RESEARCH REPORT

Eurofound

Approaches to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers

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European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

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Abbreviations used in the report

AMIF	Asylum and Migration Integration Fund
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
EaSI	EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation
EEPO	European Employment Policy Observatory
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres in the European Region
EMN	European Migration Network
MLP	Mutual Learning Programme
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union
NGO	non-governmental organisation
PES	public employment service(s)

Executive summary

Introduction

Providing swift access to the labour markets of host countries is part of the solution to Europe's refugee crisis. This report takes forward existing research on the labour market integration of refugees (those with the officially recognised status of international protection) and asylum seekers (those who have applied for international protection and are awaiting a decision).

The objectives of the study are to:

- update information on legislation and practical arrangements in the first half of 2016;
- examine labour market integration in the context of receiving and supporting asylum seekers and refugees;
- explore the role of the social partners in this area.

The study is based to a large extent on evidence collected via a questionnaire to Eurofound's network of European correspondents in the EU28 Member States and Norway. The responses reflect a snapshot of current developments.

Policy context

The sudden and massive influx of asylum seekers in 2015 initially posed a humanitarian challenge primarily for the frontline countries, Greece and Italy, where those seeking protection first arrived. However, the longer-term issues around the successful integration of the new arrivals quickly came to the fore, prompting an increased interest in social inclusion measures. As social inclusion is closely linked to successful labour market integration, the question of how to ensure swift access to and integration in the labour market has become a prominent issue on the policy agenda in many EU Member States. This is not surprising as, in addition to facilitating social inclusion, labour market integration is an economically rational response, especially if it is done in an efficient way.

Key findings

In many countries, the average duration of the asylum procedure has increased (in some cases quite substantially). Nevertheless, various measures have been introduced to ease the effects of delays in obtaining a decision; in some cases, the procedure has been accelerated for specific groups of asylum seekers.

Delays in obtaining asylum can have far-reaching consequences, as legal access to the labour market is usually linked to the status of international protection, meaning that it is open just to refugees. Due to the sudden and high inflow of asylum seekers, however, access to the labour market for this other group has had to be eased.

This is generally the approach adopted by the Member States most affected by the refugee crisis. Nevertheless, they face a number of challenges, linked to the current crisis.

- Living conditions in reception centres are often inadequate to prepare people for joining the labour market. Overcrowding and poor conditions are reported, as well as a lack of accommodation. There are problems with the availability of externally provided services, and coordination with these services can be difficult.
- Although the geographical distribution of asylum seekers and refugees is planned, in most cases proximity of jobs cannot be taken into account due to housing shortages.
- Funding for employment services for asylum seekers is often less well established than that for refugees. Access and the rules for participation are also not as straightforward.
- Social security entitlements for working asylum seekers vary across countries, and sometimes the rules are less favourable than for other migrant groups, including refugees.
- For asylum seekers, opportunities for self-employment are very limited, mainly due to the uncertainty of their status.
- Employers are only sporadically given incentives to employ asylum seekers; the use of wage subsidies as a tool is entirely lacking.
- Although the school-age children of asylum seekers are entitled to attend compulsory education in all Member States, special arrangements for these children are not always guaranteed. Some countries reported that schools are ill-prepared to receive these children.

In many countries, the granting of asylum has become temporary in the wake of the crisis. Provision of temporary asylum can weaken refugees' position in the labour market since it may deter employers from hiring them or offering them longer-term contracts or investing in training.

Several countries have recently reduced some non-employment-related social services and allowances for refugees or asylum seekers or both. While this could increase their motivation to work, it could also further impede labour market integration since it affects their living conditions. Restrictions on family reunification may have a similar impact, further postponing social (and labour market) inclusion.

In several countries, measures that aim to facilitate self-employment of refugees are either mainstream initiatives or are targeted at immigrants in general and thus do not take the specific needs of refugees into account. Private agencies (intermediary agencies and temporary work agencies) have little involvement in delivering employment services for refugees and asylum seekers.

Social partners play an active role in most of the key destination countries, where they focus on important topics such as education and apprenticeships, accelerating labour market access, and recruitment of refugees.

Joint statements by the social partners often stress the desirability of sustainable and fast integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. While trade unions tend to emphasise sustainable integration to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can live and work within a country over the long term, employers focus on fast integration, to boost their competitiveness by using the new labour resources efficiently.

Policy pointers

- Employment considerations are important when deciding the geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers within a country. But where there is a shortage of housing, it is often not possible to pay sufficient attention to labour market integration. Therefore, when new housing opportunities are explored, the availability of jobs should be taken into account.
- More attention should be paid to providing access to social services (for example, specific education for asylum seekers' children, other family support, adequate healthcare), and if services are externally delivered, better coordination with the providers is needed in reception centres.
- Employment services during the asylum procedure should be extended in order to provide better preparation for the labour market integration of asylum seekers.
- Mainstream active labour market policy measures are generally insufficient. Specific measures targeting refugees and asylum seekers (for example, language training, on-the-job training and mentoring by earlier migrants) are needed. These should also focus on the untapped potential for self-employment.
- There is a need to find the right balance between fast and sustainable integration. Integration plans should be realistic: low-skilled jobs may come first (for initial work experience), but career paths should be offered for more sustainable integration.
- The potential to involve private labour market intermediaries or temporary work agencies in offering employment services (possibly in cooperation with public employment services) should be explored.
- In several countries, the importance of the social partners' role in labour market integration is not sufficiently recognised. Not only could their experience on the ground be useful, but better coordination with them as actors (together with other relevant players) could also lead to a more efficient implementation of the integration process.
- The EU-level platforms could prove useful tools not only for exchange of experience of promising measures, but also for monitoring and evaluating the existing initiatives (as suggested in the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals, adopted in 2016).

Introduction

When Europe's refugee crisis began in 2015 with the sudden and massive influx of asylum seekers, it initially posed a humanitarian challenge primarily for the frontline countries, Greece and Italy, where those seeking protection first arrived. However, the longer-term issues around successful integration of the new arrivals quickly came to the fore, prompting an increased interest in social inclusion measures. As social inclusion is closely linked to successful labour market integration, the question of how to ensure swift access to and integration in the labour market has become a prominent issue on the policy agendas of many EU Member States. This is not surprising as, in addition to facilitating social inclusion, labour market integration is an economically rational response, especially if it is done in an efficient way.

A number of recent studies have explored the key issues around the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The studies, conducted both at EU and national levels, have analysed the main barriers and facilitating factors influencing the labour market access of these two groups. Barriers include rules restricting the employment of asylum seekers to certain sectors and occupations and the requirement in many countries that they undergo a 'labour market test'. This means that other groups (nationals, EU citizens and established third-country nationals) have priority in accessing jobs. Various measures targeted at refugees and asylum seekers such as language courses, on-the-job training and civic education courses are facilitating factors. The studies shed light not only on legal barriers but also on practical obstacles (EMN, 2016; European Commission, 2016a). Other research projects have focused on the measures aimed at easing the process of labour market integration of these two specific groups of immigrants (for example, Martín et al, 2016). These projects identified key challenges such as the lack of the host country's language and difficulties matching the skills of refugees and asylum seekers with jobs. These barriers and challenges need to be addressed for effective and swift labour market integration.

This report endeavours to update and expand on existing research on the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. It has three main objectives:

- to update information on legislation and practical arrangements in the first half of 2016;
- to examine labour market integration in the broader context of receiving and supporting asylum seekers by exploring to what extent available services and support facilitate their access to employment, or fail to do so;
- to document the role of social partners in this area.

The report can provide only a snapshot of current developments (for example, regarding legislative changes and the length of the asylum procedure). Furthermore, as far as supporting measures are concerned, it is too early to evaluate their effectiveness (this could be a subject of further research). However, the report aims to identify the direction Member States are taking towards a longer-term solution to the refugee crisis by highlighting key issues in policy debates and pending proposals.

In some Member States, the involvement of the social partners in the process of labour market integration is crucial (for example, in Denmark). In others, their views can have a significant impact (for example, in Belgium). In addition, employers and trade unions can play an active role in concrete measures to facilitate the process, often in cooperation with other actors.

The labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers does not appear to be equally important in all Member States. Even if the planned European relocation scheme (European Commission, 2016b) may soon require more countries to consider the issue, it is not at present debated much in Member States that so far have been marginally affected by the refugee crisis. In other countries, managing the inflow is the focus of the public and policy debate. This is most saliently the case in Italy and Greece and to a somewhat lesser extent in transit countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovenia.

The information presented in the report is based to a large extent on mostly qualitative evidence collected in the EU28 Member States and Norway using a questionnaire (see Annex 2) completed by Eurofound's network of European correspondents between May and July 2016. In many cases, official sources were not available, so the correspondents had to rely on media reports or on their own interpretations. Therefore, unless the sources are indicated, the information may reflect the views of the national correspondents.

Definitions

When analysing labour market integration, it is important to distinguish between refugees and asylum seekers – mainly because of their different rights and obligations.

- A **refugee** is a person who has been granted international protection in a country outside the country of their nationality.[1]
- An **asylum seeker** is a person who has applied for international protection (refugee status or recognition as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection), but whose status is still pending.

A specific case is Germany, where the term 'recognised asylum seekers' is also applied. According to German law, such people could be either refugees or people who have been granted asylum but whose permission to stay is limited.

For some of the topics and subtopics, the questionnaire considered specific aspects separately for the two groups. For example, legal changes and reception conditions were considered only for asylum seekers, since it was assumed that due to their high level of inflow they were the main target group of the changes. A distinction was also made between refugees and asylum seekers when seeking information on individual services and measures (apparently, for example, measures for self-employment are different since the refugees have a more established status).

Structure of the report

The report begins with an EU-level overview of the policy context, key findings of previous research and comparative data from Member States. This is followed by chapters on the following topics:

- a review of the policy discourse on the inflow and the main discussions around labour market integration;
- changes in relevant legal frameworks for asylum seekers since January 2016;
- factors facilitating or hindering the access of refugees and asylum seekers to the labour market;
- the involvement of the social partners in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

The final chapter contains a short commentary on the evidence found on approaches in Member States and Norway to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers, including the role of social partners in this process.

1 When the term 'refugees' is used in this report, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are also included unless otherwise stated. These are people who do not qualify as refugees but who would face a real risk of serious harm if returned to their country of origin. Usually, they are allowed to stay for a more limited period than the refugees.

1 Policy context and key facts

The most basic data show the extent of the challenge posed by the refugee crisis in Member States and at EU level. The number of asylum applications increased from 626, 960 in 2014, when it was already high, to 1,321,600 in 2015 – a rise of 111%. Although there had been a continuous increase since 2010, the escalation in 2015 was unprecedented since the Second World War, according to data from Eurostat.

This chapter first presents the policy context at EU level, outlining the relocation and resettlement schemes, relevant aspects of EU-level legislation and the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals adopted on 7 June 2016. This is followed by a brief description of the key findings of the most relevant recent research, highlighting the added value of this project. In the final section, to provide the relevant country focus for examining the data, countries are grouped according to the impact of the refugee crisis on them. This is followed by details of the scale of the inflow in the receiving countries.

EU policy context

Since asylum seekers began to stream into Europe in the summer of 2015, considerable efforts to find a solution have taken place at EU level. It soon became clear that the existing system – commonly called the 'Dublin system' after the name of the regulation – was not sustainable. The Dublin Regulation made those Member States where the applicants entered the territory of the EU responsible for examining and making decisions on asylum applications (by accepting or rejecting them). Hence, the Dublin system placed an enormous burden on those countries that were entry points to the EU.

So far, however, Member States have been unable to agree on a common solution, although there have been some attempts to do so, as detailed below. At the same time, the root causes of the crisis remain, with the main countries of origin (primarily Syria) still suffering from war; more people fleeing the violence are arriving every day, even if the rate of increase of influx into Member States has slowed down considerably, mainly due to the EU–Turkey agreement. (For details of the EU–Turkey agreement and its humanitarian aspects, see Di Bartolomeo, 2016.)

Policy measures for coping with the crisis

At EU level, there have been three main policy measures aimed at addressing the refugee crisis.

- **Relocation scheme**: The aim is to relocate a total of 160,000 asylum seekers from Italy and Greece to relieve the burden on these two countries.
- **Resettlement scheme**: This started in July 2015 and hopes to resettle 22,054 displaced people from the Middle East, North Africa and the Horn of Africa in need of international protection through multilateral and national schemes on a voluntary basis.
- **EU–Turkey Agreement**: From 20 March 2016, all new irregular migrants crossing from Turkey to the Greek islands will be returned to Turkey (European Commission, 2016b).

With regard to the relocation scheme, refugee status can be granted to those relocated if their applications are successful in the Member State where they are sent. However, the relocation process has so far proved largely inefficient. The number of places made available by individual Member States was very low, as were the numbers of people who actually filled them, although implementation has gradually increased. Of the total of 160,000 places anticipated, only 9,119 places (that is, less than 6%) had been made available by 11 July 2016. Of these, 3,056 people (33.5% of the places made available) had been relocated (European Commission, 2016c). This is a very low number compared with the initial ambitious plans. One reason for the low number is that the scheme was not received with enthusiasm by individual Member States.

In the wake of the EU–Turkey Agreement, it is expected that the majority of the places remaining from the resettlement scheme will be taken up by those who come from Turkey (European Commission, 2016d, p. 7).[2] It appears that the resettlement scheme works better than the relocation process: the share of actually resettled people is about 37% of the planned number, that is, 8,268 people. Its greater efficiency may lie in the fact that the resettlement scheme is less ambitious.

Although the results of the EU-level efforts described above are not yet visible, they constitute substantial attempts towards achieving a solution. It remains the responsibility of the individual Member States, however,

2 An important provision of the EU–Turkey agreement is that, for every Syrian returned to Turkey from the Greek islands, another Syrian would be resettled in the EU – called the '1:1 mechanism with Turkey'. To help Turkey secure proper facilities for refugees, the EU pledged €3 billion to be allocated to Turkey (for the Facility for Refugees in Turkey). An additional €3 billion will be mobilised once these resources have been spent, with a deadline set for the end of 2018 (European Commission, 2016b).

to process asylum applications. According to the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), Member States are obliged to provide protection to those who receive a status of international protection (that is, when the decision on their application has a positive outcome).

Relevant EU-level legislation

The Qualification Directive (2011/95/EU), which is part of the CEAS, mainly targets refugees and is essentially about equal treatment with nationals. Article 26, Paragraph 2 explicitly refers to the need for labour market support measures for beneficiaries of international protection:

> *Member States shall ensure that activities such as employment-related education opportunities for adults, vocational training, including training courses for upgrading skills, practical workplace experience and counselling services afforded by employment offices are offered to beneficiaries of international protection, under equivalent conditions as nationals.*

This statement makes it clear that all available services should be offered to refugees in a broader sense, including beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

For asylum seekers, however, access to labour support measures is not provided for in EU-level legislation. Nevertheless, as this report will show, in many Member States such services are provided to a greater extent than before as a consequence of the crisis. Even so, to be fully eligible for these services, the average duration of the asylum procedure (that is, the length of time to a decision in the first instance) is still important (see Chapter 2 for details on recent increases). In a number of countries, it takes on average 6 months or longer (Austria, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Sweden) or close to it (for example, 5.3 months in Germany). The average duration of the asylum procedure for some of the countries covered by this study is given in Table 1 of OECD (2016); for those countries where changes have occurred recently or where additional information is available, see Table 9 of this report.

The objective of providing fast labour market access not only to refugees but also to asylum seekers is high on the agenda in the eight key destination countries, that is, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (Table 1). It also appears to be important in some of those countries that could receive asylum seekers now or at a later stage; these countries are identified below.

The EU-level legislation reflects the objective of providing swift access to the labour market. The Reception Conditions Directive (2013/33/EU), which focuses mainly on asylum seekers, targets the matter. Article 15 is concerned with employment and stipulates the following for asylum seekers:

1. *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 instant decision by the competent authority has not been taken and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant.*
2. *Member States shall decide the conditions for granting access to the labour market for the applicant, in accordance with their national law, while ensuring that applicants have effective access to the labour market. For reasons of labour market policies, Member States may give priority to Union citizens and nationals of States parties to the Agreement of the European Economic Area, and to legally resident third-country nationals.*

Even though the Reception Conditions Directive came into force only in July 2015, the refugee crisis had already prompted a need for providing quicker access to asylum seekers and for further harmonisation of existing rules across Member States such as:

- requirements for reception conditions;
- common criteria for the recognition of refugees;
- provisions to facilitate the integration process.

Proposals for further changes to the CEAS were announced by the European Commission on 13 July 2016 (European Commission, 2016e).

Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals

The Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals was presented by the European Commission on 7 June 2016 (European Commission, 2016f). It envisages actions in the following five key areas:

- support for pre-departure and pre-arrival measures – planned within the context of resettlement programmes with the help of the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF);
- education with support of some existing tools – examples include the New Skills Agenda and the Erasmus+ programme;
- labour market integration and access to vocational training;
- help to secure access to basic services – for example, by using EU funds to improve reception and housing conditions;
- promoting active participation and social inclusion of third-country nationals, particularly refugees and asylum seekers.

Other tools are included in the Action Plan to facilitate its implementation. These include:

- improving coordination and cooperation between different levels of governance (central, regional and local);
- 'monitoring integration outcomes at local level'.

