



European Foundation  
for the Improvement  
of Living and Working  
Conditions

The tripartite EU Agency providing knowledge  
to assist in the development of better social,  
employment and work-related policies

# Labour market integration of refugees: Different approaches in Europe

Klara Foti

Research Manager, Eurofound, Social Policies Unit

Conference on  
“Immigration to the Nordic-Baltic region: New challenges for nation states in the age of  
migration”,  
Tallinn, 31<sup>st</sup> of March 2017

# Added value of this project: key objectives

- To **update existing information** both in terms of legislation and practical arrangements to the situation in **first half of 2016**.
- To examine labour market integration in the **broader context of social services** (reception, access to services and support measures).
- To explore the **role of the Social Partners** in labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees.
- **Self-employment opportunities** for asylum seekers and refugees, respectively

- *A snapshot of current changes and plans;*
- *Role of Social Partners could be crucial in some countries (for example in Denmark)*

# Methodology

- The Network of European Correspondents provides information on the above questions. Therefore, a background paper (explaining the context), and a questionnaire was sent to them
- Before the questionnaire and the background paper were drafted, consultations were held with representatives of various organizations conducted research in the area to avoid overlap and duplications
- Good practice measures were identified for example in Finland and Denmark - they are being explored in more detail (in collaboration with the EESC)

*The national experts were consulted before the questionnaire was launched. Comments came from 7 Member States; most of them proved useful in finalizing the questionnaire.*

# Challenges for Eurofound's research

- Limitations (methodology and timeline)
- Relevance of questions varies by countries or country groups
- Similar ongoing (or just finalised) research – valuable input, but risk of overlapping questions
- The subject of the research is a “moving target” – constantly changing situation
- No agreement among Member States and at EU-level on a number of important issues

# Structure of the report

Introduction

Policy context and key facts

Policy debates in Member States

Legislative changes and proposals on the reception and labour market access of asylum seekers

Factors facilitating and hindering labour market access

Role and involvement of social partners in the integration process

Conclusions

RESEARCH REPORT



Approaches to the labour market  
integration of refugees and  
asylum seekers



# Country groups by the effects of the crisis

Key destination countries	Transit countries		Countries moderately affected	Countries hardly or not affected
	Highly affected	Affected		
AT	EL	BG	FR	CY
BE	IT	HU	IE	CZ
DE		HR	LU	EE
DK		SI	ES	LV
FI			UK	LT
NL				MT
NO				PL
SE				PT
				RO
				SK

# Main issues on involvement of the social partners

- Positions of the social partners on labour market integration
- Level/intensity of their involvement
- Initiatives and examples where social partners cooperate or individually implement specific measures
- The reasons why social partners were not involved in initiatives (in cases they were not)

# Social partners' involvement in the key destination countries – an overview

Country	Type of involvement	Thematic focus
Austria	Polycymaking	Education and apprenticeship Quick access Information provision
Belgium	Polycymaking	Quick access Support for self-employed
Denmark	Polycymaking	Traineeship scheme (IGU)
Finland	Polycymaking Provision of services	Apprenticeship Information provision Recruitment of refugees
Germany	Consultation and advice	Education and apprenticeships Information provision
Sweden	Polycymaking	Quick access (fast-track initiative)



## Some conclusions relating to the involvement of social partners

- The social partners play an active role in labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers in most key destination countries. Focus is on apprenticeship, training, accelerating labour market access and recruitment of refugees
- Their involvement ranges from shaping policies at national level through consultation and advice, to direct provision of services and measures
- At sectoral level, those social partners appear particularly active, where there are labour shortages (examples of Sweden and Austria)
- Initiatives and activities of sectoral social partners could be instrumental in fighting against exploitation of migrants and promoting legalisation of their employment (for example in Italy)

# Key findings – general conditions

- The **average duration of asylum procedures has increased** in many countries, in some quite substantially, and **much effort** has been made mainly in the key destination countries **to ease labour market access, or to accelerate the asylum procedure** for certain groups of asylum seekers
- If **status for protection for asylum seekers** is given, it is **often temporary – adverse affects** from a **labour market integration** perspective
- **Living conditions in reception centres** are often **inadequate** to prepare people for joining the labour market.: e.g. overcrowding; availability of externally provided services (health or education), and coordination with these services can be difficult
- **Cut-backs in non-employment-related services and allowances** – they could further impede labour market integration (adversely affecting living conditions); **Housing shortages** – proximity of jobs cannot be considered as a factor when assigning accommodation
- Due to delays in asylum procedure, **increased importance for measures facilitating labour market integration even during the asylum procedure**

## Key findings: Measures for (self-) employment

- **Funding of employment services for asylum seekers, is often less established** than those for refugees and access to as well as rules for participation are not as straightforward;
- For **asylum seekers**, opportunities for **self-employment** are very **limited**, mainly due to the **uncertainty of their status**;
- Employers are given incentives **for hiring asylum seekers only sporadically**, with **wage subsidy** as a tool entirely **lacking**;
- The **measures** promoting **self-employment for refugees**. are either **mainstream** initiatives, and/or targeted to immigrants in general – this means that the **specific needs of refugees cannot be taken into account**;
- **Private agencies** (intermediary agencies/temporary work agencies etc.) **are hardly involved in delivering employment services** for asylum seekers and refugees.

# Policy pointers

- When **new housing opportunities** are explored, the **availability of jobs** should be taken into account;
- General active labour market policy measures prove to be insufficient. **Specific measures, targeting asylum seekers and refugees are needed**
- There is a need to **find the right balance between quick but also sustainable integration**. Integration plans should be realistic: low-skilled jobs may come first, but career paths (with prospects for further training) should be offered for more sustainable integration
- The **potential for involving private labour market intermediaries or temporary work agencies in offering employment services** (possibly in cooperation with public employment services) should be explored.
- The **potential of Social Partners** – their expertise at the workplace – **could be used more efficiently**
- At **EU-level, cross-country exchange of experiences of new and innovative labour market integration measures** could be a **valuable tool**

**Thank you for your attention!**

[kfo@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:kfo@eurofound.europa.eu)