy is looking for an ad hoc solution.

The only in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of CARA and SPRAR was undertaken by the European Fund for



Refugees in 2008–2013. The research is very rich with many in-depth interviews; the limited sample of 222 asylum seekers (178 males, 44 females), however, does not allow a clear evaluation of the programmes.

Refugees and asylum seekers have access to the Employment Offices (Centri per l'Impiego) on equal terms with natives and labour migrants in general. These centres provide information on the job market, carry out a skills assessment of the candidate, provide counselling and indicate the most appropriate training courses organised by the regional governments for migrants. Foreigners can also apply for a stage (training period) in a firm which should help them get an idea of their ability and of the investment required to meet the demand of the employers. Also, the recognition of the educational level and of prior experience does not foresee any special channel for asylum and refugees. Language courses are organised at a local level and are financed by the AMIF (EU Fund for Asylum, Migration and Integration).

### Conclusions and recommendations

The Italian government has slowly moved from an emergency approach focused on providing first-instance assistance to migrants landing in the south of the country, to a more structured approach, which provides tailored support to those who have submitted a request for international protection. Given the limited tailored support measures targeted at migrants benefitting from international protection, the support provided during the previous phase has become crucial. Until now there has not been a clear difference between migrants enjoying international protection and labour migrants. Indeed, in the 2015 report on “Migrants in the Italian labour market” the two were not distinguished at all. Now new tailored policies will be implemented (INSIDE) and a better understanding of the problematic connection with asylum integration will be at the centre of government actions.

## 6. Netherlands

### Refugee profile

From 2013 to 2014, the number of asylum applications in the Netherlands more than doubled. However, since August 2015, the Netherlands has been one of major destination countries for the most recent mass flows of asylum seekers, which peaked in 2015 at 58,880 (70% men).

### Policy and legal framework

While waiting for their applications to be processed, asylum seekers are not allowed to work. If the asylum procedure takes longer than six months and the application is still pending, they can apply for a work permit. If a work permit is granted, asylum seekers are allowed to work for 24 weeks a year. The rule that a third-country national is only granted a work permit if there is no Dutch or EU-citizen available for the vacancy, does not apply to asylum seekers. Asylum seekers who have been granted a residence permit are allowed to stay for a maximum of five consecutive years and may work without further requirements or restrictions. They do not need to apply for a work permit as, since 1 April 2014, a single permit has been introduced that covers both residence and work.

Responsibility for the integration process has been individualised. As of 1 January 2013 the integration process is considered one's own responsibility, and municipalities no longer have a legal obligation to facilitate the integration process. However, refugees are the only group still entitled to basic support by the municipality in their integration process. To date, the authorities have favoured general/mainstream policies instead of target group policies. However, research shows that the labour market position of refugees is the worst among all immigrant groups. Compared to native Dutch and other migrant groups, refugees are considerably more dependent on social security and considerably less likely to have paid employment. A recent study has followed all refugees in the Netherlands in registers (about 33,000) who received a residence permit between 1995 and 1999 and stayed in the Netherlands as late as 2011 (Bakker, 2016). According to this study, the increase in employment is sharper in the first years after receiving a residence permit and generally continues over the whole period. Significant differences in the development of employment rates by country of origin can be observed.

### Main REFMISMES

Recently, the Task Force for the Employment and Integration of Refugees (TWIV) has been installed, in which a broad array of authorities and organisations join forces to speed up the integration and participation of refugees in the labour market. The task force aims to invest in screening, matching, integration and improving information exchange and knowledge sharing between the authorities, businesses and organisations involved.

COA, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, helps the asylum seekers with the initial steps for their integration into Dutch society as soon as they receive a residence permit. Not all refugees have official proof of their formal qualifications or prior learning in their countries of origin. At the local reception centres, COA assists asylum seekers (with a residence permit) in preparing a portfolio in which prior learning and education are mapped out in as detailed a way as possible (called “the blue dossier”). However, to get these qualifications recognised, formal proof and/or a recognition procedure is necessary (see qualifications and skills).

With regard to the evaluation of qualifications there has been a shift away from recognition of former qualifications and skills based on formal proof only. Instead, the new emphasis is on complementary procedures for indicating the education level of migrants and refugees. It is expected that this will be especially beneficial for refugees as many refugees lack formal proof of former education (e.g. diplomas) and contacting the authorities in the country of origin or going there is not safe (Van der Welle, 2009; Klaver et al, 2015; Von Oven, 2016). Two organisations provide credential evaluation: EP-Nuffic (higher education) and SBB (vocational training). In 2012 the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (and afterwards the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment – SZW) launched a pilot project (implemented by EP-Nuffic and SBB) to develop a complementary procedure for credential evaluation based solely on information provided by the refugee, without formal proof of qualifications. This resulted in an official “education level indicator” (Indicatie Onderwijsniveau) of foreign credentials. Therefore, currently there are two options for the formal recognition of qualifications and skills: credential evaluation (based on formal proof); and education level indication. “Competence interviews” can be part of the credential evaluation procedure. Applying for these procedures has been integrated into the civic integration courses as part of orientation for the Dutch labour market. Until now, education level indicators have only rarely been issued. However, for more recently arrived refugees, the regular credential evaluation has been used more frequently.

The increase of employment is sharper in the first years after receiving a residence permit and it generally continues over the whole period. Significant differences can be observed in the development of employment rates by country of origin. The differences in the integration profile of various refugee groups indicate the relevance of group-specific factors, while all asylum seekers face roughly

similar reception regimes (though note that the length of decision procedure can vary across groups).

Some of the main factors hampering labour market participation are the following:

- Long periods of inactivity because of lengthy procedures (waiting time for an intake at IND, asylum procedure, family reunification procedures) and waiting time for housing in a municipality
- Barriers to accessing Dutch vocational and higher education
- Lack of integration of language training with activation and work towards employability
- Inefficient or lack in exchange of information to match supply and demand

The government states that language courses should start as soon as possible, preferably when refugees are still living in a reception centre, to reduce the periods of inactivity. In many centres courses are being offered, often with the help of volunteers. However, many temporary facilities (noodopvang) cannot offer these services adequately. One of the main weaknesses regarding the policy approach towards language and integration courses is that these are considered first and foremost a refugee’s own responsibility. This approach reduces the opportunities for municipalities to counsel and stimulate so-called dual trajectories combining language training with work experience and on-the-job training (Klaver et al., 2015). The main strength of this approach is that asylum seekers will not be “dependent” on institutional help and will take responsibility for themselves.

In general, municipalities found the funds that they receive for the integration support of refugees to be insufficient. The Dutch Council for Refugees (VWN) estimates that, on average, refugees need about 1.5 years to be able to cope for themselves.<sup>8</sup> According to the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), municipalities spend on average over €2,300 on integration support for refugees. Because of the increase in asylum applicants and the need for a good start in the municipality, the budget for refugee integration has been raised from €1,000 to €2,370 per refugee for the coming two years.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.vngmagazine.nl/archief/19192/budget-inburgeringschiet-tekort>.

The UAF Foundation for Refugee Students plays a particular role in supporting highly skilled refugees to attend formal education and find a job. UAF supports highly educated refugees with language training, transition programmes, a buddy system, job support and, when needed, financial support. Most of the UAF funds are used for financial support, intake and study advice. At the lower levels of education, there are also initiatives to attract refugees for vocational education. Recently (14 December 2015) three pilot projects of *Leerwerkloketten* (learning and working desks) in Groningen, Zeeland and Haaglanden have started to encourage the inflow of refugees into secondary vocational education (MBO).

As for job intermediation, practitioners suggest that two major approaches are applied. There is a need to pick out higher-skilled and highly employable refugees with a high level of English proficiency early on, even before they have completed the asylum procedure. For these asylum seekers, the recognition of qualifications is accelerated and employers are willing to hire them. On the other hand, the majority of asylum seekers and refugees are not easily employable. They are lower skilled and should first learn the language and complete a time-consuming integration trajectory. When a low skill level combines with health problems associated with the asylum background, the attractiveness of participation in the labour market disappears, while dependence on social welfare system is more likely. For this group, incentives for asylum seekers themselves are possibly more important than incentives for employers.

Several municipalities and employers have taken a proactive approach to strengthening job intermediation for refugees, establishing partnerships with other authorities. Especially in sectors with labour shortage, private initiatives of employers and branch organisations have evolved, targeting refugees with specific skills offering internships, on-the-job training and jobs.

### Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, wide skills distribution and a varied demographic structure among asylum seekers calls for tailored approaches. Societal response to the last massive inflow of asylum seekers appears to focus on the highly educated, most employable asylum seekers and refugees. This is, of course, good for utilising skills of the highly educated, but the less employable groups, e.g. women and the lower educated, do not receive the intensive assistance they require. Decreasing incentives and long-lasting negative effects are to be expected.

The national task force sounds very promising; however, the effectiveness of these types of coordination policies is hard to assess. There are no clearly defined targets. Lessons from earlier experiences suggest that new pilots and other initiatives start with good intentions, but they are rarely evaluated scientifically.

## 7. Spain

### Refugee profile

Spain witnessed a substantial increase in the number of first-time asylum applicants from Syria and Ukraine in the second half of 2014 and this trend has continued. These two countries of origin accounted for about 60% of the total number of applications in the third quarter of 2015. Spain's relative weight with respect to the EU-28 total remains, however, marginal (around 2%). Among applicants, the clear majority are men (61%). The level of qualifications of asylum seekers in Spain is unknown, as information is not systematically collected.

The absence of an implementing regulation for Law 12/2009 on the rights of asylum and subsidiary protection is arguably one of the major legal impediments in the socio-economic integration of asylum seekers and refugees in Spain. The implementing regulation has been pending for approximately six years. The lack of this implementing regulation for the "asylum act" of 2009 generates legal uncertainty and at the same time signals the absence of a national integration model: the uncertainty extends to economic immigrants (Cebolla-Boado and González Ferrer, 2013). In any case, Spain occupies, on paper, a rather liberal position in terms of legal access to the labour market for asylum seekers. Asylum seekers have the right to work six months after they have lodged their application and irrespective of the residence permit. However, the adverse characteristics of the Spanish labour market, magnified by the economic recession, make the socio-economic integration of asylum seekers and refugees difficult.

### Policy and legal framework

Asylum policy is an exclusive competence of the central state in Spain. The asylum system is highly centralised in the Ministry of Home Affairs, which involves the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (MEYSS), particularly its General Secretariat of Immigration and Emigration, for the implementation of reception and integration programmes.

This high degree of centralisation relegates the regional and local governments to a secondary position in the decision-making process.

During the first six months, asylum seekers are expected to attend an intensive programme in which language courses and labour market orientation, among other services, are offered. One of the main challenges during this period (or phase 1), apart from learning the language and acquiring/validating labour market competencies, is to find a job in the current labour market which can be kept after the programme ends. This rarely happens and becomes the main objective of the integration phase (or phase 2) with the monitoring of training and employment specialists. In the third phase, “the autonomy phase”, occasional assistance and sporadic monetary transfers are available to aid integration. In the second and third phases, asylum seekers and refugees are mostly mainstreamed into general labour market support schemes with services already in place for economic immigrants and natives.

The lack of resources is one of the most important obstacles affecting the sustainability of the national integration system. Since 2014, when the system started to collapse, it has become less flexible in terms of the length of its phases, and the criteria defining vulnerability have become more restrictive. The country’s policies focus on the reception stage rather than the actual labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers, perceiving the latter more as a cost than an investment.

### Main REFMISMES

Support measures for the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers are implemented nationally by four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and four Refugee Reception Centres (CARs). Most of the implementation of labour market support measures is coordinated by the Department of Immigrant Integration, within the Ministry of Employment and Social Security (MEYSS), and co-financed by the European Commission. Labour market support measures usually take place at the integration stage (phase 2), and build on the competencies beneficiaries acquire during the six-month reception period (phase 1). The latter are basically preliminary competencies that seek to activate them for employment by dealing with pre-labour market-related aspects, such as language courses, adjustment of expectations and educational profiling, pre-employment training, and labour market orientation and literacy.

MEYSS uses a network structure named Ariadna, which serves primarily as an instrument to evaluate the programmes it co-finances, and also to encourage bottom-up feedback from training and employment specialists. These specialists are members of the technical commission and share their experiences in periodical meetings, though they also cooperate informally on a regular basis. The main aim of the Ariadna network is to ease the coordinated action between the actors in the system to increase the employability of asylum seekers and refugees. At the same time, the network also seeks to stimulate key complementary actions such as the sensitisation of civil society and the business sector, and the lifelong education of its training specialists in order to improve quality standards. The network is based on a shared methodology of integrated Individualised Job-Placement Itineraries which are coordinated with, and tailored for, beneficiaries according to key parameters. Training and labour market specialists often use the ratio of employment among beneficiaries as the main indicator for assessing the impact of their support measures.

### Conclusions and recommendations

The main potential of the Spanish labour market integration system is its network structure, which promotes the sharing of information between the actors involved in the implementation of support measures. Sharing information increases efficiency in the management of the available resources, which should be reflected in the quality of the support provided. All the main characteristics of beneficiaries collected by each organisation is centralised in a database by means of a shared computer application named I3L, which was designed, and is currently managed, by MEYSS.

The national integration scheme, however, presents important weaknesses at different levels. The most fundamental one, from which others are derived, is the absence of a clear, long-term labour market integration strategy. As a result, provision of support measures is mostly subject to the availability of economic resources. The shift of the system in 2014 towards more compartmentalised phases of integration is a sign of this. Another signal of the lack of a clear integration strategy is that the network structure seems to work better in theory than in practice.

The lack of data collection and transparency, but also their exploitation, adds up to the absence of a long-term integration plan. No representative disaggregated data

on the labour market outcomes of asylum seekers and refugees are collected by any national statistical body, e.g. the Spanish Statistical Office (INE). The data generated by the Ariadna network infrastructure also presents important disadvantages. First, observations refer only to persons participating in the ESF/AMIF-financed national programmes. Second, the data has high levels of attrition as beneficiaries might withdraw from the programme or be redirected to other programmes which depend on other sources of funding. Third, access to the data at the individual level is password protected.

In terms of the articulation between the different administrative levels, the asylum system is excessively centralised and seems to ignore the fact that labour market integration is ultimately a local process. There are few synergies with regional authorities despite the fact that regional authorities in Spain are responsible for several competencies that directly affect the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

## 8. Sweden

### Refugees profile

From 2000 to 2015 almost 500,000 persons applied for asylum in Sweden – 162,877 of them in 2015. The largest groups are from the former Yugoslavia (16%), Iraq (13%) and Syria (12%). In 2015, the asylum seekers were mostly from Syria (31.5%), Afghanistan (22.5%) and Iraq (12.8%). The share of men was between 60 and 70% for all years between 2000 and 2014.

Table 2 shows the education level for participants in the introduction programme. The latest available data is from June 2015, when there were 47,702 participants (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015a). About a third of them had fewer than nine years of education, and almost a third had some kind of post-secondary education. The trend for the last two years has been a slight increase in the average educational background. On average, women have a lower education level.

In terms of employment, the employment rate after three years is low; only 26% of those who settled in a municipality and were eligible for an introduction programme in 2011 were employed by 2014. Women had a much lower employment rate compared to men across the whole period.

TABLE 2 Education level for participants in the introduction programme, 2014–2015 in percentages

|   | 2014 (December) |     |       | 2015 (June) |
|---|-----------------|-----|-------|-------------|
|   | Women           | Men | Total | Total       |
| Less than 9 years                           | 41              | 30  | 37    | 33          |
| 9 years                                     | 13              | 16  | 15    | 16          |
| Secondary education                         | 19              | 22  | 21    | 21          |
| Post-secondary education, less than 2 years | 4               | 5   | 5     | 5           |
| Post-secondary education, 2+ years          | 22              | 27  | 24    | 25          |

Source: Swedish government (2015), Arbetsförmedlingen (2015a) and own adaptation.

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### Policy and legal framework

Most asylum seekers do have a right to work. In order to work, an asylum seeker must have proof of being exempt from the obligation to have a work permit. An exemption is given if a person provides proper identity papers or in some other way proves their identity. According to the statistics provided by the Migration Agency (2015), few asylum seekers work in the regular labour market. During 2014, only 447 people were registered as employed, a decrease of about 6% compared with 2013, when 478 people had a job. Few of the rejected asylum seekers used the opportunity to apply for a work permit. In 2014, there were about 620 work permit requests from previous asylum seekers, which is an increase compared to 2013, when the number in this category was around 430 (Migration Agency, 2015). In 2015, 237 rejected asylum seekers got a work permit and became labour migrants. In 2013 and 2014 the number was 141 and 155 respectively.