Regarding labour market integration, while many of the planned actions aim to assist all third-country nationals, there are some that specifically target refugees. The main ones include:

- recognition of academic qualifications:
  - better training of staff in reception centres in order to accelerate recognition procedures;
  - improvement of access to the procedure for beneficiaries of international protection;
  - better communication between the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) in the European Region and National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) in the European Union[3] and stakeholders – including, in particular, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – active in education in reception centres (that is, focusing on training staff in reception facilities);
- revision of the European Qualifications Framework – the aim is to better understand qualifications acquired in third countries;
- funding fast-track insertion into the labour market and vocational training – skills assessment, employment-focused language training and on-the-job training are considered important and the main tools are planned to be AMIF and the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI);
- exchange of information on 'promising practices' – already happening through the European Commission's online database[4] and also conducted through existing networks and programmes such as the European Network of Public Employment Services, Youth Guarantee coordinators and the Mutual Learning Programme (MLP);
- funding for strengthening capacities at local level – for asylum seekers, this is particularly relevant at reception centres and in integration practices, with a focus on labour market integration;
- identification of best practices to facilitate migrant entrepreneurship and funding of pilot projects for dissemination.

Many of these actions are linked to the issues with which this research is concerned, such as fast-track integration, promising practices, current problems with capacities of service providers, and self-employment for refugees and asylum seekers.

Main results from previous research

As mentioned above, the refugee crisis has stimulated several new research projects focusing on labour market integration and comparing relevant practices in EU Member States. However, not all of these projects concentrated on refugees and asylum seekers, and not all covered all Member States. For example, the European Migration Network (EMN) carried out a comprehensive investigation focusing only on beneficiaries of international protection (EMN, 2016).

A study by the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) and the Bertelsmann Foundation concentrated on nine countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and the UK), with the aim of mapping labour market integration support measures for refugees and asylum seekers, taking into account the existing policies and practices (Martín et al, 2016).

A study by the European Employment Policy Observatory (EEPO) covered 30 countries – Norway and Turkey were included as well as the EU28 Member States (European Commission, 2016a). It explored various challenges refugees and asylum seekers can face during the process of labour market integration. The challenges include not only legal and administrative problems, but also institutional, economic and labour market problems as well as challenges posed by education and qualification systems and societal problems in the host countries.

The OECD also conducted an investigation on the topic and published a booklet entitled Making integration work: Refugees and others in need of protection (OECD, 2016).This covered the OECD countries (so not all the EU Member States) and was based on replies to a questionnaire sent to the countries.

A recent study commissioned by the Employment Committee of the European Parliament focused on strategies and good practices, covering all the Member States (Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016).

3 ENIC–NARIC is a joint initiative by the European Commission, the Council of Europe and UNESCO that provides information on procedures for the recognition of foreign qualifications. For more information see their website (www.enic-naric.net).

4 See http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1208&langId=en

Key findings

Several key findings are important for the current study and can be summarised as follows.

- Many newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers have low levels of qualifications and skills (Martín et al, 2016), although no general conclusions can be drawn (EMN, 2016); there is a variation mainly with countries of origin.
- Lack of knowledge of the host country's language is a key barrier for accessing the labour market, and support measures should therefore be offered as early as possible (European Commission, 2016a; Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; OECD, 2016).
- Early assessment of skills is needed for asylum seekers with a good prospect of staying in the host country. For them, easing labour market access is particularly important (European Commission, 2016a; Konle-Seidl and Bolits, 2016; OECD, 2016).
- Employment experience is crucial. This should therefore have priority among support measures – even over more extensive language courses or vocational training (see, for example, Martín et al, 2016).
- The complex and diverse needs of these groups require better coordination of services across different levels (European Commission, 2016a).
- Mental health issues were found to be important for many refugees and asylum seekers fleeing from war. They often need careful and individual attention to help to address their disadvantages. Mental and physical health issues should be identified early to provide adequate support (European Commission, 2016a; OECD, 2016).

Although this list of findings is not exhaustive, it shows that previous research has covered and addressed a comprehensive range of issues. This report seeks to capitalise on these findings by adding some evidence on the role of social partners in labour market integration and examining closely the context of social services in the labour integration process. At the same time, the report updates the information available on legislative changes concerning the asylum seekers and provides information on most recent practices aimed at integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market.

Extent of the impact on different countries

This section presents some basic data on the effects of the refugee crisis and the scale of the challenge based on country groups. Its focus is on highly affected countries and key destination countries. The latter group of countries, especially, are where labour market integration is most relevant. Some data on selected transit countries are also given.

Some characterisation of the impacts on different countries is useful when analysing the results. As became clear from the responses to the questionnaire, it matters whether the country is an entry point to the EU that people transit through or whether it is a country where refugees and asylum seekers stay (that is, a destination country).[5] At the other end of the spectrum are those countries that have been less or barely affected. Table 1 groups the EU28 Member States and Norway according to these criteria.

Table 1: Country clusters according to the effects of the current refugee crisis, 2016

Key destination countries	Transit countries		Countries moderately affected	Countries hardly or not affected
	Highly affected	Affected		
Austria	Greece	Bulgaria	France	Cyprus
Belgium	Italy*	Hungary	Ireland	Czech Republic
Denmark		Croatia	Luxembourg	Estonia
Finland		Slovenia	Spain**	Latvia
Germany			UK	Lithuania
Netherlands				Malta
Norway				Poland
Sweden				Portugal
				Romania
				Slovakia

** The reason why the number of pending asylum seekers is still high could be explained by continuous arrivals.*
*** The large increase in the number of first-time asylum seekers in 2015 was not only due to a high inflow of Syrians, but also to the flow of people from Ukraine and other citizens – not typically those who emigrated in large numbers in 2015 (Source: Eurostat and Martín et al, 2016).*
Source: *Based on Eurostat data, 2016 and responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

5 Note that Finland and Norway are both entry points for asylum seekers arriving from a third country (that is, Russia) and, at the same time, destination countries.

Table 2 shows the numbers of asylum applications in key destination countries in 2014 and 2015. As can be seen, in 2015, the number of asylum applicants reached almost half a million in just one country, Germany, and in Sweden, it was more than 150,000.

The increase in first-time asylum seekers between 2014 and 2015 was even higher than that shown in Table 2, where the total growth of asylum applications (that is, the number of those who have already applied) is also taken into account. In some countries, for example in Belgium, the growth of first-time asylum applicants was particularly large (177%), and in Finland, it exceeded 800%.

Table 2: Number of asylum applications in key destination countries, 2014 and 2015

	2014	2015	Increase (%)
EU28	626,960	1,321,600	111
Austria	28,035	88,160	214
Belgium	22,710	44,660	97
Denmark	14,680	20,935	43
Finland	3,620	32,345	794
Germany	202,645	476,510*	135
Netherlands	24,495	44,970	84
Norway	11,415	31,110	173
Sweden	81,180	162,450	100

** According to national figures, the number of asylum seekers reached 890,000 in 2015 (BMI, 2016). This reflects the number of people registered in the German EASY system, which records those who intend to apply for asylum (IOM, 2016b).*

Source: *Eurostat*

Table 3 shows which countries were, and have remained, most affected by asylum applications. It also shows the immediate administrative burden caused by the huge influx of 2015. Although in some cases this has eased, there is still a backlog in most countries. The number of pending asylum applications is still considerable: a total of around one million. Although the number of new asylum applications peaked in November 2015 (amounting to almost 180,000 in that month alone) and has since decreased sharply (standing at about 100,000 in May 2016, according to the European Asylum Support Office), the backlog is still huge, and in Germany, for example, it has been increasing continuously.

Hungary is the only country where the number of pending asylum applications has fallen considerably. This is not only due to measures introduced by the Hungarian government,[6] but also because the asylum seekers did not stay there but went on further to western Europe. Similarly, in another transit country, Bulgaria, the same factor contributed to the decrease in pending asylum applications. In Greece, one of the frontline countries, the number remained stable; although many of the asylum seekers also went on further, new arrivals came. The situation appears similar in Italy, although here there has been an increase since July 2015, suggesting that more people may have remained there than in Greece – at least for a time being.

Table 3: Number of pending asylum applications in most-affected EU Member States and Norway, September 2015 to May 2016

	2015				2016				
Country	**September**	**October**	**November**	**December**	**January**	**February**	**March**	**April**	**May**
Austria	57,735	64,415	73,600	79,665	83,645	85,205	84,515	85,005	84,675
Belgium	27,290	30,920	33,400	36,455	37,175	35,785	33,750	32,480	31,060
Bulgaria	8,065	10,220	10,350	9,500	8,675	7,440	7,000	7,165	7,165
Denmark	7,135	9,415	13,300	14,975	14,930	14,465	13,615	12,685	11,425
Finland	16,510	22,495	27,525	27,750	26,920	26,165	24,725	23,690	22,045
Germany	365,995	391,625	417,205	424,760	432,260	454,670	473,010	497,210	528,680
Greece	27,325	26,605	26,190	26,150	26,520	25,915	27,370	28,715	n.d.
Hungary	107,420	77,645	53,585	36,695	10,300	3,070	5,225	7,165	7,465
Italy	50,460	60,400	60,775	60,155	61,700	62,825	59,960	61,215	63,930
Netherlands	18,795	25,590	28,960	29,635	28,955	27,050	24,480	22,020	19,450
Norway	10,040	17,450	24,745	24,545	23,970	22,380	21,345	18,870	17,570
Sweden	85,715	117,695	148,540	156,690	156,220	151,900	147,275	142,135	137,450

Note: Numbers given are those at the end of the month; n.d. = no data.

Source: *Eurostat*

6 A wire razor fence was built at the southern border of the country to divert the asylum seekers' route. The government also introduced legislative changes, criminalising the act of crossing the border at uncontrolled points.

2 Policy debates in the Member States and Norway

Research has explored the issues that are high on the policy agendas in relation to the refugee crisis in the individual Member States and Norway. One of the major themes in the debate has been how to contain the sudden and large influx, and much concern about the arrivals has been expressed. The debates also focus on key possible responses.

One of the main dividing lines between countries is whether or not the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers is an important topic in policy debates. Based on the assessment of Eurofound's national correspondents, of the 29 EU Member States, the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers was found to be an important issue in current political debates in 13. Not surprisingly, all the 8 key destination countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) are among the 13. Of the remaining five, the UK is a traditional destination country, although not as much affected by the refugee crisis as the eight. Interestingly, all the remaining four countries (the three Baltic states and Malta) are not much affected either (see Table 1). The possible reasons for this are discussed below.

Key topics in policy debates

Before giving a more detailed description of the key issues debated in the individual countries, it is worth considering the main reasons for judging that labour market integration is not an evidently important topic in policy debates in some countries. Table 4 gives an overview of the main reasons.

In France, even after the nine-month period that asylum seekers have to wait before applying for work, a job offer – which must be submitted by the asylum seeker to the Préfecture – can be denied by the regional authority on the grounds of the 'unfavourable work situation in the region'. If permission to work is granted, the authorisation is restricted to the specific position in the job offer, which expires after six months.

The sudden influx of asylum seekers led to responses aimed at limiting the inflow by the countries most affected. Even if the responses showed similar features, there were differences, partly related to the status of the country (that is, whether it is a transit or a destination country). For example, Hungary is a typical transit country, which, like other such countries (for example, Bulgaria), has a lower level of economic development than the key destination countries. Hungary as an entry point to the EU was initially highly affected by the crisis, but according to estimates, 80% of people arriving left the country within a couple of days of their arrival (IOM, 2015). The inflow decreased considerably in 2016. According to data from the International Organization of Migration (IOM), a total of 392,073 migrants and asylum seekers were registered in Hungary between 1 January 2015 and February 2016, while only 689 were registered in 2016 (IOM, 2016a).

Even the less-affected countries – the Czech Republic, Estonia and Slovakia – refused or argued against mandatory quotas. According to an initial decision, more than 1,000 refugees were supposed to be relocated in Estonia, for example, a country that is now ready to accept 550 people within two years. Hungary also openly expressed its strong opposition to introducing mandatory quotas.[7] The official view in

Table 4: Main reasons why labour market integration is not a focus for policy debate

Reason	Countries
Low number of asylum seekers or refugees arriving or who want to stay	Bulgaria Croatia Hungary Poland Romania Slovakia
High level of unemployment among nationals dominates the debate	Croatia Luxembourg Slovakia* Spain
Other pre-integration problems dominate the debate	France** Portugal***
Highly restrictive rules for labour market access for asylum seekers	France
Severe effects of the economic crisis dominate the debate	Cyprus Greece Spain
The crisis is considered an emergency issue; key is how to manage it	Greece Italy

** There is a large number of low-skilled long-term unemployed, in particular among the Roma ethnic group;** lack of capacity in registration and housing shortages; *** the main concern is to guarantee the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, with the priority being to ensure a stable and peaceful environment. According to the website of the High Commission for Migration, labour market integration will be provided in the medium or long-term.*

Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

7 There were several attempts by the Visegrád countries (that is, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) to express this view unanimously.

Estonia is that, even if every EU Member State were to contribute to solving the crisis, the capacities in each country should be taken into account and consideration should be given not only to the share of refugees accepted in the past, but also to the number of other foreigners living in the country. Estonia has a high share of non-Estonians (around 30%) and their integration has proven difficult.

Italy and Greece are in a specific situation since they face enormous numbers of arrivals. For Italy, the main issues are as follows.

- **Challenges for registering and categorising asylum seekers adequately and in a timely manner**. As regards categorisation, for the relocation scheme, the EU suggested that the asylum seekers should be channelled into three different groups: (i) asylum seekers eligible for relocation; (ii) asylum seekers not eligible but in need of protection and reception; and (iii) irregular migrants who have to be repatriated. The operation of the 'hotspot' system of identification procedures for refugees, established by the European Commission, poses additional challenges since it takes longer than the 48 hours prescribed. In addition, time is too short to provide adequate information to people on their fundamental rights (for example, on the possibility of applying for international protection).[8]
- **Poor conditions in the reception system, especially in housing**. This is mainly linked to lack of capacity, which became apparent with the sudden influx of displaced people. (See the section on the capacity problems of service providers in Chapter 4 for more details.)

In Greece, these challenges are exacerbated by the impact of the recent economic crisis. The argument of a lack of reception capacity (see the section on capacity problems) is particularly strong. The population of Greece, however, showed strong solidarity with the newcomers, trying to help them.

Although Portugal is not much affected by the crisis, there was a mobilisation of a number of public, private and non-profit organisations and municipalities to host refugees. The country seems to be one of the most 'generous' in terms of the relocation scheme; it committed itself to make a considerable contribution to the scheme, increasing its national share to 4,500. Portugal appears willing to accept a total of about 10,000 refugees over a two-year period. The existing capacity and resources all over the country are being assessed in order to respond to requests for relocation.

In Ireland, important legislative changes were made at the end of 2015. The International Protection Act, adopted in December, streamlined the application process for asylum to give a single application route, and a new Protection Office was set up within the Department of Justice. Only 20 applications for asylum were submitted in 2015 from Syria; a total of 3,276 applications were submitted, predominantly by people from countries such as Pakistan (the largest group), Bangladesh, Albania, Nigeria and India. Ireland committed itself to accept up to 4,000 people in total under the EU relocation and resettlement programmes.

Although there are opposing views in Romania, according to commitments made, the country should receive 6,200 refugees in 2016 and 2017 – a number that could be considered high compared with the number of refugees received before. However, Romania is currently more a transit country (but not much affected).

Slovenia provided a humanitarian corridor between September 2015 and March 2016 on the western Balkan route to Austria and other western European countries. Only basic registration and temporary accommodation were given. Following the end of the 'spontaneous' migration (the western Balkan route closed in March 2016), Slovenia will focus on the relocation of 863 people (572 in the first phase) from Greece and Italy.

Although the refugee crisis affected Spain to a limited extent, the government agreed in September 2015 to accept 15,000 refugees (as allocated by the European Commission). The first group arrived in November 2015. But according to press reports in April 2016, Spain had received only 18 refugees at that point.

Of all the countries involved in this research, only for Cyprus was it explicitly mentioned that the refugee crisis was not high on the agenda. This is because Cyprus is not a reception country for refugees from Syria, and since 2013 the country has been preoccupied with the consequences of the financial crisis.

Although asylum seekers were initially welcomed in some countries, the continuous and rising inward flow resulted in changes to this atmosphere, and restrictive policies came to the fore. This happened, for example, in Austria and, to some extent, in Germany; Germany differed from Austria in that the so-called 'welcome culture' was emphasised more and voiced at the highest political level, although restrictions were also introduced. In both Austria and Germany, for example, increasingly restrictive rules were put in place on family unification; see Chapter 3 and Table 6 for more details on this and other restrictive measures adopted in these two countries.

8 Newly arriving people are provided with forms to fill in; if they identify 'work' as main reason for migration, they are automatically classified as 'irregular/economic migrants' and receive a delayed removal order, often without having the opportunity to apply for international protection.

Only some countries explicitly mentioned concern over security in their responses to the Eurofound questionnaire. In Finland, notably, the issue was expressed in terms of both internal and external security concerns. Internal security problems cover issues such as sexual harassment, crime, increasing racism and physical violence. The external security threat comes from Russia using the crisis to destabilise the country; Russia let through its territory asylum seekers who lacked a Schengen visa and who were seeking refuge in Finland.

