From Refugees to Workers

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

Presentation at ETUI lunch debate, 8 December 2016, Brussels
Structure

- Labour-market integration of refugees: A challenge for EU Member States
- Aims and scope of the study
- Key findings
  - Different legal and policy approaches to labour market integration of refugees
  - Common features and challenges across countries
  - Success factors
- Policy recommendations

The research has been carried out by the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) at the Robert Schumann Centre for Advanced Studies of the European University Institute (EUI) under the direction of Prof. Iván Martin.
An unprecedented flow of asylum-seekers to Europe

Integration into employment will determine the long-term economic and social impact of the “refugee crisis”.

From Refugees to Workers
Employment levels of past refugees are lower than for other third-country migrants

Source: 2014 EU LFS ad hoc module, DG Empl/OECD 2016
A faster integration process would significantly benefit refugees and their host societies

- Demographic characteristics: age, gender, origin
- Skills and qualifications profiles
- Factors specific to humanitarian migration

To what extent can policies help refugees integrate more quickly?

Source: 2014 EU LFS ad hoc module, DG Empl/OECD 2016
Mapping labour market support measures for asylum-seekers and refugees

- Nine country case studies (AT, DK, FR, DE, IT, NL, ES, SE, UK)
- Inventory of 94 policies and practices
- Extensive literature review
- Comparison of different legal and policy frameworks concerning labour market integration
- Structured overview of different types of support measures
- Discussion of good practices and lessons learned
General policy trend

- Increasing willingness among policy-makers and social partners to facilitate the integration of refugees into the labour market
  - Liberalization of access to the labour market for asylum seekers
  - Implementation of (new) labour market support measures for refugees (and asylum-seekers)

- Convergence on a „standard policy package“?
  - Early skills and needs assessment
  - Introduction or integration courses (including socio-professional orientation)
  - Intensive language classes
  - Access to general job intermediation services

- High reform activity and fast changing policy landscapes
  - Policy announcements often ahead of reality
  - Many pilot projects but little evidence on success factors or good practices
Administrative obstacles prevent effective access to host countries’ labour markets

- Article 15 of the receptions conditions directive requires **effective access** to the labour market no later than 9 months
- But legal and administrative obstacles *de facto* exclude asylum seekers from taking up employment
  - Labour market checks (AT, DE, FR)
  - Ban on self-employment (SE, UK, DK, DE)
  - Access limited to certain sectors or shortage occupations (UK, AT)
Different policy approaches to labour-market integration of refugees

### Mainstreaming

**FR, UK, ES, IT, NL**

- Access to the general system of ALMP/support services open to all immigrants/job seekers
  - Use of existing services, no segregation
  - “one-size-fits-all model”, difficulties in accessing services

### Specific measures

**AT, DE**

- Design and implementation of measures specifically targeting refugees/asylum-seekers
  - Targeted assistance, dedicated budget resources
  - Sense of privilege, additional infrastructure

### Integrated programmes

**SE, DK**

- Comprehensive introduction programmes including labour market integration measures and other services
  - Holistic and integrated approach
  - Expensive and inflexible

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Initiatives and projects by civil society and private actors (NGOs, employers,…)
Common challenges I: Lack of resources

- Low number of beneficiaries due to limited capacities of institutions involved (staff, facilities, budget)
  - Few measures analysed cover more than a thousand people
- Lack of funding for local/voluntary initiatives, in particular for scaling up and expanding initiatives that prove effective
- Increasing waiting times for places in orientation and language courses
- Budget increases have not kept up with the increase in asylum numbers

Coping strategies:
- Rationing: Focus efforts on highly-educated and most employable refugees (NL)
- Move to less labour-intensive modes of service provision? (e.g. apps, social media)
Challenge II: Lack of coordination

- Different actors intervening at national, regional and local level often without any coherent strategy or clear division of responsibilities
  - Division of tasks between national level (responsible for the asylum procedure) and the local level where integration policies are implemented
  - Coordination of different support systems for asylum-seekers and recognized refugees (e.g. Germany)
  - Coordination of labour-market support with other services (e.g. housing, health care)
  - Coordination between statutory institutions and private actors
Challenge III: Lack of information

- Gap between available/collected data on refugees and data needed to design and implement effective integration policies
  - No systematic assessment of education and professional qualifications of asylum-seekers
  - Refugees not identified as a particular group in labour-market or social insurance statistics, surveys remain too partial and scattered
  - Available data relies on proxies (country of origin) or is based on voluntary information

- Lack of evidence on effectiveness of different types of measures
  - Very few refugee integration policies have been thoroughly evaluated!
Challenge IV: Lack of tailor-made measures

- Given the specific vulnerabilities of refugees and the obstacles they face, refugees should benefit from specific measures and support schemes.
  - Mainstream services usually do not take into account their specific needs.
- But even targeted measures are often supply-driven, standardized and implemented regardless of the profiles and experience of beneficiaries.
  - Few measures targeting subgroups such as women, low educated or traumatized refugees.
  - Programs that pre-define certain career paths (e.g. bias towards dual apprenticeships in Germany).
  - Integrated programs should be flexible enough to allow for different along the phases of the integration process (e.g. fast-track in Sweden).
Success factors I

- Early intervention and access to the labour market are key.
  - Provide effective access to the labour market for asylum-seekers
  - Include asylum-seekers with a high probability to stay in labour market integration measures.

- Language instruction is effective if it does not delay labour market entrance.
  - Knowledge of the host country language significantly improves performance in the labour market.
  - But classroom-based language instruction is not very effective and might delay labour-market entry.

- The combination and sequence of support measures is what matters.
  - Different elements such as language training, vocational training, work experience schemes
  - However, process should be flexible and be adapted to individual needs.
Success factors II

- Subsidised short-term employment can be effective if the employer is a private company.
  - Subsidised jobs in the public sector, however, might even reduce the employment probability.

- Housing and dispersal policies should take the interaction with labour market integration into account.
  - Often, in areas where housing is cheap, there are few job opportunities.
  - Ideally, no restrictions on mobility as moving to another region facilitates job search and leads to higher incomes among refugees.

- Establishing public-private partnerships with employers and NGOs can prove effective if sustained over a longer time.
Policy recommendations at EU level

Remove obstacles to the labour market access of asylum seekers.

Strictly enforce the Reception Conditions Directive, further reduce minimum waiting period.

Improve the knowledge base on refugees labour market outcomes and the effectiveness of different types of measures.

Establish an EU-wide knowledge and exchange platform among researchers and practitioners. Develop and disseminate evaluation practices.

Increase resources in line with the emerging needs and the magnitude of the challenge.

Make effective use of the EU funding instruments. Use them to fund innovative and scalable initiatives.
Thank you!

You can download the full study at:
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