The goals of Swedish integration policy are equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, regardless of their ethnic and cultural background. Following this goal, the ambition is to support immigrants through general measures that cover the entire population. All newly arrived immigrants who lack basic Swedish are entitled to free language training and access to labour market services. For refugees and their families, mainstream services are supplemented by targeted support for 24 months after arrival. These migrants are also entitled to an introduction programme. Sweden makes no formal distinctions between refugees and those granted asylum due to subsidiary protection. Both groups are given permanent residence permits from day one and have the same kind of rights to general welfare services and introduction measures. After the 2014 election and the formation of a Social Democratic and Green Party minority government, integration

disappeared as a policy area and no specific minister was assigned. However, the policy area of migrant newcomers was kept and is the responsibility of the Minister of Employment. According to the Ministry, the goal of the policy area is to create more opportunities for newcomers to quickly get into work or education. "All steps in the refugee settlement process shall be aimed at finding employment."

From the government's point of view, the main problem is the lack of capacity in the municipalities to (re)settle refugees (Swedish government, 2015). Although the number of municipalities which settle new arrivals increased in all counties in 2014, the total number of places (housing as well as places in the introduction programme) does not cover the needs. The increasing waiting times for new arrivals with residence permits at reception centres delay entrance into the labour market and subsequent integration.

In terms of outcomes, Emilsson and Luik (2016 forthcoming) have studied the effects on human capital and migrant categories in terms of migrants' labour market integration. First, they show that refugees have lower labour market integration compared to other migrant categories. This is even the case when controlling for other factors. After controlling for human capital, demographic and contextual factors, Emilsson and Luik find that the employment gap is lowest for labour migrants (10%), and substantially larger for family (24%) and refugees (29%) migrants. Second, they show that education level and education type are important factors. Their results are in line with Dahlstedt and Bevelander (2010). To have at least a three-year post-secondary education is essential for migrants' employment success. However, a higher education level than a three-year post-secondary education does not on average improve migrants' employment levels. More importantly, differences in education level and type explain a very small part of the employment gap between natives and migrants. Human capital characteristics explain about five percentage points, or one fifth, of the gap between natives and refugees. The results clearly show the difficulties of humanitarian and subsequent family migrants to utilise their education on the Swedish labour market. This might be indicative of the low quality of their education, or it might flag up problems of transferability of foreign qualifications.

Bevelander (2011) finds that human capital characteristics matter. He shows that demographic as well as human capital factors are important in explaining employment integration. The younger and the better educated an individual is, the higher the probability of being employed.

Having children affects the probability of being employed positively for males and negatively for females. Further, the results indicate that in general, living in Stockholm, compared to the two other large cities, Gothenburg and Malmö, enhances the chance of being employed for immigrants.

### Main REFMISMES

A comprehensive infrastructure is in place to deal with migrant newcomers. However, the recent high migration intake has changed this somewhat and many now believe that there are capacity constraints.

**Introduction programme.** In 2010, the government moved responsibility for the introduction programme from the municipalities to the Employment Service, a state agency responsible for the labour market. The aim was to focus the programme more on labour market integration. The target group for the introduction programme is refugees and the families of those who arrive in the country within a two-year period from first residence. Later, in 2012, the time period for family migrants was extended to six years after first residence. It is not mandatory; however, a person who does not participate has no right to other kinds of economic support. The programme lasts for a maximum of 24 months. Due to the large number of newly arrived refugees, the Employment Service has warned the government that they will struggle to live up to the ambitions of the programme. The programme was designed for about 10,000 persons. However, in 2012 there were on average 12,000 participants per month, a figure that grew to 23,000 in 2014 and 36,000 in 2014 (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015b).

In addition to a stronger labour market focus, the reform introduced two new instruments designed to speed labour market integration. First, as a new economic compensation, the introduction benefit provides stronger economic incentives both to participate in the programme and to work alongside it. The benefit – slightly higher than the social assistance level – is dependent on "active participation" and not affected by the income of other household members. The idea is that this creates stronger incentives for both spouses and other family members to work and/or take part in activities. In the new system the household income is doubled if both adult members participate. If participants find work, they keep both their income and the benefit for a short time. The second new instrument was the introduction guides. These were independent actors who were supposed to help the newly arrived to find a job. The newcomers chose their own guides

(from a selection of private and non-profit organisations) and the compensation to the guides was partly based on their success. The Employment Service measures the results of the programmes 90 days after the end of a programme. In 2013 and 2014, 5,872 and 6,736 persons respectively belonged to this category. Ninety days after completion of an introduction programme, about half of the men and women were still in some form of labour market programme at the Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen, 2015c). In 2013, 12% of the women and 24% of the men were employed. The numbers for 2014 were respectively 11 and 28%. The Swedish National Audit Office has performed three separate audits of the programmes (Riksrevisionen, 2014a, b, c). The Audit Office is quite critical of the effectiveness of the programme.

**Swedish language training.** All adult immigrants, including EU citizens, have the right to free Swedish classes organised by municipalities. Around 60% of new arrivals take advantage of the programme (Statistics Sweden, 2009). It is difficult to evaluate the language training, since there are many reasons to drop out of a class. However, the general perception is that they are not particularly effective. This, at least, is suggested by the many reforms to improve the courses. Evidence on the influence of SFI on labour market outcomes is also somewhat mixed. A year after the completion of SFI (Swedish for Immigrants), only 36% of participants had a job (Agency for Public Management, 2009). Students who dropped out or finished at levels B, C and D had similar employment rates as non-participants: they were all higher than those of students who only finished level A.

**Subsidised employment.** So-called new start jobs are available to anyone who has been out of work for a long time (or, for humanitarian or family migrants, has been in the country fewer than three years). Depending on the age of the worker, the employer receives an amount equal to a normal employer's fee (31.42%) for those 20–25 years old, which represents 31% of gross salary, or double the employer's fee for those 26 years or older, namely 63% of gross salary. Step-in jobs are offered to humanitarian and family migrants during their first three years after admission, and they must be combined with Swedish courses. A subsidy of 80% of employer wage costs is paid to the employer for as much as two years. On paper, new start jobs have better outcomes: migrants who have had a new start job have a better chance of entering the labour market in three years, whereas there is no such evidence for those that had step-in jobs. The jobs on offer are for the most part low skilled, in sectors such as hotels and restaurants,

retail, and for the municipalities, in health care and other services. Few are in large companies or offer opportunities for progression; it is easy to replace a subsidised worker with another subsidised worker.

## Conclusions and recommendations

In conclusion, the Swedish policies for migrant newcomers are said to be comprehensive, ambitious and to provide few obstacles for labour market mobility. All persons granted international protection have access to free language training and labour market services. The downside is that the introduction programmes are expensive, the actual labour market integration is sluggish, and there are few introduction measures that are proven to be effective. The 2010 introduction programme did increase funding, raise the economic incentives for participating in the programmes to find employment and improve access to labour market services. However, no improvement in overall labour market integration is noted for the group as a whole in connection to this change. Further ambitious programmes of subsidised employment have had limited positive effects. Labour market integration success is more determined by structural factors, such as overall economic growth and the strength of local and regional labour markets.

Thus, the good practices of the Swedish approach are more the general access to services and resources for migrant newcomers. No one is prevented from improving their human capital by a lack of economic means, and there are very few structural barriers hindering labour market mobility. The current refugee crisis is putting the Swedish model to the test though. The laws and regulations for introduction programmes and language training are guaranteeing certain public services to migrant newcomers within specific time frames. Due to a lack of capacity in the upcoming years, especially in terms of staff, facilities and housing, it is likely that the quality of services will decline somewhat.

## 9. The United Kingdom

### Refugee profile

The UK government has determined to expand the Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme (VPRS), established in January 2015, in cooperation with the UNHCR. The VPRS aims to relocate 20,000 individuals from 2015 to

2020. As for the so-called “spontaneous arrivals”, during 2014, 25,033 asylum applications were received in the UK, excluding dependents. Most applicants came from Eritrea, Pakistan and Syria.