Other concerns centred on practical arrangements and more general responses. In Belgium, dispersion of refugees across all municipalities is an important issue: a total of 5,000 reception places are to be created across the country. On the basis of an agreement between the central government and local authorities, the municipalities are to be informed how many refugees they have to shelter. As regards integration, from March 2016, all newly arriving third-country nationals who intend to stay for more than three months must sign a 'newcomers' statement' whereby they agree to respect Belgian laws and certain values.

As noted above, the refugee crisis is high on the agenda in a number of countries that are hardly or not affected by it. In many of them, the EU relocation and resettlement programmes are the focus of debate. In Latvia, for example, the EU relocation plan is a hot issue, and the general attitude can be summarised by the statement that the country 'ultimately supports voluntary participation in the programme'. Within the framework of the programme, Latvia is committed to admitting 531 asylum seekers within two years. So far, a total of 41 people have been relocated. In terms of resettlement, Latvia committed itself to resettling 50 third-country nationals, but so far only 6 Syrians have been received, and this happened under to the EU–Turkey agreement (European Commission, 2016c).

In Lithuania, there is a consensus (also in policy discourse) that its international commitments mean that the country must contribute with its own limited means to solving the crisis – the argument being that this could be an important prerequisite for receiving support for sensitive national concerns, such as relations with Russia.

In the eight key destination countries, a large part of the debate centres on labour market integration; the main points are summarised in Table 5. The table also contains some details of the role of social partners in the process, because employers and trade unions take an active part in labour market integration in almost all destination countries (the Netherlands being the only exception).

Table 5: Labour market integration issues and measures in the policy discourse in the key destination countries

Country	Comments	Extent of social partners' role	Social partners' views, initiatives and actions
Austria	Restrictions on asylum seekers in place (for example, the labour market test); recent increase in unemployment in Austria; number of unemployed refugees is growing; 'Voluntary integration year' initiated in January 2016.	Strong	Asylum procedure should be closed after six months. Unrestricted access of asylum seekers to job market after six months from the date of application for asylum (WKÖ, 2016). Employers prefer access without labour market test in areas of labour shortage.
Belgium	Experience is of poor labour market outcomes for refugees compared with EU citizens (only one-third of refugees find a job within a year of arrival); skills of newcomers need to be used.	Strong	Agreement between social partners to reduce waiting time for access from six to four months (introduced in November 2015).
Denmark	General perception is that refugees should contribute to society as soon as possible. Labour market integration seen as the best way of integration.	Strong	Tripartite agreement of March 2016, which is now part of legislation. Aim is to get 50% of refugees into work.
Finland	Impact of financial crisis still felt, leading to austerity measures; government wants refugees and asylum seekers to contribute to public finances.	Strong	Social partners' common vision is to promote existing apprenticeship schemes.
Germany	Emphasis on language and occupational skills, retraining, recognition of qualifications; call to ease labour market access by, for example, exempting refugees from minimum wage legislation. There is a plan to create 100,000 extra jobs for recognised asylum seekers.*	Strong	IG Metall announced an initiative in February 2016 to introduce an 'integration year' for asylum seekers, including language classes, occupation-related training and work experience. Feasibility is challenged by the Federal Employment Agency (BA).

Country	Comments	Extent of social partners' role	Social partners' views, initiatives and actions
Netherlands	The focus is on how to manage the influx. Labour market entry is difficult due to legal restrictions, but a recent agreement between central government and municipalities aims to speed up labour market integration.	Not strong	Trade unions are deeply divided. They do not want labour market integration at the expense of current employees and labour standards. Employers want speedy labour market integration of as many refugees as possible.
Norway	Became an issue only recently. Unemployment is rising. In May 2016, the government presented a White Paper on labour market integration.	Strong	Involved in developing the details of the fast-track procedure for highly qualified migrants
Sweden	High priority (government's establishment package for refugees).	Strong	A priority; involved in government's initiatives, for example, in fast-track integration.

** Refers not only to refugees but also to people allowed to stay for a limited period only.*
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

In the Netherlands, employers argue for the speedy labour market integration of as many refugees as possible, while trade unions advocate preserving the position and labour standards of current employees. Due to legal restrictions, labour market access for refugees is relatively difficult (see below). However, several initiatives have been put in place recently to ease access, for example in an agreement concluded on 28 April 2016 between the central government and local municipalities to speed up the process.

Labour market integration initiatives in the eight key destination countries are detailed in subsequent chapters of this report. As noted previously, labour market integration is important in five other countries; the nature of the policy debate in these countries is described below.

In the UK, there are diverging views on giving labour market access to asylum seekers within a specific period (refugees have full access to the labour market, including in-work benefits). Up to 2002, the waiting period for access was six months. This policy was abandoned, with successive governments arguing that providing access within this time frame might act as a 'pull factor' and could give incentive to fraudulent claims. However, those who argue for a reduced waiting time point out that:

- it could lead to a reduced burden on taxpayers since asylum seekers would be able to contribute through taxes;
- asylum seekers would be less exposed to poverty;
- other negative consequences of inactivity (such as de-skilling) could also be avoided.

Labour market access is all the more important since 50% of asylum applicants in the UK are eventually given a status of international protection – either refugee status or beneficiary of subsidiary protection.

Similar arguments are voiced in Latvia, where the burden of providing social benefits to asylum seekers falls on the state budget. The risk of poverty is also identified as a strong reason why activation (labour market integration) is necessary.

In Lithuania, where asylum seekers are not allowed to work at all, doubts have been raised about whether existing measures are sufficient to support labour market integration of a possible increased inflow of refugees. In mid-2015, this resulted in the production of an Action Plan for Labour Market Integration of Refugees.

In Estonia, the debate focuses on making sure that labour market integration takes place as quickly as possible. The other issue is labour shortages and the need to attract highly skilled, talented people.

The government in Malta was previously criticised for a lack of a coherent national integration policy for migrants, but in November 2015 it set up a Human Rights and Integration Directorate within the Ministry for Social Dialogue, Consumer Affairs Civil Liberties. The aim of this new directorate is to streamline the functions of all government departments involved in integration policy. Its director said that discussions with the Employment and Training Corporation (Malta's public employment service) were under way over issues relating to employment conditions and the labour market integration of migrants.

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

Most countries have made some legislative changes in response to the refugee crisis; those adopted since January 2016 are described in Table 6. The focus here is on legislative changes concerning asylum seekers, not refugees, since legal provision of labour market access for those with a status of international protection was clearer and more established even before the crisis than that for asylum seekers (see the flow chart on the asylum process in Annex 1). The main aim of the legislative changes reported was to either lay the groundwork to limit or discourage further inflow or to promote labour market integration for those already in the country (and, in most cases, with a good chance of staying).

No legislative change took place recently in eleven countries: Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal and Spain. However, some amendments were made in several of these countries before 2016, mostly towards the end of 2015. For example, relevant EU directives were transposed into national law in the Czech Republic, and Ireland adopted the International Protection Act in December 2015 (making the application process for asylum seekers possibly faster).

The fact that legislative changes have not been made recently does not necessarily mean that none of these countries would be interested in labour market integration of asylum seekers. (In fact, the Netherlands is one of the key destination countries.) The reason for the lack of changes may lie rather in the fact that responsibility for implementing labour market integration policies is not borne by national authorities exclusively, but regional and local authorities are also heavily involved (see more details on this in EMN, 2016, p. 19). For example, in the Netherlands, the municipalities have a direct role in policy implementation. In addition, since the legal and administrative system is highly flexible, there was no need for major changes. At local level, the most important issue is the availability of sufficient personal and financial resources to cope with the increased inflow of asylum seekers.

Table 6: Legislative changes and proposals since January 2016 in response to the crisis

Country	Key points

Austria	◦ An upper limit on inflow was set at a reference value of 1.5% of the current population within the next four years (starting with the current year of 2016).
	◦ Changes in the Asylum Act:
	  ◦ An emergency decree can be issued in case of a sudden rise in inflow that makes it possible to reject access of asylum seekers at the border and to send them back to a safe neighbouring country. The duration of the decree is six months but can be prolonged three times by a further six months.
	  ◦ All asylum seekers who have entered Austria since November 2015 are to be granted temporary asylum lasting three years, after which the situation in their home country will be examined.*
	  ◦ Certain restrictions imposed on family reunification – mainly for those with subsidiary protection.
	  ◦ Processing time for applications for asylum is to be extended from 6 to 15 months.

Belgium	◦ Introduction of 'newcomers' statement', which refugees are obliged to sign if they want to stay more than three months. ◦ Processing time for applications for family reunification has been extended. ◦ Refugees can stay for five years; after that, the situation in their home country is to be evaluated.
Bulgaria	The law on the recognition of professional qualifications was changed in 2016 regarding access to work and exercise of their profession by third-country nationals. (Previously the Law on Asylum Seekers and Refugees was amended in relation to adapting the existing provisions on conditions of receiving asylum, international and temporary protection, and so on.)
Denmark	◦ Daily allowance for asylum seekers has been reduced by 10%. ◦ Asylum seekers with economic capacity have to pay for their stay. ◦ Authorities have the right to confiscate cash or items exceeding €10,000. ◦ Skills assessment is to be made for smooth integration once asylum has been granted.

Country	Key points
Estonia	Besides the transposition of relevant EU directives, other changes relate partly to labour market access, but for refugees only, as follows: • refugees are obliged to learn the Estonian language; • refugees are obliged to attend at least one module of an adjustment programme; • social benefits of refugees have been cut.
Finland	• From April 2016, residence permits based on humanitarian grounds are no longer being granted. • State subsidies are paid to municipalities to facilitate the pre-school education of immigrant children. • For those who refuse to leave after a negative asylum decision, deportation centres will be set up that are more open than detention centres, yet have residency obligations. The following proposals have been made: • limitations on the right of asylum seekers to judicial aid during asylum interviews; • further restrictions on the terms and conditions for subsidiary protection.
France	A new law on the rights of asylum seekers was adopted on 7 March 2016. The law makes it possible to release new funds for the reception of refugees (construction of new housing facilities) and the acceleration of procedures (hiring of new officers). The law stipulates an extra funding of €1.4 million to be allocated to the French Office for the Protection of Refugees and Stateless Persons (OFPRA) in order to respond to the increase in asylum claims.
Germany	The Asylum Package II on accelerated asylum procedures was adopted on 11 March 2016 and included the following provisions: • The accelerated procedure was extended to include many groups of asylum seekers, with a target to complete the procedure within one week. During the procedure, applicants must stay in newly established specialised reception centres and are not allowed to move or work. The sanction for those not complying is a cut in financial support. • Family members are not allowed to join beneficiaries of subsidiary protection within two years. • The monthly allowance for asylum seekers has been reduced.
Greece	• A new law was adopted in April 2016 on the organisation and operation of the Asylum Service, the Appeals Authority, and the Reception and Identification Service; includes the transposition of relevant EU directives on the employment of beneficiaries of international protection and other provisions. • The new law abolished the requirement for asylum seekers to have a work permit as a precondition for labour market access. This makes it much easier for them to work legally.
Hungary	• Cuts in social protection for refugees and asylum seekers (April, May, June 2016).
Italy	• Identification and reception procedures. • Proposal for a 'migration compact', the aim being to conclude bilateral agreements between the EU and the countries of origin, taking the EU–Turkey agreement as a model.
Lithuania	Government decrees on the procedure for asylum applications and actions and emergency assistance under AMIF.

Norway	• First round of legislative amendments was adopted on 16 November 2015. Since then, border controls have been implemented and prolonged several times.
	• Minor legislative changes since January 2016, but major changes are still pending. They include:
	  ◦ stricter rules on family reunification (need a sponsor who has worked or studied for three years in Norway);
	  ◦ more grounds for refusal of a family reunification application;
	  ◦ introduction of integration criteria and requirements for a permanent residence permit;**
	  ◦ extension of the required period of stay in Norway from three to five years to be eligible for a permanent residence permit.

Romania	• National Memorandum on intra-EU relocation of refugees.

Sweden	• Changes in March 2016: municipalities became obliged to accommodate the newly arrived immigrants assigned to them; new regulations adopted on the number of those newly arrived persons whom the municipalities and counties are obliged to accommodate in 2016.
	• Change in April 2016: the right to assistance will be revoked when a deportation or removal order takes legal effect.
	• The most recent law, which came into force on 31 May 2016, included the following provisions:
	  ◦ temporary restriction on the possibility of obtaining a residence permit;
	  ◦ temporary residence permits introduced;
	  ◦ more limited rights for family reunification – higher demand for self-sufficiency not only for the newly arrived but also as a precondition for family reunification.

Slovenia	• Decree on list of safe countries and changes in International Protection Act (includes restrictions).
Slovakia	• No direct change in Asylum Act, but change in government decree.
UK	• New clause proposed extending asylum seekers' right to work, but has no government support.

** Depending on the results: if the situation has improved, the person can be sent back home; if it is unchanged, asylum status will be extended to unlimited duration. ** These include a condition that the applicant is able to support themself for a 12-month period before permanent residence is granted. The applicant should also have a minimum level of spoken Norwegian and pass a test in social studies.*
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

Both types of legislative changes – aimed either at stemming the inward flow or integrating existing asylum seekers into the labour market – can be found in many of the key destination countries that have made such changes. In Austria, for example, not only was an upper limit for inflow set, but it was also decided to earmark financial resources specifically for integration in 2016.[9] The dichotomy can also be found in Denmark, Finland and Sweden.

In some cases, the intention to make the country less attractive for asylum seekers resulted in countries adopting similar measures; for example, Austria, Belgium and Sweden are trying to limit the stay of newly recognised refugees in the country (Table 6). This change is interpreted by the EEPO study as something that can pose an additional administrative burden on asylum authorities (European Commission, 2016a). The study adds that the provision of temporary asylum could weaken the position of refugees in the labour market since it might deter employers from employing them for the longer term. Indeed, this uncertainty could also discourage them from investing in refugees' human capital, for example through costly and long-term training. A similar argument was raised by the social partners in Sweden, which criticised the government for introducing temporary resident permits, arguing that as a consequence the focus could potentially be shifted to a 'short-term labour market solution'.

Restrictions on family unification also show some similarities and have been recently adopted in Austria, Belgium, Germany, Norway and Sweden. In Austria, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection need to meet certain financial and living conditions requirements (such as income, accommodation and insurance) to obtain family reunification. In Sweden, in a somewhat similar way, higher demands for self-sufficiency have been imposed. The social partners criticised this provision, arguing that it would discourage people from studying to improve their skills and provide an incentive 'to find a job, rather than the right job'. (See Chapter 5 for the arguments for quick access to labour market versus sustainable labour market integration.) In Belgium, the increase in the processing time for applications of family members has had significant implications, since previously in cases when the authorities had failed to close the procedure before the shorter deadline, the applications were automatically accepted. In both Austria and Germany, a distinction for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection has also been made; in Austria, the application for family unification can only be filed after three years, while in Germany, family members are not allowed to follow within two years.

In Germany, the Asylum Package II, which followed the Asylum Package I (also called the Asylum Procedures Acceleration Act), was introduced to speed up the asylum application process. The fast-track procedure for applications was extended for certain groups (people from safe countries, asylum seekers who do not cooperate with authorities or pose a threat to security). The aim is to complete the asylum procedure within one week, or two weeks if the applicant appeals. The rules on family reunification in Germany are similar to those in Austria.

In both Denmark and Germany, there have been cuts in entitlements or allowances for asylum seekers. In Denmark, the daily allowance for asylum seekers was cut by 10%, while in Germany, the monthly allowance paid to asylum seekers was reduced – for example, by around €10 per month for single adults.

In the frontline countries of Italy and Greece, the changes concerned mainly identification and reception procedures; in Italy, these changes had been made already at the beginning of the crisis in 2015.

Changes relating to labour market access for asylum seekers

Waiting time for access to work

Although the OECD study on labour market integration of humanitarian migrants (OECD, 2016) and the related EEPO study (European Commission, 2016a) have explored the topic of waiting times for labour market access in detail, the current study provides some complementary details. Since the OECD and EEPO investigations, there have not been changes in most countries (Table 7). The exception is Luxembourg, where the changes were not indicated in the OECD study. Further details have also emerged in other countries.

Even if the waiting period for access to work is short, there can be other obstacles hindering access to the labour market by asylum seekers. In Austria, for example, access can depend on specific quota regulations, which can be different in each of the nine federal states. In addition, as a prerequisite for obtaining a work permit, a labour market test is applied – meaning that groups other than asylum seekers are prioritised in accessing work. In this case, before a work permit is issued, it has to be proved that no unemployed person is available for that job. Moreover, the work permit can only be issued for six months. Asylum seekers can be granted an apprenticeship in occupations with a shortage of labour supply. The list of such occupations was extended in October 2015.

9 These financial resources are called the 'pot for integration': €75 million was earmarked for general integration (such as language courses) and an additional €70 million for active labour market policy measures targeting refugees in 2016. This measure was decided in September 2015.

In both Austria and Italy, asylum seekers are allowed to do voluntary work. In Austria, this has to be work for the public domain (for example, municipalities); asylum seekers can also get involved in activities around their own accommodation.

In Greece, even though the authorities are mainly preoccupied with managing the huge inflow, in April 2016 significant legislative changes were made to facilitate the labour market access of asylum seekers with the abolition of previous obstacles to obtaining work permits.

Table 7: Waiting times for labour market access for asylum seekers

Country	Waiting time for access (months)	Comments
Austria	3	Access to selected occupations in tourism, agriculture and forestry (see OECD, 2016).
Belgium	4	
Bulgaria	3	Waiting period for refugee status to be given.
Croatia	9	
Cyprus	6	
Czech Republic	6	Legislative change from 12 to 6 months in December 2015.
Denmark	6	
Estonia	6	
Finland	3 or 6	If applicant has a valid travel document (passport or another document for identification), it is 3 months; otherwise, it is 6 months.
France	9	
Germany	3	
Greece	Immediate	Conditional on obtaining a temporary work permit.
Hungary	9	
Ireland	No access	
Italy	2	Cut from 6 months; residence permit is given after filing an application (Articles 4 and 22 of Act 142/2015), but this cannot be converted to a labour residence permit.
Latvia	3–9	Change was considered by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, but it is not present in the amended law on immigration.
Lithuania	No access	Law No IX-2206, Article 71
Luxembourg*	6	As of 18 December 2015, reduced from 9 months to 6 months (Article 59(1) of the 2015 Law on International Protection).
Malta	12	Change is being considered in Parliament to reduce it to 9 months (in accordance with the Reception Conditions Directive).
Netherlands	6	In practice, it takes longer, up to 15 months, but there are still options for asylum seekers without a residence permit to start working after the first 6 months – this long-standing practice has not changed. Participation in voluntary work is also possible early in the asylum procedure.
Norway	Immediate	In practice, not immediate; the actual waiting time has increased.
Poland	6	
Portugal	1	
Romania	3	
Slovakia	9	This is in cases where no decision was taken in the first instance; was around 3 months in 2015.
Slovenia	9	
Spain	6	A 'red card' – a form of identification in their job search – is issued to asylum seekers, which has to be renewed every 6 months.
Sweden	Immediate	Asylum seekers with valid IDs are exempt from having to obtain a work permit.
UK	12	There is a proposal to cut this to 6 months.

Notes: Table refers to waiting time after lodging an application for asylum.
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016; European Commission, 2016a; OECD, 2016*

Self-employment possibilities for asylum seekers

In most countries, asylum seekers are not allowed to be self-employed. In others – for example, Bulgaria Estonia, Italy and Norway – it is not prohibited, but there is no specific regulation covering it. In Bulgaria, only a small number of refugees and asylum seekers are self-employed. In Estonia, practical obstacles (for example, language barriers) prevail. It can be assumed that the reason behind the lack of regulation in non-destination countries is the lack of demand for it. In Sweden, asylum seekers cannot engage in self-employment because the precondition for starting a business is to have a residence permit. Similar conditions apply in Norway.

Even in those countries where asylum seekers can in principle be self-employed, there are other practical obstacles (Belgium) or administrative barriers (Austria) that make this option difficult. Only in Malta do asylum seekers enjoy preferential conditions for engaging in self-employment compared with other third-country nationals. Table 8 lists the countries where self-employment is possible for asylum seekers.

In many countries, in cases when refugee status is granted, self-employment is permitted. In Croatia, for example, people given temporary protection can work without permission, and so no restrictions on self-employment apply to them. The condition is that they have been granted asylum.

Social security entitlements

Social security is not directly related to labour market access as such, but from the point of view of motivation and actual conditions when in employment, it is an important aspect of it.

Social security benefits in general are provided in several countries. In Sweden, they are given to those asylum seekers who work and pay taxes in the country. In Norway, even asylum seekers whose application is finally rejected are covered by social security benefits, with the precondition that they must have a work permit and actually work in Norway. In Denmark, social security is universal and does not rely on attachment to the labour market. In Latvia, social security benefits are provided equally as for nationals.

The question on social security benefits for working asylum seekers in the Eurofound questionnaire specified two entitlements: unemployment benefit and healthcare (see Annex 2).

In most countries where information on unemployment benefits is available (Austria, Belgium, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands and Spain), asylum seekers are entitled to it under the same terms as nationals. In practice, however, asylum seekers are unable to avail themselves of these benefits since a work history (or at least a minimum qualifying period) is required, which, of course, they cannot meet.

Table 8: Countries allowing the self-employment of asylum seekers

Country	Details of regulations
Austria	Asylum seekers are allowed to work under a specific 'contract for work' (that is, freelance jobs without a qualifying certificate or trade licence). For activities where a business licence is needed, specific commercial and occupational provisions prevail. There is hardly any self-employment in a regulated trade.
Belgium	In principle, it is possible for asylum seekers to be self-employed, but due to their unstable residence situation, doing a job that requires major investment is prohibited.
Germany	Although asylum seekers (whose applications are still pending) are not allowed to be engaged in self-employment, recognised asylum seekers* are. People with tolerated residence status are also allowed to be self-employed, but this is subject to permission from the immigration authorities on a case-by-case basis.
Malta	Asylum seekers are required to have an employment licence. Whereas third-country nationals must meet a number of criteria to qualify for self-employed status, asylum seekers do not need this.
Netherlands	The same waiting period applies for self-employment as for other work. Refugees (who have been given this status) are entitled to a work or residence permit. But in practice the asylum procedure may take longer than the statutory period of six months.
Portugal	If a temporary residence permit is granted, self-employment is permitted. The temporary residence permit is valid for one year and renewable for successive periods of two years.
Slovenia	While asylum seekers have an access to work after nine months, the Act on employment and self-employment contains restrictions on foreigners with a temporary residence permit that was not issued due to employment. The restrictions include that a foreigner can become self-employed after one year of legal residence in the country.
Spain	The same provisions regarding access to the labour market apply; there is no special provision restricting self-employment for asylum seekers.

** The term 'recognised asylum seekers' includes not only refugees but also those who have been granted 'political asylum'. They are given so-called 'alternative recognition', meaning that permission to stay is for a limited period only.*

Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

In Portugal, only those granted temporary residence are entitled to unemployment benefit, but, to some extent in a similar way as to the other countries mentioned, the entitlement period depends, among other things, on the duration of social security contributions. In Croatia, the precondition for entitlement to unemployment benefit is also holding a temporary residence permit. In Finland, although rules apply to asylum seekers in the same way as for legal residents, these rules are set by collective agreements (and, of course, by legislation). Although Greece seems to be the only country where asylum seekers are entitled to unemployment benefit without any preconditions, the benefit can only be provided for a certain period, and the insurance coverage is also given only for a limited period.

Asylum seekers are not entitled to unemployment benefit in Luxembourg, Poland and Romania. In Malta, a daily allowance is provided for asylum seekers upon termination of employment. But once they leave a reception centre, known as an Open Centre, they are no longer entitled to receive the daily allowance. In Denmark, asylum seekers are treated under a separate system within the asylum centres (under the auspices of the national Danish Immigration Service). Thus they do not have access to the services of job centres (administered by municipalities).

As far as healthcare is concerned, there is less variation across countries: asylum seekers are usually entitled to basic health services, although there may be differences as to what exactly these services cover. There are several countries where access to healthcare is equal to that for nationals: Bulgaria, Greece (if the asylum seeker resides legally in Greece), Latvia, Luxembourg, Norway (access to healthcare is universal in Norway), Slovenia and Spain. In Denmark, a parallel system of healthcare exists within the asylum centres.

Within the context of entitlements, it is worth mentioning that in some countries if asylum seekers work, they have to contribute to the costs of their accommodation and other material support. This is the case, for example, in Belgium, Denmark and Luxembourg. In Belgium, this applies to those asylum seekers who reside in a reception centre while working; they continue to be eligible both for material support and housing, but will be obliged to contribute. In Greece, if asylum seekers have sufficient resources, authorities may suspend benefits to the extent that subsistence needs are met from the asylum seekers' own resources.

4 Factors facilitating and hindering access to the labour market

This chapter begins by presenting details on the average duration of the asylum procedure. There has been a general increase in the length of time taken, and so uncertainty about the eventual status to be granted to the asylum seeker is prolonged. This makes it important to look at the circumstances of asylum seekers during the reception phase, and features of this situation that may help them or not to access the labour market are explored. Those factors (circumstances and services) influencing the access to employment of refugees and asylum seekers indirectly through their material conditions are subsequently examined. Finally, direct labour market measures and services are documented.

Increase in average duration of asylum procedure

According to both the Geneva Convention and the Qualification Directive, refugees should be treated in the same way as nationals. Gaining full access to the labour market is thus possible when the status of international protection is granted and therefore the length of the asylum procedure is of great importance.

Due to the large inflow of displaced people, the average duration of the asylum procedure has increased enormously not only in most of the key destination countries but also elsewhere (not least in the frontline countries of Greece and Italy), where some data or estimates are available. France is an exception, with a slight decrease being reported, although as noted in Table 1, the country is not one highly affected by the crisis.

Table 9 presents OECD data, complemented with the latest available information from the responses to the Eurofound questionnaire. Austria is not listed in this table because there are no updated data. However, implementation of an amendment to the Asylum Act will extend the processing time for applications for asylum from the current 6 months to 15 months (Österreichisches Parlament, 2016).

Table 9: Recent changes in average duration of asylum procedure

Country	Average duration*	Comments based on latest information or updated data
Belgium	2.5 months (based on 2014, early 2015)	This duration is no longer feasible. No concrete duration has been disclosed.
Bulgaria	n.a.	No official data are available, but the estimate is 6 months.
Finland	5.2 months	6 months (early 2016 data)
France	7 months	6 months (200 days)
Greece	2.9 months	About 6 months (official response from the Asylum Service)
Italy	3.5 months	No official data, but estimate is 12 months (from the SPRAR database – other sources agree the time has increased dramatically)
Latvia	n.a.	3 months; due to reasonable factors it could be prolonged to 12 months.
Lithuania	n.a.	Legal rule: maximum of 3 months (may be extended by an additional 3 months if it is not feasible for some reason)
Netherlands	6 months	No official figures, but in practice, the procedure can take longer.
Norway	2.7 months (median)	The expected waiting time is 14 months, according to the Directorate of Immigration
Slovakia	n.a.	3 months (2015 data)
Slovenia	6 months	Expert's estimate, based on content-related procedures (that is, excluding applications that were suspended or discarded)**
Spain	n.a.	Legislation stipulates a maximum of three months but, in practice, it varies by offices, depending on their workload.
Sweden	7.5 months	9 months, according to the Swedish Migration Agency.

** 2015 or latest available year; ** information provided by Katarina Bervar Sternad from the Legal Informational Centre for NGOs (in email dated 19 April 2016).*
Notes: n.a. = not available. SPRAR = Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati (Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees)
Source: *OECD data (for the average duration); OECD, 2016; responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

Contextual conditions affecting labour market integration

Accommodation

Labour market integration is not considered as a factor in most of the countries when assigning accommodation (Table 10). The reason in frontline countries is clear: when there is a large influx, housing and other services are overloaded. Even if at a later stage, particularly for beneficiaries of international protection, proximity of jobs is considered, this is less true for asylum seekers, especially at the early phase of their stay. The reason often lies in how the system of reception is established and how it works. For example, in Austria, labour market integration is not a priority in the case of asylum seekers in the very early stages of the asylum process. Austria has a deliberate dispersal policy, which is conducted through specific quotas for each federal state (OECD, 2016).

In some other countries, the reception of asylum seekers consists of stages. For example, in the Czech Republic, asylum seekers stay in reception centres in the first phase. The second stage starts when the six-month waiting period for labour market access has expired. Applicants may then obtain a work permit for specific job positions and be moved from the reception centre to a residential centre (Table 11).

Similarly, in Norway, asylum seekers are placed after arrival either in transit centres (where they wait for their applications to be processed) or in reception centres (where they wait for a decision). If they are granted asylum, they wait in a reception centre to be assigned housing in a municipality.

Although not related directly to labour market integration, decent living conditions (including meeting nutritional and sanitary needs and providing sufficient space for families to live together) constitute a key prerequisite for successful inclusion. Families can stay together in nine countries (Belgium, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Norway and the UK) and also usually in Austria.

Table 10: Living conditions during reception as a factor in labour market integration

Country	Commentary: conditions, available services and support measures
Austria	Asylum seekers are first accommodated in reception centres, where their application is examined. It is determined whether it lies within the competence of Austria to further process the application. In case of positive decision, the asylum seekers are dispersed to each region on the basis of a quota system and decisions made by officials in the reception centres. In accommodation provided by the federal states, families can usually stay together.
Belgium	Social, psychological and legal support, interpreter services, and language courses are available at reception centres, where there are attempts to provide each family with its own room. In individually arranged housing, support measures are managed by local social services.
Bulgaria	Accommodation is an important factor in labour market integration. Various support measures did exist but have now expired. There are plans for support for housing from AMIF.
Croatia	In reception centres, asylum seekers are placed with family members. There is access to healthcare and educational institutions, and psychosocial assistance is provided. The centres are well connected by public transport to city centres.
Czech Republic	Families live together in residential centres, from where asylum seekers are allowed to go to work. This is in contrast to reception centres, which do not permit asylum seekers to leave to perform work.
Denmark	Labour market integration has become the main factor considered when assigning accommodation in municipalities to refugees and other migrants. (The other is the share of immigrants in that municipality.) However, this does not apply to asylum seekers.
Estonia	Families can stay together. Financial support, access to healthcare, language courses and essential translation services are provided.
Finland	At reception centres, family members are usually located in the same room. Private housing is allowed but not funded, and asylum seekers must register at a reception centre to be entitled to social and healthcare services.
Germany	Asylum seekers are distributed across the federal states based on a special formula called the Königssteiner Key. The main criteria are population size and tax income. There are ongoing discussions in the German Parliament on revising the Integration Act, and it has been proposed that the local housing situation, local capacities of language classes and the local labour market situation should be taken into account during the distribution of recognised asylum seekers who are unemployed.
Italy	Labour market integration is not a factor when assigning accommodation. There is only one type of reception centre, where healthcare, psychological assistance, professional and language training, cultural mediation and so on are provided.
Latvia	Families live together. Labour market integration is considered irrespective of whether the asylum seekers want to stay in the country or not. All asylum seekers are involved in language courses and basic information on Latvia such as legal regulations, culture and Latvian history is provided; mental health services are also available. After receiving refugee status, people have to leave the asylum centre; advisers from the State Employment Agency (NVA) help, among other things, with finding accommodation close to available jobs.

Country	Commentary: conditions, available services and support measures
Lithuania	Families are accommodated together. Labour market integration is not relevant because asylum seekers are not allowed to work.
Luxembourg	The family as a unit is respected, ensuring that families have their own room, but labour market integration as such is not a factor when assigning accommodation.
Malta	The physical conditions in reception centres, or Open Centres, are challenging due to the low daily allowance and lack of access to social welfare support. Training in English, the Maltese culture, and information and communications technology (ICT) skills are, however, provided to improve employability.
Norway	In principle, labour market integration is recognised as a factor in assigning housing, but, in practice, the quality of accommodation and related services varies and so does not always facilitate labour market integration. In reception centres, however, decent living conditions are provided, letting families stay together. As daily activity for adults, various tasks are provided and they have a say in their own living conditions.
Slovenia	Beneficiaries of international protection are entitled to free accommodation for one year in an 'integration house' held by the Ministry of the Interior. The houses are located in major urban centres.
Spain	During the first six months at a refugee reception centre, asylum seekers are expected to attend language training and labour market orientation courses.
UK	Labour market integration is not considered as a factor when assigning accommodation for asylum seekers, but family conditions, such as having children, do matter.

Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

As Table 10 shows, there are a number of countries that not only provide basic services, but also offer psychosocial assistance and activities that could help integration in general, including access to the labour market. In most cases, various professional and language courses are provided as well as training in the host country culture, labour market orientation and so on.

Capacity problems at reception centres

Due to the sudden and large inflow of asylum seekers, accommodation services have had to cope with increased capacity challenges.

Among general problems, cuts to funding of NGOs and local support groups were identified as challenges in the UK. In Malta, it was indicated that NGOs concerned with migrants' rights have to work in an increasingly hostile environment; they are subject to severe criticism and even threats by some online media.

The lack of resources in general is the most commonly cited problem that faces reception centres. Examples of the main issues are given below.

- A lack of capacity to accommodate new arrivals (Sweden) and, as a result, overcrowding and poor living conditions (Austria, Greece, Hungary, Slovenia, Spain and the UK). In particular, in Greece, concerns over public health due to a high risk of infection were highlighted; the fact that asylum seekers are housed in abandoned industrial warehouses could expose them to potential known and even unknown risks.
- Lack of funding was mentioned in Bulgaria.
- Staff shortages, in particular, were indicated in France, Germany and the Netherlands, while lack of trained staff was noted in Bulgaria. Staff resourcing has been cited as being linked to the backlog of refugee cases in Ireland, where the length of time it takes for asylum seekers to receive a decision is a major problem (meaning that the asylum seekers remain under direct provision for long periods, although several measures have been put in place recently to remedy these problems).
- In addition to staff shortages, in Norway, budget shortages also posed a challenge. However, the budget has now been increased and, with the introduction of 240 new full-time positions, reception capacity is now sufficient.

Inadequate arrangements at reception centres are another issue. In Spain and France, it was indicated that existing reception centres have recently proved inadequate to receive the new wave of asylum seekers. In Spain, facilities are not suitable for families, and while centres in France were designed for families (and not single people), lone adults make up the majority of the new arrivals.

Lack of social services poses a challenge, too. In Finland, there are problems with the availability of certain social, healthcare and education services, which are provided externally (not in the centres); shortcomings in or lack of medical and sanitary services were also indicated in Austria. Problems with healthcare provision were highlighted in Lithuania, where even the availability of emergency medical services is under strain due to accommodation and staff shortages. The reason is that there is no established payment procedure, for example, for secondary healthcare institutions. Lack of coordination with other social services was identified as a problem in Cyprus.