### Policy and legal framework

The UK did not opt in to the recast Reception Conditions Directive. As a consequence, in the UK an asylum seeker may apply for permission to take up employment 12 months after submitting an application for asylum (instead of the maximum of nine months established in the Directive). If permission to enter employment is granted by the Secretary of State for the Home Department under Paragraph 360 of the Immigration Rules, it is subject to restrictive conditions. In particular, asylum seekers may only take up employment in roles which are included on the Shortage Occupation List. Asylum seekers are placed in Tier 2 and confronted with an extremely limited range of occupations which, in most instances, do not correspond with their previous experience and training. In many cases, this has the effect of de facto excluding asylum seekers from the labour market altogether. Furthermore, permission to enter employment is subject to the qualification that asylum seekers may not act in a self-employed capacity and that they may not be engaged in setting up a business. In addition, the rapid settlement of asylum claims, with six months as the chief “reference period”, has the practical implication that an asylum seeker typically either receives refugee status or has his or her application refused before requesting permission to work is even an option. This legal regime is also instituted within a policy context in which central government is increasingly demonstrating a preference for resettlement (of refugees who have already been granted status and attendant employment rights) in contradistinction to a spontaneous arrival model. As a consequence of this legal and policy context, the efforts of both policymakers and third sector actors in the UK are focused on the labour market integration of those who have been given refugee status.

Refugees in the United Kingdom are entitled to work without any restrictions as to employment or occupation. The maximum five-year period for refugee status has, as such, been identified as impeding labour market access, since it creates uncertainty as to the long-term presence of a refugee employee for employers, even if the status is renewed (Stewart and Mulvey, 2014). Furthermore, another factor to note in the case of spontaneous arrivals relates to the transition to employment rights and benefits. In particular, once an asylum seeker has been granted refugee

status, he or she has 28 days to vacate the accommodation that has been provided to them. Due to the brevity of this period, there is a strong incentive to secure housing and out-of-work benefits rather than employment.

It was noted by a number of consulted practitioners that there is currently no strategy for the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, be that labour market integration or other kinds, in England or indeed any area promulgated by central government. The absence of strategy is particularly significant given that neither asylum nor welfare are areas of competence. This absence is to be contrasted with Scotland, with the *New Scots: Integrating Refugees in Scotland’s Communities 2014–2017* (“New Scots”) of the Scottish government and Wales, with the *Refugee Inclusion Strategy* of the Welsh Assembly Government. In both the Scottish and the Welsh strategies, employment is acknowledged as an important indicator of integration, both as a public outcome which should be equivalent to those achieved by the general population and for the sake of “fulfilling potential”. Nonetheless, the present absence of a general integration strategy from central government for refugees and asylum seekers has led to a de facto policy approach of mainstreaming refugee support and assistance regarding access to employment or making use of flexibility within existing systems.

Cebulla, Daniel and Zurawan (2010) highlighted factors influencing refugee integration using longitudinal questionnaire responses from refugees from 2005 to 2009. They found that the following seven factors influenced refugee integration: country of origin, time spent in the UK prior to the asylum decision, English language skills, age and gender, health, previous education and employment, and the presence of friends and family. They also revealed that after 21 months, the employment of refugees stands at 49% rather than 80%, the employment rate for the general population.

### Main REFMISMES

The Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES) was operational from 1 October 2008 to 1 October 2011 and was designed to support individual refugees and their dependants in integrating after refugee status is granted. It followed on the success of the earlier pilot project, the Strategic Upgrade of National Refugee Integration Services (SUNRISE), which ran from 2005 to 2008. It was operated by the Refugee Council and a number of local authorities. RIES offered a 12-month programme to refugees, in particular at the moment when status was granted. While some of



its support involved addressing difficulties created by the transition to mainstream benefits and housing, after the special asylum regime, RIES also included an Employment Advice Service. This service encompassed a degree of skills and qualifications assessment and assisting refugees to recognise their own skills and experience through curriculum vitae writing.

The Refugee Integration Service (RIS) is operated by the Scottish Refugee Council. It is financed by National Lottery funding as a de facto successor to RIES. It offers twelve months assistance to refugees who have been granted RS (refugee status) or HP (humanitarian protection) in the form of an advice and support service concerning initial access to benefits and employment options. The aim is long-term labour market integration. As part of this service, the skills and needs of the refugees concerned are assessed and links and further information are provided. Through an initial “Skills Audit”, the Bridges Programmes place a strong emphasis on not only assessing the skills and needs of refugees but on assisting individuals to recognise which skills and experiences are of value on the UK labour market. A significant part of this effort is directed towards assisting refugees to articulate their skills, experiences and qualifications from their countries of origin in terms which are comprehensible and attractive to employers in the UK. This means, for instance, identifying which professions in the UK are the closest equivalents to those existing in the country of origin and which other roles are allied to them. The preparation of curricula vitae and interviews are an important aspect of the “Skills Audit” and best equip refugees to explain and evidence their value to employers with a view to prospective work placements. The Life Skills courses offered by the Bridges Programmes also contribute to the effort to assist refugees in communicating and building confidence in discussing their skills and professional strengths.

Asylum seekers experience very restrictive conditions, even if permission to access the labour market is granted under Paragraph 360 of the Immigration Rules. However, limited job intermediation is possible in the form of volunteering opportunities. In particular, this has been acknowledged by the New Scots strategy and the Scottish Refugee Council has been active both in making representations to the Home Office in terms of volunteering and in offering opportunities through volunteer jobs events.

A number of the practitioners consulted reported an absence of understanding on the part of Job Centre Plus as to the meaning and importance of work placements for refugees. Indeed, a number of refugees have been

sanctioned, their benefits being suspended, for carrying out unremunerated work placements while in receipt of a Job Seekers’ Allowance. A number of practitioners believed this to be a significant factor in disincentivising the labour market integration of refugees. Indeed, while intervention by third-sector organisations on behalf of refugees often offers an effective remedy, in other cases there is anecdotal evidence that sanctioning has dissuaded refugees from pursuing work placements and other forms of job intermediation. Given that work placement is considered to be among the most significant factors in promoting labour market integration, the de facto imposition of disincentives to follow such schemes in the form of sanctions results in the unemployment and underemployment of refugees.

### Conclusions and recommendations

It is important to stress that the regime for asylum seekers established by Paragraphs 360 and 360A of the Immigration Rules both de jure and de facto exclude asylum seekers from much of the labour market in the UK. This is an important limitation on the personal scope of labour market integration measures in the UK. Given that it has been found that early labour market integration promotes the long-term employment of refugees, extending into the period after their status has been determined, this is much to be regretted. It also leads to a considerable degree of skills attrition. Equally, the formal five-year duration of both RS and HP creates additional legal barriers to labour market integration for those granted refugee status. Accordingly, the legal framework in place for both refugees and asylum seekers in the UK creates particular obstacles to securing employment in both the short and the long term.

# III. Comparative analysis, lessons learned and prospects

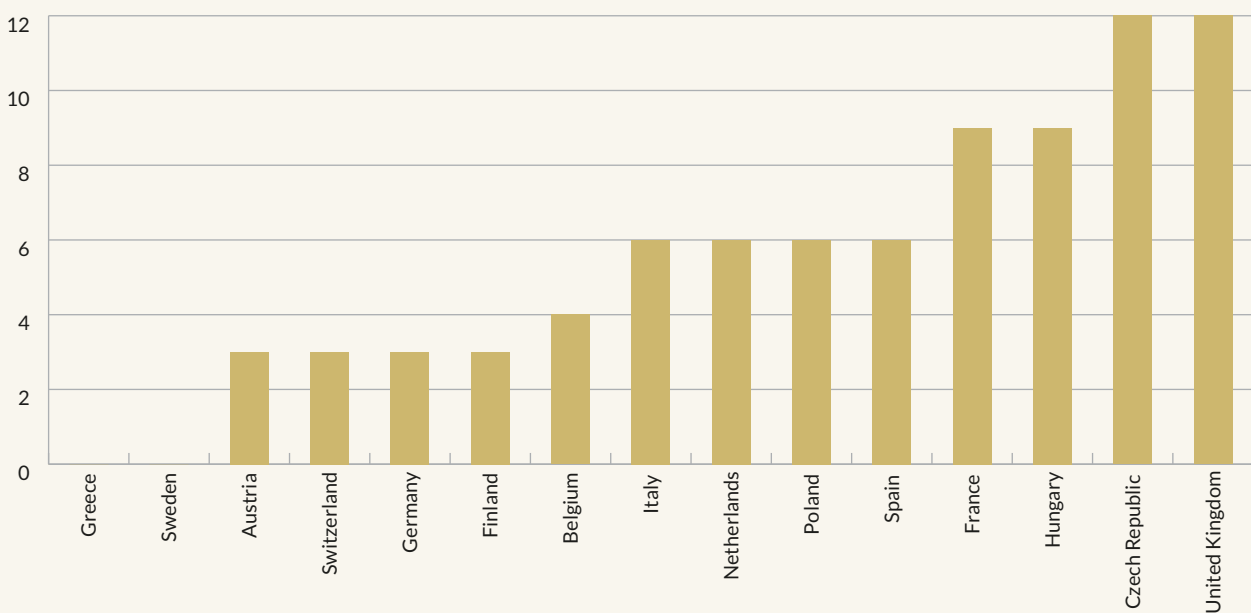
## 1. Different legal and policy approaches to labour market integration of refugees

Policy approaches to the labour market integration of asylum seekers (in particular) and refugees (who have the same legal rights of access to the labour market as nationals) have changed dramatically over the last year or so. They have actually changed so much that the legal framework is often lagging behind in relation to the actual policy approach implemented by the authorities. As a matter of fact, during the short period of the operation of this study, several of the surveyed countries implemented legal reforms, such as Denmark (January 2016) and Germany (April 2016), whereas others had adopted legal changes shortly before, such as France (July 2015) and Italy (July 2015).