Reception centres located in remote areas can give rise to geographical isolation (for example, in Lithuania).

Geographical factors

Certain geographical factors may hinder or facilitate asylum seekers' labour market access. Table 11 provides an overview on these conditions in selected countries.

Allocation of accommodation in a reception centre happens just after arrival and is considered as temporary. In four countries (Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and the UK), the distance of reception centres from jobs is not considered (Table 11a). However, in other countries, it is problematic, that is, in Estonia, Italy, Norway, Poland and Sweden. Differences in reception systems (for example, whether the centres are temporary accommodation or not) explain, at least partly, why distance is considered problematic or not. In addition, in some countries the location of the existing reception centres makes distance an important issue (for example, in Italy).

There are, however, other factors that influence whether the distance of reception centres from jobs is an issue or not. For example, the size of the country and the availability of public transport play some role (these are the reasons why distance in Luxembourg is not a problem). Lack of available places for people in need also explains why distance from jobs is not a priority consideration (for example, in Spain). Labour market difficulties may explain why remoteness as such cannot be regarded as really problematic, for example in Finland, where unemployment is relatively high.

Table 11: Geographical factors hindering or facilitating labour market access for asylum seekers

(a) Is distance of reception centres from jobs a general problem?

Country	Yes/No	Comments
Austria	n.a.	Partial employment restrictions for asylum seekers mean this is not an issue.
Belgium	No	
Croatia	No	
Czech Republic	n.a.	A stay at a reception centre is required immediately after arrival and thus is temporary (see previous section).
Denmark	No	Asylum seekers seldom work outside of asylum centres.
Estonia	Yes	The only reception centre is far from towns and not well connected by public transport.
Finland	No	Although reception centres are located in remote areas, the distance from jobs only became a problem after the big influx and applications became congested. The remoteness of the reception centres as such is not a problem.
France	No	
Germany	n.a.	Under the Asylum Act, people at reception centres are not allowed to work.
Hungary	No	
Italy	Yes	Most reception centres (with the exception of SPRAR facilities) are in remote areas and not well connected by public transport.
Luxembourg*	No	This is because of the small size of the country and asylum seekers can use public transport at no cost.
Netherlands	No	As a rule, employment prospects are not yet a factor for those housed in a reception centre.
Norway	Yes	The strategy for the dispersal of asylum seekers involves 110 state-run reception centres, located in 99 municipalities. The final settlement of refugees falls under the competence of municipalities. Much of the housing is located in remote areas.
Poland	Yes	The vast majority of reception centres are in remote areas, with only one in Warsaw. There is a lack of access to public transport.
Portugal	No	
Spain	No	Allocation depends on the places available and geographical proximity.
Sweden	Yes	The previous requirement for locating asylum seekers, which set up a time limit for travel by public transport, is no longer valid because of the lack of housing.
UK	n.a.	Asylum seekers do not have a right to work for 12 months (and then only if still awaiting a decision), so the issue is not relevant.

(b) Are there constraints on asylum seekers' mobility within the country?

Country	Yes/No	Comments
Austria	No	The exception is during the first stage, while it is being determined if the decision on granting asylum lies within Austria's jurisdiction or not.
Belgium	Yes	Although asylum seekers are allowed to live in individually arranged housing, certain restrictions apply. In some cases, for example, applicants lose their entitlements for social support.
Croatia	No	With the consent of the Ministry of the Interior, asylum seekers can stay at their expense at any address, but certain conditions such as self-sufficiency must be met.
Czech Republic	No	The exception is during the first stage when the identification procedure is completed. After that, applicants can choose to be housed at residential centres (see Table 10), where there are certain rules to be observed. Applicants are entitled to find their own housing, but this must be approved by the Department for Asylum and Migration Policy (OAMP). In private accommodation, related costs must be paid for but medical care continues to be free. OAMP may provide financial support of up to 1.6 times the subsistence minimum for a maximum of three months.
Denmark	Yes	The following conditions apply: • six-month waiting period; • self-sufficiency; • housing should meet basic standards; In addition, four municipalities cannot receive asylum seekers since they already have a high share.
Estonia	Yes	Written permission by the Police and Border Guard Board is required if the accommodation and support are guaranteed by a person residing legally in Estonia, or where the applicant is self-sufficient, or to ensure the applicant's safety.
Finland	No	Mobility constraints apply only for those whose identity or travel route is unclear. Such people are accommodated in a detention unit in the Metsälä unit in Helsinki until their identity can be clarified. Residents are not permitted to leave the detention unit (Finnish Immigration Service, 2016).
France	Yes	Those who refuse when granted a space in reception centres for asylum seekers (CADA) lose their entitlement to a living allowance.
Germany	Yes	Asylum seekers are banned from leaving the district of their registration for the duration of the asylum process. An exception is those with a good chance of staying who get the right to work from BA. In this case, with permission, they can leave the district.
Hungary	No	Asylum seekers must stay in reception centres or camps.
Italy	Yes	While waiting for the territorial commission's decision, asylum seekers are not allowed to leave their reception centre. Once they leave the centre, they are no longer entitled to the assistance provided in the facility.
Luxembourg	Yes	Asylum seekers can live in a private household without losing social entitlements.
Netherlands	Yes	When waiting for a permit, asylum seekers have to stay in a reception centre. After a permit is granted, in principle, local municipalities are responsible for providing housing, but due to the high number of refugees, it is difficult to find suitable housing, so permit holders may have to stay longer in a reception centre than envisaged.
Norway	Yes	Although they can stay in individually arranged housing, asylum seekers are no longer entitled to financial benefits. In practice, this means that the majority stay in reception centres. Individually arranged housing is only allowed after asylum is granted and under certain conditions.
Poland	No	
Portugal	No	Asylum seekers are entitled to the following support: • monthly income allowance, covering transport partly; • monthly supplementary allowance for housing; • monthly allowance for personal expenses and transportation.
Spain	No	Asylum seekers can stay in individually arranged housing and, in some cases, the costs of rented accommodation can be covered (OECD, 2016). In particular, the Protocol for Income Support funded through the European Refugee Fund and the European Social Fund (Ministerio de Empleo y Seguridad Social, 2013) allocates income support to fund rents for refugees and asylum seekers not accepted in a shelter centre. Eligible asylum seekers who agree to take part in the programme are offered a place where there is accommodation available; this may imply geographic mobility with respect to the region from where the initial petition was made, depending on vacancies available in reception centre (Martín et al, 2016).
Sweden	No	Asylum seekers who find their own accommodation are responsible for covering their living costs.
UK	Yes	

(c) Is proximity of jobs considered when housing is allocated?

Country	Yes/No	Comments
Austria	No	
Belgium	No	
Croatia	No	
Czech Republic	No	
Denmark	No	It is considered for refugees but not for asylum seekers.
Estonia	No	
Finland	No	
France	No	
Germany	No	Draft legislation of April 2016 contains plans for taking it into consideration.
Hungary	n.a.	No housing is allocated.
Italy	No	
Luxembourg	Yes	Proximity to a job is generally taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis when housing is allocated by the National Reception and Integration Agency.
Netherlands	Yes	Recently, various agencies have advised that opportunities for employment must be taken into account when distributing refugees across the country. In 2016, this led to a shift of government policy, and the intention is now to take into account job prospects in the matching process between a refugee and the municipality where they will be housed.
Norway	Yes	It is considered formally but, in practice, this criterion cannot be enforced, because demand for housing is currently higher than existing places in reception centres and municipal housing; available locations are used, regardless of proximity to jobs in cases where the centres or municipal housing meet other criteria. In response to the crisis, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration set up 173 contracts with private suppliers to set up emergency reception centres in rural areas.
Poland	No	
Portugal	No	
Spain	No	
Sweden	No	Asylum seekers are accommodated where there is a supply of housing. They can apply for a housing allowance if the period of employment is longer than three months and if they have to move to a town where the Swedish Migration Agency cannot offer housing.
UK	No	

Note: n.a.= not applicable
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

Preparatory measures for labour market integration during reception

Overall, the results of this research confirmed the findings of the OECD study on integration support for asylum seekers (OECD, 2016). However, Table 12 reveals some new developments and details.

Some countries, such as Belgium, Denmark and Norway, offer a wide range of services. In Belgium, however, the rules for some of the programmes differ between Flanders and Wallonia: in Flanders, asylum seekers are obliged to attend a free integration programme after three months, whereas in Wallonia, the current mandatory programme is very limited, although both regions are expanding their mandatory programmes. Validation of foreign degrees is free in Belgium for asylum seekers.

Table 12: Services and measures offered to asylum seekers in preparation for labour market access

Service/measure		Countries
Language training		**Austria**, Belgium (eligible after application for asylum), Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Germany (for those who are likely to stay), Italy, Latvia, Malta, Slovenia, Spain *Voluntary participation*: Estonia, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland, Slovakia *Provided only by volunteers*: Greece, Netherlands
Skills assessment		Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Luxembourg, **Norway**
Help in recognition of qualifications		Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Spain
Other	**Civic and cultural courses**	Belgium, Denmark
	Mental health services or counselling	Belgium, Czech Republic, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden
	Career counselling	**Norway**, Spain
	Orientation, information and guidance	France (voluntary participation), Portugal, Spain
	Financial help or counselling	Italy
	Professional training	Italy, Luxembourg
	Traineeship	Malta

Note: Countries where there are differences between the OECD results and new developments identified by this research are indicated in bold.
Source: *OECD, 2016; responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

As can be seen from Table 12, the most common service is language training. Participation, however, is voluntary in many countries (Estonia, France, Luxembourg, Norway, Poland and Slovakia). In Poland, for example, the voluntary nature of these courses is why beneficiaries of international protection have a poor knowledge of the Polish language. This could be problematic because language courses become compulsory for those who enter the Individual Integration Programme after refugee status is granted. In Norway, the offer of language training is up to the municipalities. In Greece and the Netherlands, language courses are provided by volunteers. In Austria, language courses are now being opened up to asylum seekers on a gradual basis.

Despite efforts to offer various courses, a lack of resources can be an obstacle in practice for offering not only language courses but also other services. The delivery of services can therefore show large differences even within a particular country. This is the situation in Spain and especially in Italy, where language courses for asylum seekers are usually provided, but other services are mostly offered only by those reception centres that belong to SPRAR. Italy has other facilities such as reception centres for asylum seekers (CARA) and Identification and Expulsion Centres (CIE), which are mainly targeted at irregular migrants waiting for repatriation. Many NGOs have pointed to the poor and inadequate reception conditions in these facilities, which often do not meet basic standards for food supply, healthcare assistance and legal counselling.[10]

In Spain, skills assessment is not provided in reception centres, but asylum seekers are directed to public employment service (PES) offices where they can have access to this service.

In three countries (Hungary, Ireland and Romania), no services are provided for asylum seekers to prepare them for labour market integration.

Education for school-age children of asylum seekers

The arrangements surrounding school-age children of asylum seekers attending compulsory education in host countries could undoubtedly affect the employment of female asylum seekers primarily. Although legislation guarantees the access of school-age children to compulsory education in Member States, this research sought to reveal how this is implemented in practice with asylum seekers' children. Most countries (18) reported some sort of special arrangements, including all the key destination countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden) (Table 13).

10 Information on the Italian reception system is available from Accardo and Guido (2013), Barbieri et al (2016), Extraordinary Commission for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights (2016), Lanni (2016), Ministero Dell' Interno (2015) and VITA (2016).

Table 13: Special arrangements for education of asylum seekers' children

Country	Arrangements
Austria	Specific classes are provided in schools with a high number of asylum seekers' children (for example, in Vienna). The children are treated as special students for up to two years, meaning they are only graded in subjects in which they can perform (and not in those that they cannot follow due to their lack of German language skills). They may attend language support classes and may be taught in their native language (if available).
Belgium	Only in secondary education do children participate in specific reception classes.
Czech Republic	'Remedial classes' in residential centres or local schools are available, with the aim of helping with language difficulties and facilitating the children's subsequent attendance at regular classes. Attendance in remedial classes lasts 3–6 months.
Cyprus	Compulsory education for asylum seekers' children is provided in regular schools. They also attend the all-day school operating in the Kofinou area, which includes Greek language lessons for these children.
Denmark	Education is offered either at or in affiliation with the asylum centre. In terms of scope and content, the education corresponds to that offered to bilingual pupils in primary and lower secondary schools (folkeskole).
Finland	Education is arranged and financed by local governments, generally in regular schools. Children usually spend one year in preparatory education, learning about the language and culture of Finland, before entering regular classrooms and starting to learn the regular curriculum.
Germany	Despite a clear obligation under the law for children to attend school, in practice, schools are not sufficiently prepared for young migrants due to lack of resources – they have neither sufficient space nor teachers.
Hungary	A total of three kindergartens and four primary/secondary schools are available to receive the children of refugees and asylum seekers; these cooperate with reception centres. The law also stipulates access to pre-school kindergartens from the age of three years old. There is a lack of competent teachers with an appropriate educational background.
Luxembourg	Children start school within the first week of their arrival. 'Reception classes' are set up. Intercultural mediators are available to facilitate communication between parents and teachers, as well as training for teachers.
Latvia	Access to education for asylum seekers' children in regular schools and kindergartens is provided. Regulations envisage the introduction of a special adaptation programme in educational institutions.
Malta	Primary and secondary education is offered to asylum seekers up to the age of 15–16 years old. Children with particular needs are assigned a learning support assistant.
Netherlands	Schools are confronted with capacity problems and have complained that they have not received extra funds to cope with the large inflow and to provide the extra care these children need. Due to the massive influx, special schools have been opened and courses are sometimes also given in reception centres.
Norway	Compulsory schooling is available from day one. Primary education is the responsibility of the municipalities. Asylum seekers' children are usually enrolled at regular schools, but introductory classes are available for them; specific groups, classes or separate schools can also be organised for them.
Portugal	Even undocumented children have access with the same conditions as nationals. In March 2016, the Ministry of Education launched a Welcoming Guide aimed at preparing pre-school, primary and secondary education institutions for welcoming and integrating non-national students into the education system.
Slovakia	Schooling is provided in the asylum facility or in the surrounding municipalities. In the facilities, afterschool care is provided. In the reception centre of Humenné, daily language classes are available. After their arrival at a long-stay centre, children attend local primary schools.
Spain	Education is the exclusive responsibility of each autonomous community. Schools offer special services for immigrants in general to help children with language and cultural difficulties.
Sweden	Some schooling regulations are aimed specifically at newly arrived students.
UK	Access to compulsory education is provided in regular schools; asylum seekers' children have the same entitlement to state education as other children and may be eligible for free school meals.

Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

In some transit countries (for example, Bulgaria), it was reported that asylum seekers did not show much interest in school services because they wanted to leave the country as soon as possible.[11] In several countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Lithuania and Slovenia), access to education is provided after three months' stay, as required by legislation.

In Malta, according to the law, access to compulsory education may be postponed for up to three months from the date of submission of the asylum application. However, this can be extended to one year where special arrangements apply (that is, specific classes are provided to facilitate access to the education system). Children in detention centres, however, are not provided with any form of education.

Measures and services directly promoting labour market integration

This section is concerned with:

- the services provided by the PES for refugees and asylum seekers and capacity problems of these services;
- self-employment opportunities for refugees;
- incentives for employers to hire refugees and asylum seekers;
- new measures in response to the refugee crisis.

Services offered by PES

Some schemes that are usually provided by PES may be similar or the same as those delivered during the reception of asylum seekers. In Finland, for example, all the services listed in Table 14 aimed at asylum seekers are provided by reception centres and not by PES. However, it is worth focusing on PES schemes as they are directly related to labour market integration, and in those countries where both refugees and asylum seekers are targeted, a comparison can be made between the availability of services for both groups.

Although a wide range of services is available and the services on offer vary between countries, some common features can be identified (Table 14). They are summarised below.

Refugees: Provision of services within a broader programme

In some countries, employment services are offered as part of a broader programme. In Finland, for example, many of the services – such as language courses, guidance and counselling, and civic education – are provided within the framework of a 'personalised integration plan'. In Flanders, Belgium, language courses, orientation courses and civic education are delivered within a broader integration programme.

In Norway, the schemes for refugees listed in Table 14 are delivered mainly within the framework of an introduction programme, which is obligatory for those refugees who lack basic skills. It lasts up to two years full time and can be extended. The programme consists of Norwegian language training, social studies and measures that prepare participants for further education and access to working life. While the PES (NAV) is responsible for delivering crucial parts of the programme (that is, measures directly linked to labour market access), it is managed by municipalities. A recent White Paper on integration indicates that measures targeting labour market integration and job-related training are to become a bigger part of the introduction programme. Civic education is obligatory as part of the programme for refugees, but not for asylum seekers, although the government is proposing a legal obligation also for them.

Asylum seekers: Waiting period for some services

For some services for asylum seekers, a waiting period applies that is in line with the waiting time for labour market access in the given country (see Table 7).

In Belgium, vocational training and job-related training as well as measures falling into the category of 'Other' in Table 14 are available to asylum seekers only after four months.

In the Netherlands, a six-month waiting period applies for job mediation, job placement, and guidance and counselling.

In Germany, asylum seekers can access so-called 'integration measures' (subsidised employment) after three months.

Differences in services for refugees and asylum seekers

Funding of services for asylum seekers is often less well established than the funding of services for refugees, and access as well as rules for participation may also be different. For example, in Austria, language courses are funded by the federal states for refugees only. Although NGOs have stepped in in some places (Vienna and Vorarlberg, for instance), demand cannot be met.

In Norway, the participation of asylum seekers in language courses is voluntary (that is, there is no right or duty to attend). Guidance and counselling are not available for all asylum seekers. Civic education is compulsory for refugees but not for asylum seekers.

11 Source: interview with expert from the State Agency for Refugees

Regional diversity within countries

Provision of services varies according to region, to some extent, in Austria, mainly due to the reasons mentioned above. The funding of measures for asylum seekers is not as straightforward as for refugees, so in some states NGOs have to act to fulfil unmet needs. In addition, some specific courses are provided in one region but not in another. For example, orientation courses for asylum seekers are provided only in Vienna.

In Belgium, language and orientation courses as well as civic education are obligatory in Flanders but not as yet in Wallonia, although it makes these schemes available. In both regions, there are plans to extend the mandatory programmes.

In Norway, schemes for asylum seekers are not offered in all municipalities. This applies, for example, to civic education courses that last up to 50 hours in a language understood by the asylum seekers. Some programmes for refugees also vary between municipalities. For example, job mediation and job placement are not provided in a systematic way, and only some municipalities include these components as part of their introduction programme. The government urges all municipalities to participate and strengthen cooperation with the PES. Vocational training and job-related training (which also varies by municipality even for refugees) are not yet available for asylum seekers but will possibly be part of pilot projects at integration centres (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2016).

Services offered to asylum seekers likely to stay

In Germany and Austria, some services are offered only to asylum seekers who have a good prospect of staying in the country – these being people who came from a country that has not been declared a 'safe country'. In Germany, for instance, in 2016 these are Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Syria. Countries in this category are decided on an annual basis by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

In Germany, those services listed in Table 14 in the 'Asylum seekers' column are available only for those who are likely to stay. In Austria, there are plans to introduce publicly financed courses for this group.

Table 14: PES programmes for refugees and asylum seekers in the key destination countries

Services		Refugees	Asylum seekers
Language courses		Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Sweden[d]	Austria[e], Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway
Orientation courses		Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Norway	Austria[e], Belgium, Germany, Norway
Guidance, counselling		Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Netherlands[a], Norway	Austria[e], Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands[a], Norway
Civic education		Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway[b]	Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Norway
Job mediation, job placement		Austria, Belgium[a], Denmark, Finlanda, Germany, Netherlands[a], Norway[c]	Belgium, Netherlands[a]
Public work		Belgium, Germany[f]	Austria, Belgium, Norway[c]
Vocational training, job-related training		Austria, Belgium[a], Denmark, Finland[a]	Austria, Belgium[a]
Other	**Traineeship**	Denmark[e]	
	Programme for youth	Austria[e], Germany[e]	Austria[e], Germany[e]
	Internship	Germany, Sweden	Germany
	Assessment at the workplace	Germany	Germany
	Entrance qualification – internship for longer period[e]	Germany	Germany
	Subsidised employment	Germany (integration measures), Sweden (Step-in Jobs, New Start Jobs)	Germany (integration measures – after three months)
	Supplementary education	Sweden	
	Validation of skills	Sweden	

[a] *Mainstream measures are available;* [b] *obligatory;* [c] *not systematic;* [d] *provided by municipalities;* [e] *see explanation in the text;* [f] *planned*
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

A number of services are offered as mainstream programmes for unemployed job-seekers. For example, in the Netherlands, guidance and counselling as well as job mediation and job placement are available for both refugees and asylum seekers, although these services are not specifically designed for them. Similarly, job mediation and job placement, as well as vocational training and job-related training, are offered as part of mainstream programmes in Belgium. The job-related training is also a mainstream service in Finland.

Skills assessment is important, but it is not part of standard PES programmes – and in many cases is already conducted at the reception centres. In some countries, however, skills assessment is included in PES programmes. In Norway, for example, counselling for asylum seekers is provided as a supplement to skills assessment. In Germany, skills assessment forms part of a programme called Perspectives for Refugees (PerF); despite its name, PerF is also available for 'asylum seekers with a high probability of staying.' The programme has three phrases:

1. skills assessment and career guidance;
2. two weeks of a practical skills check at a workplace;
3. support by the public employment agency.

Over the three phases, applicants receive language training.

In Sweden, validation of work experience and competences is offered so that unemployed job-seekers can be matched to opportunities in the Swedish labour market.

Some countries have specific schemes for young refugees and asylum seekers. In Germany, PerjuF is a vocational training programme to support refugees and asylum seekers up to 25 years old who need help in finding their way to a vocational training position. Another scheme, initiated jointly by the PES (BA), the Ministry for Research and Education (BMBF) and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), began in April 2016 with the aim of guiding young asylum seekers into apprenticeships (*Wege in Ausbildung für Flüchtlinge*). The 'entrance qualification' is a standard measure that subsidises training for school leavers and the unemployed with problems accessing a job. Its duration is 6 or 12 months.

In Austria (in Vienna), a programme called Youth College is offered to young people who are no longer of school age (15–21 years old). This training programme, which consists of modules, can lead to either further education or occupational training.

In Denmark, refugees are offered a kind of traineeship as part of the new 'primary integration education' (*integrationsgrunduddannelse*, IGU) scheme. They receive a lower wage than the minimum wage in that job for a temporary period. The wage is lower because the job is part time, since they have to attend language courses at the same time. In terms of time, the work and the language course add up more or less a full-time job (between 32 and 37 hours a week).

Capacity problems at PES

Similar to accommodation services, PES were reported to suffer capacity problems. The most prominent challenges are listed below.

- A general lack of resources, including staff and sufficient budgets, was mentioned for Finland and Italy. Staff shortages, in particular, were indicated for Denmark.
- The increasing complexity of regulations was indicated in Sweden. For example, new regulations on the temporary residence permit have meant that more time is needed for this process, making it difficult to establish collaboration with municipalities.
- Recent budget cuts in Spain and the UK have led to difficulties when more financial resources were needed. This is a particular problem in Spain, where the consequences of the economic crisis are severe and mainly affect the labour market.

Problems in employment service institutions include a lack of translators in Germany and the low level of language skills of staff in Hungary.

Measures to support self-employment of refugees

In many countries, there are mainstream measures for which refugees can apply to support themselves in self-employment. In other countries, there are special initiatives for immigrants. However, there are only two such measures in place that specifically target refugees (Table 15). Although there are just a few countries where supporting the self-employment of refugees is planned or is seen as an issue, it indicates that this it is an important topic for the future.

Table 15: Existing and planned measures to support self-employment of immigrants, including refugees

Country	Details of regulations
Austria	Several programmes target self-employment or start-ups by migrants by providing consultation and coaching. The PES (AMS) also has a programme supporting unemployed people in setting up their own company, which includes unemployed refugees.
Denmark	Social partners in the tripartite agreement of March 2016 agreed to discuss how to facilitate self-employment for refugees.
Finland	Support for immigrants is given through the programme Promoting the Well-being of Micro-entrepreneurs through Networking. This aims to improve knowledge on occupational health and well-being among immigrant entrepreneurs and is partly funded by the European Social Fund.
France	The NGO SINGA has an **Entrepreneurs initiative** that offers training and support for refugees with entrepreneurial projects. It also organises sponsorship between companies and beneficiaries. For more details, see Martín et al (2016, Volume II).
Italy	There are no national policies, but the activity of CNA World is important. CNA World is the first employers' association targeted at and managed by foreign entrepreneurs and has 1,000 member companies. Its key objectives are to represent its members' interest, help in accessing credit for foreign companies, and provide training and information to the entrepreneurs themselves.
Lithuania	Within the framework of Action Plan for Labour Market Integration of Refugees (adopted in October 2015), there are plans to support 50 foreigners in 2016 in engaging in activities under business certificates.
Norway	Start-up funds exist, but they are mostly ad hoc. It is relatively common for municipalities to run preparatory courses aimed at immigrants who want to start a business.
Romania	According to the Action Plan of the National Immigration Strategy, a legal provision is envisaged for developing a measure supporting self-employment for refugees as a target group.
Spain	The **Protocol for Income Support** offers start-up support for refugees and asylum seekers. The financial support can be €10,000 for expenses, such as rent or social security contributions. Approval of a business plan is required.
Sweden	Support measures for start-ups, including activity support and development benefits, are provided over a maximum of six months. The measures are not directed only at refugees but also at other groups such as young people and people with disabilities.

Note: Measures that are in place and specifically target refugees are shown in bold.
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

Incentives for employers to hire refugees and asylum seekers

Some of the measures within this category come under the heading of active labour market policy measures offered by the PES; however, not all are delivered by the PES. In addition, this topic is often the subject of lengthy discussions by the social partners and so is considered here separately.

The incentives can take different forms in the countries listed in Table 16; these are as follows.

- A subsidy is paid directly to employers under the condition of employing an asylum seeker for a certain period of time. This is the case, for example, in Denmark, where employers receive a bonus of €2,000–2,700 after six months of employment, and again after 12 months. The amount of the bonus depends on the refugee's length of stay in the country (the shorter this is, the bigger the bonus).
- Employers are reimbursed. In Sweden, employers are entitled to reimbursement of the payroll tax if a refugee is employed under the New Start Jobs scheme.
- Employers may be exempted from non-wage labour costs (or some parts of these). In Finland, employers do not pay social security or health insurance contributions for asylum seekers. Other liabilities, such as pension contributions, apply after a specified number of working days or amount of income.

There are some preconditions for subsidies and not necessarily just for employment. In Norway, work experience and job placement should be part of the introduction programme. In Germany, a three-month long internship for career guidance purposes should be offered, with a six-week assessment in the workplace when the employer assesses the skills of the applicant, although they do not perform any paid work. In Slovenia, a subsidy is given to employers who employ a refugee for four months' training in the workplace.

Table 16: Incentives for employers to hire refugees and asylum seekers

Incentive	Refugees	Asylum seekers
Temporary exception for minimum wages	Denmark[b]	Germany[a]
Reduction in non-wage labour costs	Sweden[a]	Finland[a]
Wage subsidies offered to employers	Austria[e], Czech Republic[c], Denmark[a], Finland[c], Ireland[c], Latvia[c], Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands[d], Norway[a], Slovenia[a], Spain[c], Sweden	None

[a] *See details in the text;* [b] *traineeship under the IGU scheme;* [c] *mainstream measure, also applicable to other disadvantaged groups;* [d] *responsibility for the measures rests with municipalities and the measures are also offered to other groups;* [e] *or up to five months, 50% of wage costs and non-wage labour costs are paid by the PES (AMS).*
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

New measures for labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers

There have already been some efforts to set up an inventory of initiatives with the same focus as this research; see, for example, Martín et al (2016) or the European Commission's database of promising practices for the labour market integration and social inclusion of asylum seekers and refugees across EU Member States.[12] Table 17 presents an overview composed of examples of the following types of measures taken in response to the crisis.

- The measure is really new, that is, from the date and or its start date, it is clear that the measure could be regarded as a response to the crisis.
- The measure is not well-known from previous research or specific articles describing them – for example, a competency check in Austria (Eurofound, 2016b) or fast-track initiatives for integration in Sweden (Eurofound, 2016c).
- Even if part of mainstream measures, the measure is extended to refugees or asylum seekers or both in such a way that a specific focus on this group has been developed.
- The measure is directly related to labour market integration.

Table 17: Overview of new or planned measures for labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers

	Austria	Czech Republic	Denmark
Name	Chancen:reich (Chances:rich)	The new State Integration Programme (SIP)	Tripartite agreement on labour market integration
Target group	Refugees	Refugees	Refugees
Type of support	Job fair	Dedicated enhanced support for job-seekers – people granted asylum or subsidiary protection when entering the Czech labour market	Skills assessment tool
Brief content	A standalone measure. Companies introduced themselves to refugees, who could contact them. Included potential matchings. Talks and workshops were organised.	Increased support should be provided, particularly in the context of job placement, counselling and active employment policies. These measures form part of the SIP.	Refugees' skills are assessed as part of the tripartite agreement. A new national tool is being developed to do this. The tool takes in information from the screening conducted in asylum centres, and it is used to match people with available jobs.
Initiator	The NGO Chance Integration in cooperation with about 50 (large) companies and the Austrian Retail Association as well as AMS	Government	Government
Implementing authority	Not applicable	Ministry of the Interior	Government, municipalities and social partners

12 See http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1208&langId=en

	Austria	Czech Republic	Denmark
Name	Chancen:reich (Chances:rich)	The new State Integration Programme (SIP)	Tripartite agreement on labour market integration
Other actors involved	AMS Vienna, Vienna Business Agency (City of Vienna)	Ministry of Labour – database of the 'OK prace' information system on positions suitable for asylum seekers, Czech Labour Office – the Employment Services Administration, the Refugee Centres Administration of the Ministry of the Interior, charities, NGOs	Not applicable
Scale (if pilot, or local, regional, national)	National (the fair was held in Vienna)	Job-seekers from among those granted asylum or subsidiary protection in the country	National
Start date and duration	29 June 2016, one-day event	Start date 1 January 2016	From March 2016 onwards
Source of funding and cost	Not available	Public budget	Unclear

	Finland		Germany
Name	On-the-job learning agreement	Start-up Refugees	Preparatory course for vocational training
Target group	Refugees	Asylum seekers	Asylum seekers (recognised, too)
Type of support	On-the-job learning to attain a vocational qualification (refugees and immigrants are one of the target groups)	Help to connect job-seeking asylum seekers (not refugees, despite the name) with potential employers	Language training and guidance
Brief content	The measure would make possible unpaid on-the-job learning, which does not exist at present. It is part of the second cycle education reform, one of the 26 key projects of the government of Prime Minister Juha Sipilä.	It maps asylum seekers' language and other skills and connects job-seekers and employers. It is a standalone measure but connected to similar (private) initiatives, such as Recommend a Refugee and Zharity.	The chemical company Bayer in the city of Leverkusen runs courses providing language training and guidance, leading to a vocational training position in electronics or chemistry for asylum seekers at Bayer.
Initiator	Ministry of Education and Culture	Journalist entrepreneurs, Riku Rantala and Tuomas Milonoff	Bayer
Implementing authority	Ministry of Education and Culture	Start-up Refugees (private organisation, not authority)	Human resources department at Bayer
Other actors involved	None as yet. Social partners have offered their own model proposal.	Over 350 partners including Ministry of the Interior, the Immigration Service, PES and private companies – each contributes according to their resources and expertise.	Training school in Cologne provides language classes.
Scale (if pilot, or local, regional, national)	National initiative	National initiative Currently covers some 1,000 asylum seekers	Local 20 asylum seekers per course
Start date and duration	To be implemented in 2018	Launched autumn 2015 Duration according to need	Autumn 2016 Four months.
Source of funding and cost	The measure is expected to save public and private sector costs.	Donations by companies, foundations and individuals	Bayer

	Lithuania	Malta	The Netherlands
Name	Mini labour exchange	Immigration Work Office	Implementation Agreement on the Increased Inflow of Asylum Seekers
Target group	Refugees and asylum seekers	Refugees	Refugees
Type of support	Services provided include: information and consultation (individual or collective); provision of a list of relevant vacancies; and provision of information about available active labour market policy measures.	Job brokerage service for refugees and asylum seekers	Broad integration package. Measures are proposed concerning work and integration, education, health and care, housing and security.
Brief content	The mini labour exchange is a subdivision of the Lithuanian Labour Exchange and provides the same services as the ordinary PES; it differs only regarding its location.	This measure involves the setting up of an Immigration Work Office within two main Open Centres, with the aim of reducing irregular employment of migrants.	The government funds local municipalities for language courses and help finding jobs
Initiator	Lithuanian Labour Exchange	State authorities	Government and local municipalities
Implementing authority	Lithuanian Labour Exchange	Agency for the Welfare of Asylum Seekers	Local governments
Other actors involved	Refugee reception centre	The service will be operated by a public–private partnership; no further details are available as the service has not started operating yet.	Local government municipalities have a key directing role at local level and can involve other actors if necessary
Scale (if pilot, or local, regional, national)	In early May, 16 refugees and asylum seekers (including 4 who were transferred to Lithuania) were twice per week consulted on a permanent basis, at the mini labour exchange situated in Rukla.	National	Nationwide
Start date and duration	A mini labour exchange office was established at the refugee reception centre in the first quarter of 2016.	2016	Agreement: April 2016
Source of funding and cost	National budget	Not applicable	Government, €353 million for the 2015–2017 period.