Regarding the legal framework at EU and Member State level in respect to the labour market access of asylum seekers, one recent report provides a useful overview (see European Parliament, 2015, p. 35). Sweden, it transpires, is the most liberal country, granting access to the labour market immediately after the application for asylum is lodged. France and the UK are the most restrictive countries, in policy terms, with a maximum of nine months waiting period allowed by the Reception Conditions Directive for France<sup>9</sup> and an even longer period of 12 months for the United Kingdom, which opted out from the implementation of the Directive (see Figure 2).

<sup>9</sup> See also a presentation by DG HOME, “Integration of asylum seekers and refugees – legal access to labour market and EU funding”, EESC, 15 October 2015, [www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/antoine-savary--laurent-aujean--ec-dg-home.ppt](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/resources/docs/antoine-savary--laurent-aujean--ec-dg-home.ppt).

FIGURE 2 Minimum waiting period for accessing the labour market for asylum seekers, according to national legislations



Source: Konle-Seidl and Bolits (2016).

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Regardless of the stance concerning the arrival of new asylum seekers (a field where many countries are taking a more and more restrictive approach), for those asylum seekers who are already in the country there is a general trend to put in place policies facilitating their integration into the labour market (with some notable exceptions such as France and the United Kingdom). However, even in those more “liberal” countries aiming to support the fast labour market integration of asylum seekers, the administrative obstacles are huge. Indeed, these often render void the legal provisions, as evidenced by the low numbers of asylum seekers actually getting a work permit or getting a job (see the cases of Austria or Denmark, for instance).

A rough categorisation of policy approaches emerging from our case studies is as follows:

- **Labour market exclusion** or important restrictions to labour market access of asylum seekers (refugees normally enjoy full labour market access). This policy is used in France, for instance, but also in the United Kingdom.
- **Liberal approach**, allowing but without actively facilitating labour market access for asylum seekers, not least by tolerating irregular employment (Spain).
- **Mainstreaming refugees** (and sometimes asylum seekers) into general labour market integration support measures targeted at immigrants or even the general population of job seekers (e.g. Spain). Asylum seekers can be granted access to active labour market policies; however, this approach poses the question of to what extent general support measures address the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers, for instance in terms of language learning, skills recognition and validation. Italy has undertaken this strategy, as has France in relation to refugees, but so did Sweden until recent reforms became operative.
- **Designing and implementation of specific labour market integration support measures** to meet the specific needs of asylum seekers and refugees. Relevant countries here include Austria, Germany and Sweden.
- **Structured, integrated approach** linking labour market integration support measures with other services, such as housing and psychological assistance. Denmark undertook this research after it was decided that asylum requests are to be determined in the country

(through the so-called “integration contract”). This approach also characterises Sweden to a certain extent.

This categorisation is blurred and evolving, as legal frameworks and policy approaches are changing quickly. The general trend, however, is towards an increasing willingness among policymakers and social partners (and in public and policy debate) to allow asylum seekers to integrate into the labour market (and to facilitate it for refugees).

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## 2. Common challenges across EU Member States

One conclusion stands out clearly from the comparative analysis of the nine country case studies: despite the differences in social contexts, labour market structures and support measures, the challenges, policy trade-offs and choices involved in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers (the key questions emerging from the country case studies) are pretty similar across countries. This hints at a certain scope for mutual learning, cooperation and even Europe-wide solutions.

Roughly, the following patterns or factors are common to most of the analysed cases:

- **Policy announcements ahead of reality.** Given the sense of urgency and the real-time reactions of policymakers to the magnitude of the challenges involved, new labour market integration support measures (REFMISMES) are being announced all the time, often at a local level. This makes it difficult to have a clear overview of what is actually being implemented. Hence a simple tool such as an inventory of measures adopted and implemented can be extremely useful.
- **Labour demand as the basis for labour market integration.** As might be expected, a key driver in the labour market integration of refugees is skills demand from country to country. Refugees, naturally, feel attracted to countries like Sweden, Germany or Austria, with well-identified gaps in their labour supply. Meanwhile, labour market integration seems to be more difficult in Southern European countries, where the labour markets are actually forcing a growing number of national workers to leave – see Italy and Spain particularly. But this has also a reflex at the national

level: the geographical distribution of asylum seekers and refugees should reflect the distribution of labour demand; or they should have freedom of movement to look for a job within the country (or ideally, from a labour market efficiency point of view, at the EU level).

- **Employability.** Of course, the employability of asylum seekers and refugees themselves (their profile in terms of culture, language, professional experience, etc.) also plays a key role. This is why early skills assessment is a key strategy to identify differentiated support measures addressing the specific needs of different refugee profiles and to understand better how they can be matched with the local labour market.
- **Underutilisation of skills.** In any case, asylum seekers and refugees who first enter the labour market experience the widespread underutilisation of their skills and qualifications, to a greater extent than do migrants in general, and they in turn more so than national workers. Beyond problems of quality of education systems in countries of origin and transferability of skills, this is also due to the language barrier and administrative barriers such as the instability of the migrants' status: an employer will be chary about offering a job to a highly skilled asylum seeker whose stay permit is only for three months. This can mean that qualified refugees end up competing in the labour market with non-qualified national workers, and not only in countries with high degrees of graduate unemployment (such as Southern European countries). This could exacerbate the risks of a social backlash against refugees, as well as political tensions concerning this issue.
- **Differentiated labour market** integration performance by nationality. Beyond socio-professional profiles, there seems to be a clear difference in labour market integration performance across refugee nationalities (in the Netherlands, for instance, Somalians and Iraqis fare worse than other communities). This calls for specific labour market integration "strategies" adopted for specific profiles and associated incentive structures.
- **Multilevel governance challenge.** Finally, in many countries the difficulties of articulating local, regional and national actions in this field are clear. Whereas integration is by definition a local process, and often requires the intervention of local actors, the challenge remains of how to integrate these actions into a coherent national policy, let alone a European one. This

is obvious, for instance, in the mismatch between the geography of labour market demand and the territorial distribution keys of refugees and asylum seekers highlighted in several of the country case studies (e.g. Germany, Denmark and Austria). The labour market integration of refugees is a field which urgently needs the implementation of the best practices of multilevel governance.

- **Public employment services overburdened.** The refugee crisis has imposed a heavy burden on public employment services across the EU, which were already overwhelmed by high levels of unemployment. This makes it difficult for them to provide the specific, customised job counselling and job intermediation services required to meet the needs of this very specific group of new customers. Even so, they play a key role and should be strengthened so they can rise to these new challenges.
- **Size matters.** From the point of view of the hosting countries, the size of the country (and the size of the respective language community) seems to play a key role in the incentives for acquiring a language, which has been proved to be a key lever for social and labour market integration. This factor might explain many of the observed differences not only in outcomes, but also in integration policies across EU Member States.
- **Information gap.** Another, transversal element in all country case studies is the gap between available and collected information on refugees (both individually and as a group) and the information required to design effective labour market integration measures and policies. This will be dealt again in section III.5 below on suggested further research.

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### 3. Elements for analysis of REFMISMES and success factors

Despite the structural similarity of challenges and policy response patterns noted in the case studies, it is far from easy to draw any conclusions or lessons on the effectiveness of different kinds of REFMISMES, let alone the failure or success factors that emerge from policy practice. The first reason is that, in most cases, the REFMISMES are too recent to draw any conclusion on their implementation. To this extent, only the cases of Sweden and to a lesser

extent Denmark and, even further behind, Germany can provide a sufficient body of evidence over time allowing for policy recommendations. In this regard, the analysis of the literature on former research on these experiences is crucial (as was done in Section I.4 and at more length in Volume II of this study). But even when REFISMES have already been implemented for a long enough period to produce results, in most countries there is no systematic follow-up and impact evaluation of those policy interventions. This, naturally, prevents researchers and policymakers from drawing policy conclusions. It also highlights the most pressing point of action in this area: the systematic generation and collection of information and integrated evaluation of implemented measures required for evidence-based policies is largely absent in this field.

### Common features across countries

**Standard policy package.** The 94 REFISMES identified and analysed in the nine country case studies (see Appendix 10 of Volume II for details on each of them as well as Table 3 below for a summary) suggest the emergence of a kind of “standard package” which could form the basis of “conventional wisdom” in labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers. The four key elements of this package are: 1) early skills assessment; 2) an “introduction” or “integration” programme including general cultural orientation, but sometimes also socio-professional orientation and even some training (the more articulate examples are those of Sweden and Denmark); 3) intensive language courses, sometimes compulsory; and 4) access to general job intermediation services. This “model of intervention” is little questioned and should be subject to testing and closer analysis to ensure that there are no better policy options or better mixes. Indeed, one recurrent suspicion haunting all analyses of REFISMES is to what extent they are supply-driven, i.e. to what extent they are offered and implemented regardless of their actual impact rather than outcome-oriented.

**Fragmentation.** The general overview of REFISMES described in each of the case studies shows a high degree of fragmentation and a lack of coordination in their implementation, with too many actors intervening at a local, regional and national level without any kind of coherent strategy or information exchange. This has made our inventory of REFISMES particularly difficult. In line with the “experimental” nature of this policy field in response to the ongoing refugee crisis, there are many pilot initiatives and few integrated approaches. This is no doubt one of the main challenges for the near future.

**Some types of REFISMES are little used.** It is interesting to observe that some modalities of intervention are hardly used, such as specific skills development programmes to meet needs identified in the labour market. Likewise, there are few programmes taking into account the profiles and experience of beneficiaries; and there are few skills validation programmes (despite the frequent mentioning of skills and qualifications recognition as an obstacle to labour market integration, only the Netherlands and Denmark seem to have specific programmes for this very specific category of workers). Self-employment is forbidden in Denmark and the UK for asylum seekers, and was only introduced as a possibility by Austria and Italy in 2015 despite the positive assessment of its impact on labour market integration in the literature. Then, there is the relative lack of economic incentives for employers to employ refugees (see the country case studies on Sweden and Denmark). In the same way, the potential of ethnic communities of asylum seekers or refugees to help newcomers (for instance, through mentoring programmes) seems to be another underused support measure.

**Low number of beneficiaries in most cases.** Many of the REFISMES identified and analysed have a relatively small number of beneficiaries. Looking at the fifth row of the REFISMES inventory in the Appendix of Volume II, the number of beneficiaries of most measures is in the range of a few dozens, and very few of them count a few thousand beneficiaries. The main explanation lies in the high labour intensity of most of those support measures, as well as the limited capacity of institutions involved. In any case, adding up all the asylum seekers and refugees who seem to be receiving this kind of support, they are a minority in relation to the total number of refugees received (maybe with the exception of refugees taking language courses, which are quite widespread). This has some implications for the level of budgetary resources to be mobilised: a recurrent observation in the country case studies is the lack of sufficient resources to cater for the numbers of refugees and their needs.

**Few specific REFISMES for women.** Even if women typically only go to make up between one fifth and one third of all asylum seekers, all evidence suggests that they fare worse than men in terms of labour market integration. However, the inventory has found few specific measures targeting this group of asylum seekers and refugees and their specific needs and work potential (with the exception of new competence checks in Austria and some programmes in Denmark).

## Mains findings by types of REFMISMES

By types of REFMISMES, there is not enough distance and variation across countries to draw specific conclusions on how effective each of them should be in terms of impact or cost. But the analysis carried out at country level allows some general remarks on them.

**(Early) skills and needs assessments** are increasingly popular across countries (see for instance the Austrian case study), but it was not possible to identify any research establishing a clear causal link between this kind of REFMISMES and the labour market outcomes of beneficiaries.

**In the field of skills development**, there is a wide consensus on the benefits of language courses. They were widely introduced in the very early stages of asylum seekers' stay in the country. However, their actual impact on labour market integration is questionable, as shown by the evidence from Sweden. More generally speaking, there is a growing debate on whether a certain level of language proficiency is required for effective labour market integration, as was assumed until now, or whether employment is the best way to acquire the language, and whether formal requirements (such as the language) should really prevent the refugee from getting a job. In other terms, should integration be powered by language acquisition or is language acquisition a consequence of integration? The effectiveness of integration or introduction programmes (after the experience in Denmark and Sweden, in particular) is also put into question: according to some evidence, they might actually contribute to delaying the integration of beneficiaries into the labour market, as a kind of waiting period, rather than facilitating it. In contrast, some pioneering initiatives, such as the voluntary year launched in Austria and other civic integration schemes, might be promising alternatives. However, there is no study on their impact on labour market outcomes.

**In relation to job intermediation services**, there is a clear tendency to extend to refugees (and even asylum seekers) those services offered to the general population. However, this is a clear case where REFMISMES could be led by supply-driven considerations (the State offers what it already does) instead of by a sound analysis of the specific needs of that group. Indeed, the scarce evidence available shows that the number of placements achieved by those services is very limited. This, combined with the high human resource intensity of labour-intermediation services (i.e. their high cost) calls into question the cost-benefit analysis of these services.

**As for the recognition of skills and qualifications**, despite the wide consensus on how important it is to remove this obstacle to labour market access and to reduce the overqualification of working refugees, most countries analysed here refer asylum seekers and refugees to their general systems of skills recognition. They do not take into account the specific challenges faced by this group: in particular, the frequent lack or loss of certificates of degrees and the impossibility of obtaining them from their countries of origin. Innovation in this field has been very limited so far. Regarding the validation and certification of professional skills acquired in previous work, only the Netherlands seems to have developed a system involving employers to test and accredit refugees' professional skills.

**Economic incentives to employers to give jobs to refugees** are another strand of REFMISMES which seems underutilised. However, they might prove more effective than active labour market integration support measures. In Sweden, this seems to have worked quite well for the low-skilled, even if some analyses point to the moral hazard derived from the risk that such schemes end up being a subsidy for employers to pay substandard salaries for substandard occupations. However, the ongoing discussion in Denmark about the possibility of waiving minimum wage provisions in the case of jobs offered to refugees clearly crosses the line beyond which REFMISMES risks undermining the basic principles of the welfare state and non-discrimination.

**The combination and the sequence of support measures is what matters.** However, the assessment of individual support measures misses the key lesson drawn in countries with most experience in this field. Labour market integration is a process and outcomes are determined by a mix of support measures, and it is their combination and sequence which matters most, rather than the individual impact of each of them. This notwithstanding, the experience with "package" integration programmes such as those implemented in Sweden and Denmark is mixed, and there is evidence that they could also contribute to keeping refugees away from the labour market.

## Success factors

The above-mentioned constraints (lack of time for the measures to produce their intended effect, lack of information, lack of systematic follow-up and evaluation) make it very difficult to identify definite success or failure factors influencing the outcome of different REFMISMES. What the country case studies show (as do many former

studies, for instance the ten lessons identified in the OCDE 2016 study) is the collective informed opinion of practitioners on the basis of their experience, i.e. the “conventional wisdom” prevailing in the field. The factors identified, then, do not differ much from those already identified in the literature (see section I.4).

**Asylum process.** Asylum law and the refugee recognition process interact with the labour market integration of asylum seekers in many ways. The bigger the certainty about the legal status of the asylum seekers and the shorter the period leading to the recognition of the international protection status, the easier they will integrate into the labour market.

**The sooner the intervention,** the bigger the chances that labour market integration support measures have a positive impact. This point has been repeatedly stressed in the literature and by practitioners, but still faces legal obstacles. These prevent asylum seekers from accessing the labour market and benefitting from public labour market integration support measures from the early phases of their stay in the country.

**Tailor-made measures.** Because of the specific needs and vulnerabilities of the asylum seekers and refugees (and also their specific attitudes and incentive structure), tailor-made measures seem to be more effective in promoting their labour market integration than general ones addressed to workers or to all migrant workers.

Even if there are not many examples of them, **public-private partnerships in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers**, for instance between employers and local authorities, or even employment agencies and NGOs, seem to have a big potential – see, for instance, some cases in Italy and Germany. However, in other cases they can be purely pro forma partnerships without any real substance: see the example in France.