	Norway	Slovenia
Name	From Reception Centre to the Labour Market (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2016)	Tripartite agreement on labour market integration
Target group	Asylum seekers	Refugees
Type of support	Early language training, civic education, skills assessment and qualification schemes	Training at the workplace and simultaneous learning of the Slovenian language
Brief content	Reception centres for newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers likely to be granted residency, with the aim of quicker labour market integration through the courses and schemes described above, adapted to the individual and on a full-time basis. A contract demanding participation from the resident must be kept to retain a place at the integration centre.	Basis: an ongoing pilot project 'Integration of beneficiaries of international protection'. Duration of the programme is six months, twice as long as usual duration of training at the workplace, due to the specific needs of the target groups. It is part of the ZRSZ integration programme.
Initiator	Government (Ministry of Justice and Public Security) as part of the White Paper on integration policy	ZRSZ

	Norway	Slovenia
Name	From Reception Centre to the Labour Market (Norwegian Ministry of Justice and Public Security, 2016)	Tripartite agreement on labour market integration
Implementing authority	Directorate of Integration and Diversity in close cooperation with the Directorate of Immigration and sectoral authorities	ZRSZ
Other actors involved	Job placement in cooperation with local businesses. Volunteer work and participation in activities on behalf of or hosted by non-profit organisations are encouraged.	Cooperation of ZRSZ counsellors, refugee counsellors appointed by the Ministry of the Interior and employers, selected by open tender.
Scale (if pilot, or local, regional, national)	Pilot initiative with 4–5 different integration centres in 2016, with a total capacity around 500. Likely to be expanded if successful.	It will include the active working population from the European scheme for relocation and resettlement of refugees from Italy and Greece. It is a mainstream national programme offered by ZRSZ adapted to the specific needs of refugees.
Start date and duration	Start in 2016 – to be evaluated	Planned from beginning of 2017
Source of funding and cost	Government funded; NOK 5.4 million (€598,000 as of 12 October 2016) allocated to pilot project in revised budget	Ministry for Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MDDSZ) from the public budget within the framework of the European schemes for relocation and resettlement of refugees from Greece and Italy

The examples outlined in Table 17 show a wide diversity ranging from a one-off measure such as the job fair in Austria to large nationwide initiatives such as the tripartite agreement on a skills assessment tool in Denmark. Among the examples, there is one pilot project (in Norway) and one in the planning phase (Finland).

Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway – all key destination countries – play a prominent role in offering such measures; see Martín et al (2016) for an inventory of measures in Austria, Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands. However, it is interesting that some new measures have been introduced (or are planned) in countries that are either not affected or only slightly affected by the crisis (the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Malta) or appear to not be a destination country (Slovenia). In Lithuania and Slovenia, there is a direct reference to the European relocation and resettlement schemes; for Slovenia, both the measures featured can be regarded as being in direct response to these schemes.

Among the specific aims of the measures outlined in Table 17, skills assessment is important as is job placement, training, job brokerage and labour exchange. In Finland, two actions – skills assessment and job placement – are combined.

This research sought to explore the role played by various authorities and institutions, including the social partners, in initiating, implementing and participating in some way in measures to promote labour market integration. Among the examples in Table 17, there are two measures where social partners are, or could be, involved. In Denmark, their role is obviously very prominent. In Finland, their model proposal may have an impact on the measure. Although social partners are not always considered important actors in the context of such measures, they may well voice their opinion on labour market integration – something which is often followed up by action. Their involvement is discussed in the next chapter.

5 Role and involvement of social partners in the integration process

This chapter examines the following topics in relation to the involvement of trade unions and employer organisations in integrating refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market:

- the position of the social partners on the issue;
- the level 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 where they were not).

The majority of trade unions and employer organisations in all the countries studied have a positive attitude towards the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. In some countries, however, no clear position has been taken by the social partners. This is the case in transit countries and in countries that are less affected or not affected by the influx of refugees and asylum seekers. Nuances in their position, their involvement and the level of related activities exist depending on:

- the stakeholders' affiliation (management or labour);
- the industrial relations system;
- country context.

The social partners have been involved in the design of labour market integration policies in nearly half of the EU Member States. Most of these countries are receiving countries, and in a majority, the role of social partners is institutionalised within a coordinated market economy.

The integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market plays a minor role in transit countries and in countries that are less affected or not affected by the influx of asylum seekers (see Table 1). Social partners are only involved to a limited degree in these countries as the topic is not a priority. In addition, in most of these countries the role of social partners is not institutionalised and their involvement in policy design is rather irregular.

Social partners' position on the issue

Trade unions represent labour and give voice to the rights and demands of the employee. Therefore, trade unions tend to focus on educating and empowering refugees and asylum seekers trying to access the labour market in a given country.

Employer organisations support and represent the interest of businesses and companies. For a company to be successful, it needs to maintain or increase its competitiveness. Therefore, employer organisations tend to emphasise the need for quick access to skilled labour, arguing that it is difficult to find the right skills in an increasingly ageing labour market.

Common statements issued by the social partners often stress that 'sustainable integration' and the 'quick integration' of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market is desirable. While 'sustainable integration' reflects the intention of the trade unions to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can live and work within a country and its society on a long-term basis, 'quick integration' reflects the intention of employers and their organisations to boost competitiveness by making use of the new resources most efficiently.

This is the case in Austria. A recent mutual position paper highlights the importance of access to both education and apprenticeship schemes and German language courses to ensure sustainable integration into the labour market. To speed up the process, the paper calls for asylum procedures to be completed within six months. In addition, the social partners demand non-restricted access by asylum seekers to the job market after six months of applying for asylum.

In Germany, one aspect of sustainable integration emphasises ensuring housing and language training as well as good public services. German employers promote the idea of obligatory language training to ensure faster integration, while also demanding faster deportation of those whose asylum request has been rejected.

In Cyprus, trade unions focus on ensuring refugees and asylum seekers are aware of their employment rights when working in the country. Both German and Cypriot employer organisations call for greater European cooperation and better distribution of refugees among the Member States. (In Germany, this is part of the general policy discourse). This call can be understood in light of Germany's status as one of the main receiving countries, while Cyprus, being situated in the Mediterranean, might be keen to prevent a situation where it has to deal with migrants stranded on the island and lacking support to manage it.

In Finland, a joint statement had a different focus in that the social partners called for tolerance, shared responsibility and mutual understanding.

In a number of countries, specific measures to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market have been accompanied by wider anti-discrimination and anti-racism campaigns supported by either the trade unions or both trade unions and employer organisations. In Germany, for instance, the reason for jointly promoting the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market is not only rooted in a shared understanding for an increased demand for skilled workers in a demographically challenging environment but also in a desire to minimise the influence of a growing euro-critical, right-wing populist party, Alternative für Deutschland.

In Estonia, trade unions promote non-discrimination campaigns and call for more labour inspections in order to prevent discrimination in workplaces. As Estonia is a country little affected by the influx of refugees and asylum seekers but has problems with the labour exploitation of migrants, the demand for greater inspections serves the purpose of preventing and tackling exploitation of migrants including refugees and asylum seekers.

In France and Ireland, trade unions are running campaigns against xenophobia and discrimination in the workplace and calling for equal treatment. In France, like in Germany, the campaign is born out of recent political developments. Following the Paris shootings, seven French trade union confederations – the General Confederation of Labour (CGT), the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT), the French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC), the French Confederation of Management – General Confederation of Professional and Managerial Staff (CFE-CGC), the National Federation of Independent Unions (UNSA), the Unitary Union Federation (FSU) and Solidaires – initiated a common awareness-raising campaign called Vivre Ensemble, Travailler Ensemble to reinvigorate values of solidarity and hospitality so as to lay the foundation for integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market and into society. Interestingly, in Lithuania, employers also call for a refugee integration strategy to prevent the spreading of populist messages and perceived threats by the influx of refugees and asylum seekers.

Particularly in Scandinavian countries, the social partners have expressed increased concern about the effects refugees and asylum seekers may have on wages. They are concerned about refugees and asylum seekers undercutting wages and minimum wages in particular. In Denmark, for instance, trade unions are worried about social dumping. This concern is shared by trade unions in Norway, which argue that asylum seekers should receive a work permit until they are granted asylum so as to avoid exploitation and social dumping. While the employers share most of the views of the trade unions, one point of difference is the issue of the minimum wage in Norway. Currently there is no national minimum wage in Norway, yet the employers promote minimum wages (and the exemption from extended collective agreements) to avoid exploitation and social dumping, while the trade unions fear the creation of a new underclass. In Sweden, the instrument of the national minimum wage to prevent social dumping also is a point of debate between the social partners. While the employers promote lowering entry-level wages below the minimum wage to create more jobs for refugees and to allow refugees to work before receiving residence to ensure quick integration, the trade unions oppose allowing refugees to work below the minimum wage. They promote sustainable integration via upskilling, recognition of skills, language classes and effective access to labour market services.

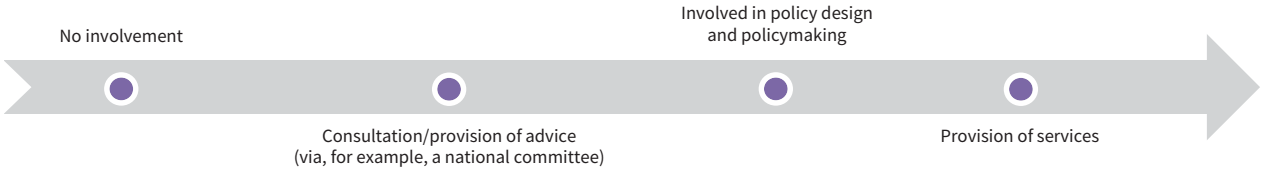
Bulgarian and Czech trade unions have not expressed a position on how to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. In the Czech Republic, for instance, a country less affected by the influx of refugees and asylum seekers, emphasis is placed on how to integrate Ukrainians into the labour market when they arrive in the country.

In France, Greece and Ireland, the employers have not taken an active position. The reason for this in Ireland is that the employers' body (IBEC) considers the number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving too small to have a position on it. Having said that, IBEC is liaising with the Migrants Rights Council of Ireland to remain involved in further discussions.

Level of involvement of social partners

Social partners vary from not being involved at all to providing advice and actively designing policy to providing services to refugees and asylum seekers (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Different levels of involvement of social partners in integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market



Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

Table 18: Level of involvement of social partners by country

Active involvement	No or limited involvement
Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Germany, Finland, Italy, Lithuania, Norway, Slovakia (employer organisations only), Spain, Sweden, UK	Cyprus, France, Greece, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania (trade unions only), Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia (trade unions only), Slovenia

Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

In over half the EU Member States, social partners are actively involved in integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market (Table 18). In the majority of these countries, their role in the political and economic system is institutionalised. The topic might also be considered as more pressing as most are receiving countries for refugees and asylum seekers.

In less than half of Member States, social partners have no or limited involvement in integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. This may be because the role of social partners in policy development in the majority of these countries is relatively irregular. In addition, the challenges posed by an influx of refugees and asylum seekers are less pressing as these countries are not as strongly affected as others.

Active involvement of social partners

The type of involvement by social partners differs from country to country and depends on the national political set-up and the degree to which the role of the social partners is institutionalised. If they are involved, tripartite or bipartite initiatives as well as activities by either trade unions or employer organisations are implemented.

Table 19: Type and focus of involvement of social partners

Country	Type of involvement	Thematic focus
Austria	Policymaking	Education and apprenticeships Quick access Information provision
Belgium	Policymaking	Quick access Support for self-employed
Croatia	Policymaking	
Denmark	Policymaking	Traineeship scheme (IGU)
Finland	Policymaking Provision of services	Apprenticeships Information provision Recruitment of refugees Running of reception centres
Germany	Consultation and advice	Education and apprenticeships Information provision
Norway	Policymaking	Information provision Education Recruitment of refugees
Italy	Policymaking	Quick access Support for self-employment Education Information provision
Spain	Consultation Provision of services	Education
Sweden	Policymaking	Quick access (fast-track initiative)

Note: The table is concerned only with those countries where the social partners are strongly involved in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers.
Source: *Responses to Eurofound questionnaire, 2016*

In countries such as Austria, Belgium, Germany, Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden (all key destination countries), the involvement of social partners is very strong (see Table 5). One explanation is that their involvement in the form of debate, consultation, development and implementation of policies is well established. The demand for important actors such as the social partners to be involved is high, as these countries deal with a relatively high inflow of refugees and asylum seekers. The thematic focus of the social partners is often rooted in the intention to create sustainable integration on one side (trade unions) and quick integration (employer organisations) on the other. This is shown by a focus on either – or often a combination of both – highlighting the importance of education and training and providing information on the labour market and related subjects, on one side, and the promotion of quick access, support in recruiting refugees and refugees' entrepreneurship on the other (see Table 19). An interesting debate on the issue of (minimum) wages, exemption from collective agreements and related subsidies for employers is ongoing in the Scandinavian countries.

In Austria, the social partners are very involved in policymaking. Based on a strong partnership, the social partners have exercised their influence and proposed several measures in relation to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The trade unions and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs were against allowing more liberal access to asylum seekers in the summer of 2015 but have since changed their position. The social partners now agree that all asylum seekers should have access to all sectors of the economy after having passed a labour market test conducted by the AMS. However, employer organisations would prefer to allow access to the labour market even without passing the test.

Two programmes promoted by the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) employer organisation have been implemented and successful: the mentoring programme for migrants (since 2008) and the pilot project on the supranational apprenticeship placements for young refugees (since 2015). The aim of the mentoring programme is to provide networks and information on labour-market-related issues to facilitate job searching in general, while the pilot project aims at reducing the lack of skilled employees in certain areas and increasing mobility of apprenticeship seekers within Austria. In 2015, the mentoring programme focused on refugees, while the pilot project was set up to target asylum seekers only. In addition to these two state-sponsored programmes, the Austrian Trade Union Federation (ÖGB) runs a contact point for undocumented workers, where people without a residential or work permit can seek advice in several languages.

The social partners in Belgium are also strongly involved in policymaking. These include the trade union confederations the Belgian General Federation of Labour (FGTB-ABVV) and the Central Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (CSC-ACV). The employer organisations involved are: in the Flemish region, the Flemish Economic Association (VOKA), the Association of Social Profit Enterprises (VERSO) and the Federation of Christian Employers and Managers (VKW); the Union of Self-Employed and Business Leaders (UMC) in Wallonia; and UMC's counterpart in Flanders, the Union of Independent Entrepreneurs (UNIZO). One of their main achievements to date is an agreement to facilitate earlier labour market access, with the waiting time being reduced from six to four months on their initiative. Both trade unions and employer organisations run initiatives and campaigns focusing on anti-discrimination and diversity management. In addition, employers are investigating how individual companies can better contribute to the care and shelter of refugees. They also provide training for asylum seekers who wish to become entrepreneurs.

The German social partners are very actively involved in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in a variety of ways. Together they formed the Alliance for Tolerance, Solidarity, Democracy and Constitutional State – Against Prejudice, Hatred and Violence to increase awareness and, in particular, to ensure the protection of basic rights. The German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB) has also set up a dedicated website providing information on labour rights in several languages. An association called Trade Unions Help has also been set up to assist young asylum seekers in accessing learning and training classes. In addition, the sector trade union IG Metall proposed in early 2016 an 'integration year' for asylum seekers consisting of language classes, training and work experience. The United Services Union (ver.di) has designed a pilot scheme that calls on employees within companies to inform their works council of available jobs, internships or apprenticeship opportunities that might provide work opportunities for asylum seekers. The federal government, together with the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (ZDH), is committed to enrolling 10,000 refugees in apprenticeship schemes over the next two years. To facilitate this, a programme is offering language courses, internships and other opportunities to prepare young refugees for apprenticeships.

In Denmark, a tripartite agreement adopted in early 2016 constitutes the cornerstone of the labour market integration of refugees. The integration of refugees into the labour market is considered as key and a driver for integrating them into Danish society. An important component is the IGU scheme, a paid traineeship during which refugees learn the language, are trained and work on the job. IGU can last up to two years, and its successful completion is marked by a diploma. In its main components, IGU is similar to IG Metall's

integration year. To make the IGU scheme work, employers need to be willing to give asylum seekers an opportunity to learn and train. This is the case in Denmark, and a precondition for similar programmes in other countries to be successful.

Integrating refugees into the labour market via workplace schemes is also an important area of activity in Finland. As in Denmark, employer organisations are committed to offering opportunities to refugees and encourage their members to hire refugees. To facilitate the recruitment of refugees, employer organisations provide information on relevant legal regulations important to an employer. Most models build on the combination of language courses, training and work experience as in Denmark and Germany. In contrast to Denmark, where the refugees must receive a wage similar to the sectoral standards, no wages have to be paid in Finland. This is because no employment relationship is established under the new apprenticeship model targeting young immigrants. This is a contested issue as the trade unions argue that the same terms and conditions of work should apply to refugees and asylum seekers and other employees. As the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK) is opposed to the introduction of cheap labour, the fair labour market integration of immigrants is a priority.

Based on the strong involvement in labour market integration measures for refugees and asylum seekers, the social partners in Norway successfully set up an ad-hoc working group to discuss the detailed implementation of a fast-track procedure for those who are granted residence and already possess skills and language capabilities. A point of difference between the social partners, comparable with Finland, is the issue of paying wages and exemption from collective agreements. There is no national minimum wage in Norway, and the social partners agreed in the past that there should not be one. However, one of the employer organisations has brought the possible introduction of a minimum wage back on the agenda. While it sees this as a way of facilitating the employment of refugees and asylum seekers, the trade unions are concerned that the introduction of a minimum wage (and possible exemptions from collective agreements) would create a new underclass. In addition, municipalities are encouraged to cooperate with the social partners in implementing the fast-track procedure. The labour movement's humanitarian solidarity organisation, Norwegian People's Aid, is involved as a service provider too. It runs reception centres for refugees and immigrants in general, providing language classes, social and cultural activities, the teaching of various skills and work experience opportunities.

A fast-track initiative has also been adopted in Sweden, although it is not a general fast-track procedure as it applies only to professions in demand. A contested point, as in the other Scandinavian countries, is the lowering (in particular) of entry-level wages. Minimum wages in Sweden exist and are set through collective agreements.