**Connecting practical work with vocational education and training.** More than in labour market integration of workers in general, but for the same reasons, some kind of dual approach linking vocational training with a direct on-the-job experience is a good recipe for success and leads to high rates of employment (through traineeships or dual training apprenticeships). As with labour market integration, work encourages integration.

### **Housing has an impact on labour market integration.**

Last but not least, integrating housing and work or training schemes has proved necessary in many cases. After all, precarious housing (and the often associated lack of an official address) is a major obstacle to benefitting from labour market integration programmes. This is exacerbated by the fact that, as a general rule, in areas where housing is more accessible, there are fewer jobs, introducing a distortion factor in the smooth matching between labour supply and demand. The extreme case is that of the UK, where the loss of the housing benefits provided for when finding a job discourages refugees from taking employment.

However relevant, all this analysis on potential success factors should not blur the bottom line: labour market outcomes of refugees are largely determined by structural factors, not policy interventions, both regarding the characteristics of the national or local labour market and the profile of each refugee.

TABLE 3 Summary of REFMISMES implemented in the nine Member States analysed

|    | Skills and needs assessment  | Skills development  | Incentives for economic integration  |
|----|--|---|--|
| AT | X  | X   |  |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· INTO Wien – Integration of refugees</li> <li>· Treff.punkt Österreich</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Education and training and vocationally oriented German courses for young TCNs and asylum seekers</li> <li>· Quantum leap! – Modular qualification and labour market integration of asylum seekers</li> <li>· Modular qualification and activation of TCN and asylum seekers in Vienna and Lower Austria South</li> <li>· Pole Position – Startklar für den Arbeitsmarkt (ready for the labour market)</li> <li>· Fachwerkstatt03 (Project for labour market-oriented training)</li> </ul>   |  |
| DK |  | X   | X  |
|    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Language course</li> <li>· Access to traineeships, apprenticeships and internships</li> <li>· Access to vocational education and training (VET) and further education</li> <li>· Specific professional skills development programmes for LMI</li> <li>· Labour counselling and professional orientation</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Support for self-employment and entrepreneurship among refugees</li> </ul>    |
| FR | X  | X   |  |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· OFII Skill assessment</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· OFII language training</li> <li>· OFII information session</li> <li>· Fellowships awarded by the Entraide Universitaire Française</li> </ul>   |  |
| DE | X  | X   | X  |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Early assessment of skills and needs</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Integration courses</li> <li>· Vocational language courses</li> <li>· Vocational language courses (short-term programme ending in March 2016)</li> <li>· Network programme (integration by qualification; IQ)</li> <li>· Network programme (integration of asylum seekers and refugees; IvAF)</li> <li>· Language courses</li> <li>· Job placement training</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Information and support of employers</li> </ul>                               |
| IT |  |   |  |
| NL |  | X   |  |
|    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Locally organised language courses</li> <li>· Foundation for refugee students: for access to formal secondary, vocational and high education</li> <li>· Utrecht University: special pre-bachelor programme for refugees with an IT background</li> <li>· The University of Groningen: transition programme to prepare refugees for university study</li> <li>· VU University in Amsterdam: transition programme to prepare refugees for university study</li> <li>· Leerwerkloketten (learning and working desks) Haaglanden: initiatives to attract refugees to VET</li> <li>· MBO: three pilot projects to encourage inflow of refugees into secondary VET</li> <li>· Facility Services (HECTAS) and Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (COA): learning trajectory for the cleaning services</li> </ul> |  |
| SE |  | X   |  |
|    |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Introduction programme</li> <li>· Language training</li> </ul>   |  |
| ES | X  |   |  |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Labour market diagnostic interviews</li> </ul>  |   |  |
| UK | X  | X   | X  |
|    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Skills Audit</li> <li>· Refugee Integration Service (RIS)</li> <li>· Refugee Integration and Employment Service (RIES)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· ESOL courses for asylum seekers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Specialist Employability Support</li> <li>· Refugees into Business</li> </ul> |

Note: This table contains the labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers (REFMISMES) identified and analyzed in the nine country case studies. They were classified in the different categories of REFMISMES for analytical purposes, even if some of them cover more than one of the defined categories. A few identical measures implemented in several regions of the same country have been removed from the table.



| Job intermediation  | Recognition of skills and qualifications  | Integrated measures  |
|---|---|--|
|   |   | X  |
|   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrations- und Bildungszentrum St. Pölten (integration and education centre St. Pölten)</li> <li>SpracheInklusive (language inclusive)</li> </ul>  |
| X   | X   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Access to labour market information, job matching and placement services. Incentives for employment of refugees or asylum seekers</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills and qualifications assessment and profiling</li> <li>Validation and certification of skills (including informal and non-formal skills); Recognition of qualifications</li> </ul>  |  |
| X   |   | X  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>OFII partnerships</li> <li>Counselling at CPH</li> <li>Accelair project</li> <li>Reloref</li> <li>Support to medical professionals</li> <li>SINGA integration activities</li> <li>Counselling at CASP</li> <li>Counselling at Jesuit Refugee Service</li> <li>"Bail glissant" project</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Centre d'Accueil Préparatoire</li> </ul>  |
| X   |   | X  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Employment promotion according to Social Security Code Book III</li> <li>Employment promotion according to Social Security Code Book II</li> <li>Job intermediation by mentoring</li> <li>Organised activities by volunteers for job intermediation</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Early Intervention (pilot project, 2014-2015)</li> <li>Perspektiven für Flüchtlinge (perspectives for refugees)</li> <li>General mainstreaming in measures of labour market</li> <li>Engagement of job coaches</li> <li>Placement of young refugees as apprentices</li> <li>Comprehensive programmes for LMI of asylum seekers and refugees</li> <li>Establishment of one-stop facilities for LMI</li> <li>Same at the local level</li> <li>Particular communal measures for LMI</li> <li>Different programmes and measures for the LMI of asylum seekers and refugees</li> </ul> |
| X   |   | X  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>POR</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SPRAR asylum seekers assistance</li> <li>CARA asylum seekers assistance</li> <li>INSIDE Inserimento Integrazione NordSud Inclusione</li> </ul>  |
| X   | X   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foundation for refugee students: job intermediation</li> <li>Pilot projects jointly undertaken by the Dutch Refugee Council, Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers (COA), Employee Insurance Agency (UWV), employment agencies and private companies are involved</li> <li>Dedicated section in national newspapers to match refugees for companies with staff shortage</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Education Level Indication</li> </ul>  |  |
| X   |   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsidised employment</li> </ul>   |   |  |
| X   | X   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internships/apprenticeships</li> <li>Ariadna network awards</li> <li>Collaboration with LinkedIn Spain</li> <li>Training of the personnel of the Ariadna network</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Skills recognition support</li> </ul>  |  |
| X   | X   |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phoenix Mentoring Project</li> <li>Work placements</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Refugees into Teaching (rit)</li> <li>Refugee Doctors (Scotland)</li> <li>Refugee health professionals – Building Bridges</li> <li>Refugees Into Teaching in Scotland (RITeS)</li> </ul> |  |

This inventory does not intend to be exhaustive of the whole range of labour market integration support measures implemented in each country. For a full record of the available information and an analysis of each labour market integration support measure, refer to Volume II of the study.

#### 4. From REFISMES inventory to policy conclusions?

The REFISMES inventory conducted in nine EU Member States cannot translate into clear-cut policy recommendations at this stage. It is too early (in most of the countries analysed, systematic implementation of labour integration support measures started within the last year), and too little is known about them. But comparability is there, both in terms of the structural challenges faced (see Section II.1) and in terms of policy response to them (Section II.2). This policy convergence allows for mutual cross-country learning at least at two levels: on the one hand, learning from those countries, in particular Sweden and Denmark, which have a long track record of labour market integration support measures for refugees. On the other hand, putting in place mechanisms which allow for the rapid dissemination of promising initiatives: the current sense of urgency in responding to the refugee crisis is giving rise to a plethora of new initiatives, sometimes in an experimental way and at a local level, which could be a rich source of inspiration across Europe.

**More information required.** But this requires more information. In conducting this study, it became evident how little information has been collected and analysed on what all different actors involved are doing in this field. In order to ensure a better learning curve across Europe, more systematic collection of information on actions taken is needed. But a more systematic evaluation of all those actions is also required (in terms of impact and cost-effectiveness), as well as a specific follow-up of labour market outcomes of this specific group of workers. At present, all we have are very scant and isolated pieces of evidence which are repeated again and again by experts and researchers.

**Need for adequate resources.** In any case, some preliminary conclusions can be drawn from this exercise. First, more resources need to be dedicated to promoting the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Even if all countries have approved budget increases for this item in the last year or so, the available resources are, to date, not commensurate either to the emerging needs in this field or to the magnitude of the economic, social and even political stakes at play around this question. Although it may look technical, the issue of REFISMES and their impact on the labour market integration of refugees has a key political bearing on the future of Europe.

At the same time, this is an issue that cannot be fixed just by throwing money at it. Efficiency of implemented measures has to be closely monitored in terms of level of expenditure on the different support measures, number of beneficiaries and impact on labour market outcomes, and evidence for that is mixed thus far.

If there are two main findings which have attracted consensus in the discussion of the country case studies, they are the following:

**Need for specific measures.** Since asylum seekers and refugees have specific needs, profiles and incentive structures which explain their systematic underperforming in the labour market in relation not only to the population in general, but also to other migrants, their labour market integration requires specific support measures. The “mainstreaming” of refugees, i.e. their referral to the general active labour market policies and support measures offered by public institutions to national workers (which are very often not effective for them either), is not enough, even if this is the most widespread policy implemented to date in this field.

**The sooner the interventions, the better.** At the same time, in line with all former research and unanimous expert opinion, the country case studies support the principle that the sooner the support measures kick off, the faster the labour market integration of refugees will be. This clearly calls for removing legal obstacles to the labour market participation of asylum seekers many Member States still maintain, and making an effort to remove the administrative and objective obstacles which still prevent many refugees from joining the labour market, even once they are legally entitled to do so. This is exactly the approach taken by the European Commission for third, developing countries receiving forced displaced persons in its recent Communication on “Lives in dignity: from aid-dependency to self-reliance. Forced displacement and development”.<sup>10</sup> In particular, the labour market tests still in place to authorise asylum seekers to take a job in some countries (like France and the UK) run counter to the rationale of considering them as part and parcel of the national labour market, which makes more economic sense.

Beyond these findings confirming the evidence emerging from past research, a few other policy issues have been raised through this study:

<sup>10</sup> Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, SWD (2016) 142 final, [http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Staff\\_working\\_document\\_Forced\\_Displacement\\_Development\\_2016.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/policies/refugees-idp/Staff_working_document_Forced_Displacement_Development_2016.pdf).

**Need for coordination and multilevel governance.** At a more institutional level, several challenges stand out from the country-level analysis. First, there is a dire need for coordination across government levels and between actors. Municipal governments are taking actions to address an issue that affects them directly (both socially and economically). This is particularly true in those countries where municipalities are legally responsible for hosting and supporting asylum seekers and refugees, such as Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands (until 2013) or Italy. But they often lack the financial and institutional resources required to be up to that task. On top of this resource issue, some kind of supra-municipal rationale should prevail, some information exchanges and complementarity between different actions undertaken at different governmental levels. The labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers have become a case in point for the need of powerful multilevel governance mechanisms to deal with current challenges in an integrated way (and this might also include the European level). In particular, better complementarity between different REFMISMES implemented by different actors is needed, as well as mechanisms to extend and upscale good practices across municipalities, regions and across countries. On the other hand, multilevel problem-solving strategies should contribute to overcoming the perverse incentives embedded in the current system, in which those municipalities, regions or countries better succeeding at the labour market integration of refugees risk attracting higher numbers of them.

#### **Picking the winners or supporting the most vulnerable?**

In terms of policy choices, some of the country case studies have highlighted a key policy dilemma. Should REFMISMES focus on the more qualified workers, with higher chances of finding a job, or rather primarily help those who are most vulnerable and will have more difficulties entering the labour market? Or, to put it as brutally as possible: should REFMISMES pick the winners or help out the losers? In view of the low labour participation rate of refugees across the board, the choice made in the Netherlands to focus on those with more chances of finding a job, reserving purely humanitarian aid for the most vulnerable refugees, seems far from irrational. Another, more moral question posed in this context is whose responsibility the labour market integration of refugees is: is it an individual responsibility of the refugees themselves (and this can have implications for the structure of incentives offered to them through benefits) or it is the receiving State's responsibility, as part of its hosting obligations? The answer given to this question will decide many of the policy choices to be made.

#### **Public-private partnerships and networks of experts.**

In the same line, partnerships between institutional and private actors need to be further explored (employers or NGOs have proved useful in supporting refugees in a more effective way) and sustained over time, as they tend to wither away. The *branchepakker* initiative in Denmark, the *Accelair* programme in the Rhône Department in France and the *SPRAR* model in Italy have been highlighted as good practices in this field. Networks of experts and practitioners at national and European level are also a necessary platform for this mutual learning and exchange of information that could lead to more effective REFMISMES. The *Ariadna* network in Spain, though more theoretical than real, might stand as a good example.

#### **Finally, what is the scope for EU-wide action in all this?**

Integration is definitely a local process, and labour markets operate best at the national level rather than the EU level (even if there is a trend in this direction). However, from the analysis and discussion carried out throughout this study, a few lines of potential EU action have emerged:

- First, the EU is the appropriate level to establish an information exchange platform and develop a pool of knowledge contributing to improving policy practice by all Member States. This EU-wide networking has numerous precedents in many policy fields and seems completely justified in the labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees.
- This EU-wide knowledge and exchange platform could work not only as a lever of exchange among practitioners, but also as an active entrepreneur of information and analysis initiatives in this field (including the evaluation of practices and the development of policy guides).
- In some fields, like the recognition of qualifications, the EU legal framework provides a potential venue for EU-wide initiatives: there is no economic reason not to extend to refugees the rationale for the free movement of workers within the EU as just another mechanism to promote solidarity in facing the reception of refugees across the EU. In other words, there is no economic reason why a refugee who finds a job in a different Member State from the one which granted him or her the protection status should not be able to relocate to that State.
- Last but not least, though EU funding covers only a small part of the total cost of facing the refugee crisis

(including labour market integration measures), total funds allocated in the EU budget are substantial (for 2015–2016, they might amount to €9.2 billion, 0.01% of the EU total GDP). This gives the European Commission a leverage which should not be bypassed. In particular, the European Social Fund and the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) have the “firing power” required to spread basic standards on policy practices, collection of information and evaluation of programmes and follow-up of beneficiaries. These are key dimensions of an effective and efficient labour market integration equation for refugees.

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## 5. Further research needs

As stated in the introduction, the present study was conceived as a preliminary inventory of policies and support measures regarding the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers in a number of EU Member States. But there is much that can be done in terms of research to contribute to an improvement of policies in this field. Despite the increasing number of policy reports on this topic, research is still lagging behind in this particularly complicated field, especially in Europe. A research effort commensurate to the political importance of this issue is required to fill the knowledge gaps which prevent the adoption of evidence-based policies.

**More data.** In the first place, there is an acute need for more data and more information on refugees and asylum seekers, on their qualifications and skills as well as on their personal and professional profiles, on their spatial distribution (in relation to the distribution of labour demand across the labour market) and on labour market contexts at a local level, where there are potential labour market niches for asylum seekers and refugees. This can only be achieved through representative surveys of current and past refugees (surveys conducted to date among refugees are too partial and scattered) and through an adjustment of the EU Labour Force Survey to serve these purposes (for instance, by asking for the reason of migration, to the extent that currently it only differentiates between migrants and non-migrants, without any information on the channel of entry). Given the importance migration in general and asylum seekers and refugees in particular have taken in European labour markets (and European politics), it is not acceptable that the only systematic data available for migrants in the labour market are the specific modules included in the European Labour Survey in 2008, in 2014, etc. The next,

meanwhile, will not be produced until 2021 according to the current statistical plan.

**More follow-up.** Then there is a need for more tracking studies of refugees, following up their professional track record and their labour market outcomes over time. These would be the cornerstone for any proper evaluation of the impact of implemented REFMISMES.

**More research.** Finally, there is a need for more REFMISMES (comparative) case studies, deeper and wider analysis and more detailed analysis of different kinds of labour market integration support measures. Even if numerous studies are being undertaken, information and research on the effectiveness of specific REFMISMES is almost non-existent, and studies are carried out without comparison of groups and without a thorough analysis of impact and causality. It would also be extremely useful, then, to extend the comparative country case approach to more EU Member States. But it would also be enlightening to extend the analysis to other non-EU countries, including Turkey and Lebanon, with a different but intense experience of integrating refugees into their labour market, or the United States and Canada, which have long experience in this field.

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