In Bulgaria, the social partners are involved via ministerial working groups and tripartite bodies such as the Economic and Social Council or the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation. However, no concrete initiatives and examples of involvement have been identified. In Lithuania, only the employers seem to be contributing to policy development aimed at the integration of refugees and asylum seekers and only to a limited degree.

In Italy, social partners are also involved in policymaking, and one focus, as in many other countries, is that refugees and asylum seekers learn to speak the national language. A number of national collective bargaining agreements in the construction, industry, stone, chemical and pharmaceutical sectors therefore stress the importance of training and education in companies with foreign workers. In addition, the trade unions offer information and advice services.

In Spain, the social partners are consulted on matters in relation to the labour market but are not actively involved in policy design. Three large trade unions have joined one of the main Spanish NGOs that actively supports refugees, the Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid (CEAR). The Ariadna Network is one of the main projects in Spain dealing with the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The network has signed bilateral agreements with companies to organise unpaid work placements to offer opportunities to gain professional skills and certificates for the beneficiaries. Trade unions at the regional and local levels complement the support offered to refugees and asylum seekers. For instance, the Association for the Mutual Help of Immigrants in Catalonia (AMIC-UGT), which is linked to the General Workers' Union (UGT), offers support for immigrants and refugees on job searching, training, career guidance and so on. It also offers a specialised service for the validation or certification of qualifications, a process which is long and arduous in Spain.[13]

Overall, in countries where the social partners are involved in policy design for the purpose of integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market, the initiatives are either tripartite or driven by one of the social partners (often the trade unions).

13 Source: Spanish case study in Martín et al (2016, Volume II) and informative leaflet by AMIC-UGT

In countries where initiatives have been developed and implemented, they are often based on a combination of ensuring sustainable integration through training and the provision of information, on one side, and on speeding up integration through fast-track initiatives or the promotion of entrepreneurship, on the other. Apprenticeship schemes and the willingness of employers to train refugees and asylum seekers play an important role in integrating young refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market.

In relation to employment and on-the-job training, the Scandinavian countries have developed or continue to discuss the different approaches to unpaid schemes and paid schemes, reintroducing the debate over minimum wages.

From the examples provided, it can be seen that the different approaches concentrate on very similar topics yet their specific interpretation and implementation might vary.

Reasons for lack of involvement

In slightly less than half of EU Member States, social partners are not or only to a limited degree involved in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. There are a variety of reasons for this.

In France, for example, the social partners are involved in the design of general employment policies but not in measures targeted at integrating refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. The trade union confederation the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (CFDT) argues that the number of people seeking refuge and asylum in France is not substantial enough to engage in awareness-raising campaigns, particularly in the otherwise challenging and tense social context in France.

In Latvia and Lithuania, the social partners too believe that the inflow is not big enough to engage in specific initiatives. In addition, the Latvian trade unions argue that refugees and asylum seekers are not members of their organisations and therefore not a priority. In Slovakia, the trade unions also claim that the number of people arriving to seek refuge and asylum is not big enough to be involved in any activities (see country grouping based on this criterion in Table 1).

The limited involvement of the social partners in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands is for other reasons, not because the inflow is small. One reason is that the barriers to refugees entering the labour market are relatively high. Another important reason is that local governments bear the main responsibility for integrating refugees into the labour market and society. The social partners, especially the trade unions, are relatively weak at the local level, which constrains strong involvement. In Slovakia, trade unions state that they are not getting involved as it is the responsibility of public authorities and NGOs to integrate refugees and asylum seekers.

In Slovenia, the social partners are not involved in a systematic way. For example, the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers has not been discussed at the Economic and Social Council, of which the social partners are members; the employer organisations proposed including the topic, but the idea was not picked up. In addition to the lack of discussion in the Economic and Social Council, the government has not invited the social partners to participate in any measures, and no financial resources have been made available. The social partners have also struggled to agree and engage in joint actions.

In Portugal, the social partners are part of the Council for Migration, but no concrete actions have been defined by the Council.

In Ireland, the trade unions have offered to be involved in local initiatives through their network of centres, which could provide support, resources and a range of services. The government has not so far followed up on this offer.

In contrast to countries like Ireland and Slovenia, where the social partners suggested that the topic was relevant and offered their involvement, the social partners in Malta chose not to take up the government's invitation to comment on the National Migrant Integration Strategy 2015–2020 as they consider that integration is not one of their core activities.

In sum, the three main reasons for social partners not being involved or being involved only to a limited extent in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market are as follows.

- The number of people seeking refuge and asylum is relatively low in a given country.
- Barriers exist that prevent social partners from becoming involved to a greater extent, such as substantial obstacles to refugees and asylum seekers accessing the labour market and the lack of capacity of and (official public) responsibility for the social partners.
- Proposals by social partners to include the topic for discussion are not acted on by the government.

6 Conclusions and policy pointers

This report examines the approaches EU Member States and Norway have adopted to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers as a response to the refugee crisis that began in 2015.

Conclusions

There is broad consensus, both within Member States and at EU level, that providing quick access to the labour market of the host country is part of the solution to the refugee crisis. However, there are a number of challenges faced by all the actors involved – central and local governments, social service providers, NGOs and social partners. The reasons for these challenges are the scale of the influx (1.3 million people) and the short period of time in which it happened (from the summer of 2015 up to March 2016). The developments since the summer of 2015 have left even Sweden struggling – a country that had traditionally received the highest number of refugees and so had accumulated ample experience in handling their needs.

The root causes of the refugee crisis (violent conflicts, war and poverty in the countries of origin) have not been eliminated, and therefore, despite the lower numbers arriving at the time of writing, this situation could change again very quickly. Much effort has been made, primarily in the key destination countries, to achieve accelerated and effective labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. These efforts need to continue, and it is important to examine the experiences gained so far. This includes looking at lessons learned and the main challenges, as well as the promising practices that have emerged.

One of the aims of this study was to provide an update on the most recent changes to legislation and procedures concerning asylum seekers and refugees. In many countries, the average duration of the asylum procedure has increased, in some cases quite substantially. In order to incorporate asylum seekers into the labour market, some countries have, however, introduced an accelerated procedure for many groups of asylum seekers, or provided quicker and easier access to the labour market during the asylum process. For example, waiting times for labour market access for asylum seekers have been reduced in most countries.

Several recent changes, however, are a source of concern. In many countries, even if asylum seekers have been granted asylum, it is temporary. From a labour market integration perspective, this can have a harmful effect. Not only does it place an additional administrative burden on asylum authorities, but a previous study confirmed that provision of temporary asylum can weaken refugees' position in the labour market since it may deter employers from hiring such workers or offering them longer-term contracts (European Commission, 2016a). Under such circumstances, employers will be reluctant to invest in costly and long-term training. However, this kind of investment is necessary if a career path is to be offered and sustainable integration is to be achieved. In addition, several countries have recently reduced the services and allowances provided to asylum seekers or refugees or both. Although there are some arguments that this could increase the motivation to work, it could also further impede labour market integration since it affects their living conditions (see the comments on accommodation in reception centres below).

Delays in the asylum procedure underline the importance of addressing labour market integration during the asylum process more effectively. Although many services are available for both refugees and asylum seekers, the following key challenges remain.

- The often inadequate living conditions in reception centres make it difficult to prepare for joining the labour market. Overcrowding and poor conditions are reported, as well as a lack of capacity to accommodate new arrivals. There are problems with the availability of externally provided services (that is, those from outside reception centres) such as healthcare and education. In addition, coordination with these services poses a challenge.
- Although the regional and geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers is planned, in most cases, proximity of jobs cannot be considered as a factor due to housing shortages.
- The funding of employment services for asylum seekers is often less well established than that for refugees. Access and the rules for participation are not as straightforward either. For example, language and other courses supporting integration are usually not compulsory for asylum seekers, or not available for them at all.
- Social security entitlements for working asylum seekers, in particular eligibility conditions for unemployment benefit, vary across countries; sometimes the related rules are less favourable than those for other migrants groups (including refugees). Hence, asylum seekers may not be eligible for unemployment benefit at all, and these poorer conditions may impede their motivation to find work.

- For asylum seekers, opportunities for self-employment are very limited, mainly due to the uncertainty of their status.
- In several countries, measures to support the self-employment of refugees are either mainstream initiatives or targeted at immigrants in general; this means the specific needs of refugees cannot be taken into account.
- Employers are only sporadically given incentives to employ asylum seekers; the use of wage subsidies as a tool is currently entirely absent.
- Although the school-age children of asylum seekers are entitled to attend compulsory education in all Member States, special arrangements for these children are not always guaranteed. Some countries reported capacity problems, saying that schools are ill-prepared to receive this specific group of pupils.

It is also apparent that private agencies (intermediary agencies, temporary work agencies and so on) have little involvement in delivering employment services for refugees and asylum seekers.

The final part of the investigation explored the role of the social partners in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The social partners play an active role in most of the key destination countries, and when they are involved in policymaking or consultation and advice, they focus on important topics such as:

- education and apprenticeships;
- swift access to the labour market;
- recruitment of refugees;
- training positions.

In terms of their general approach, joint statements by the social partners often stress the desirability of the sustainable integration and fast integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market. While trade unions tend to place greater emphasis on advocating sustainable integration, to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers can live and work within a country and its society on a long-term basis, fast integration reflects the interest of employers and employer organisations in boosting their competitiveness by availing themselves of the new resources most efficiently.

The study identified some positive examples of cooperation between social partners. These ranged from creating important framework conditions at national level for integrating refugees into work (Denmark), through initiating fast-track integration (Sweden) and achieving a reduction in the waiting time for labour market access for asylum seekers (Belgium), to proposals for apprenticeship schemes, and providing information and guidance for employers on the employment of asylum seekers.

In addition, the social partners can play an important role in alerting governments to the possible adverse consequences of certain measures. This is shown by the example of the social partners in Sweden, who criticised the government for introducing temporary residence permits, arguing that this would favour short-term labour market solutions, lacking sustainability.

Policy pointers

The following policy pointers emerged from the analysis conducted in this study.

- Employment considerations are important when deciding the geographical distribution of refugees and asylum seekers within a country. But where there is a shortage or lack of housing, it is often not possible to pay sufficient attention to labour market integration. Therefore, when new housing opportunities are explored, the availability of jobs should be taken into account.
- The process of labour market integration should be seen within the context of providing adequate social services in reception centres. Specific education for asylum seekers' children, support for families and provision of healthcare services could be crucial for asylum seekers' integration into the labour market.
- Employment services should be extended during the asylum procedure for those asylum seekers who are likely to stay.
- The mainstream measures that many countries employ in their approach to refugees and asylum seekers generally prove to be insufficient. Specific, targeted measures are needed, including language training, specific on-the-job training, and mentoring by migrants already settled in the host country. The measures should also focus on the untapped potential for self-employment among both refugees and asylum seekers.
- There is a need to find the right balance between fast and 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 to involve private labour market intermediaries or temporary work agencies in offering employment services (possibly in cooperation with PES) should be explored.
- The proposals, actions and plans of the social partners have proven to be useful. Their potential in helping to implement labour market integration policies and measures seems to be untapped in many countries. Their experience in the field should be better utilised.

- At EU level, cross-country exchange of experiences of new and innovative labour market integration measures could be a valuable learning tool – the available EU-level platforms have the capacity to make a difference in this regard.
- Suggestions of the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals for monitoring and evaluating the integration measures have to be considered.

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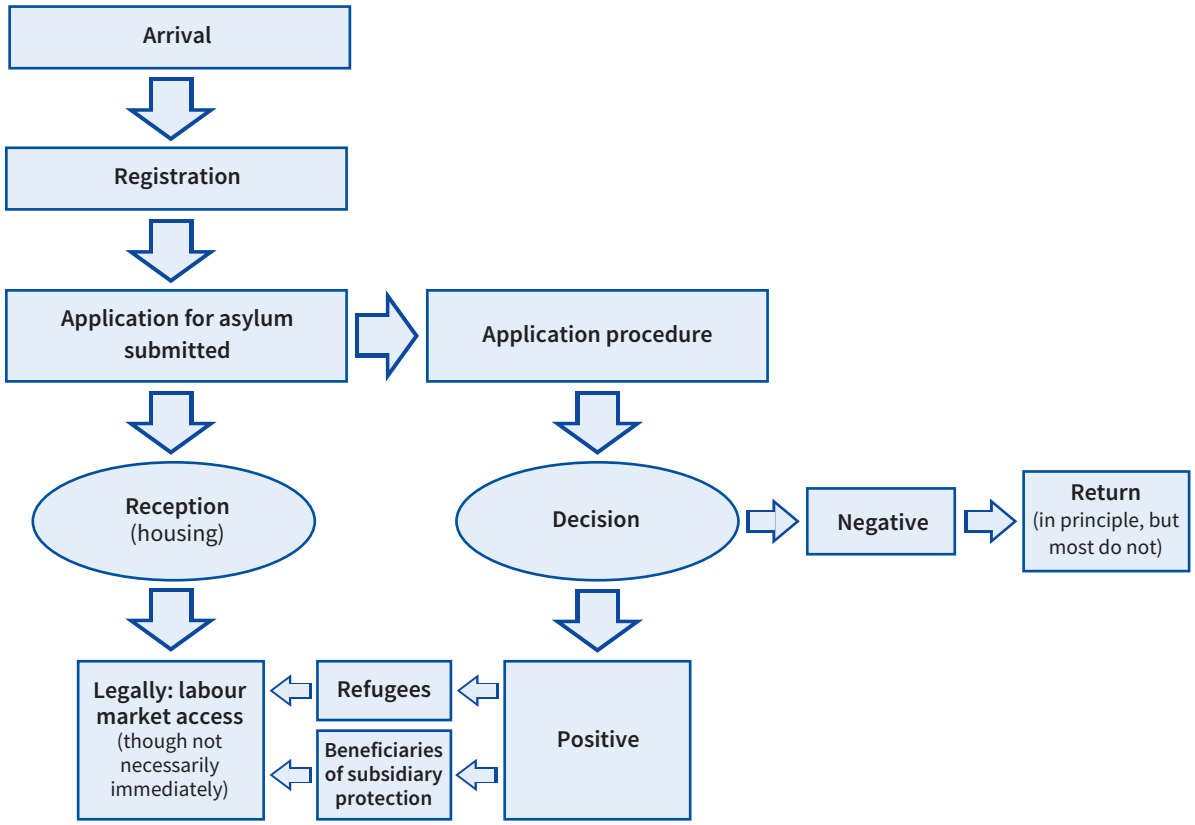
Annex 1 Flow chart of the asylum process

Figure A1: From arrival in the EU to being granted refugee status



Note: Here the term 'refugee' is understood in a broad sense: beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are also included.
Source: *Authors' own elaboration based on OECD (2016)*

Annex 2 Eurofound questionnaire 2016

Introduction

The study focuses on refugees and asylum seekers. The distinction between the two groups is important since legislation is completely different for each of the categories. Whereas refugees fall under the category of 'beneficiaries of international protection', asylum seekers do not.

1. **Beneficiaries of international protection or 'humanitarian migrants'** [14]
   - **Refugees**: a refugee is someone who has been granted international protection 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country'.[15]
   - **Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection**: they do not qualify as refugees, but also in their case 'substantial grounds exist that the person concerned, if returned to their country of origin, would face a real risk of suffering serious harm as defined in the EU Qualification Directive'.[16]
2. **Asylum seeker:** a person, who applied for international protection (refugee status, or recognised as a beneficiary of subsidiary protection), but whose status is still pending.

An important topic of the study is the legal framework in each Member State. Here the focus is on asylum seekers. Whereas beneficiaries of international protection are part of the mainstream social system (there are no administrative barriers for their employment so they are entitled to general social assistance, income support, and so on just as nationals), this is not the case with asylum seekers.

From the point of view of systems, practices and measures for labour market integration, facilitating a more stable employment for refugees is also crucial. Therefore, in the second section of part three (questions 12–17) and part four, the policies for them are also to be explored.

Those minor legal differences which exist in the treatment of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are not particularly relevant from the point of view of labour market integration (the focus of this study). Therefore, the study will not differentiate between them and will use the term 'refugees' only.

Please note that the word count given for each part is indicative. Some of the parts contain questions which may not be equally relevant to all the countries. Therefore, please focus on those questions, which reveal most the specific features of your country and recent developments.

14 This is the term used in the most recent study by the OECD (OECD, 2016).

15 Definition of the term 'refugee', Article 1, UN Convention (Chapter I: General Provisions), p. 14

16 *Asylum in the EU: Facts and figures*, European Parliamentary Research Service, 2015, p. 1.

PART ONE

SETTING THE SCENE: POLICY DISCOURSE (Reply: max. 400 words)

1. **Please identify the key issues in the current political debate in relation to asylum seekers and the refugee crisis in your country.**

   Key issues – examples: *returning many of the asylum seekers on the ground that reception capacity is limited, by declaring more countries as safe ones – Sweden; limiting the inflow by adopting discouraging measures, such as border controls, introducing longer period for family reunification for refugees, as is stipulated by a recently adopted law in Denmark; keeping them out – Hungary*.

2. **Is labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees important in the current political debate in your country?**

Yes/No	**Why? Please elaborate on this even if the answer is no.** (Reasons, arguments)

PART TWO

CHANGES IN LEGAL FRAMEWORK: AN UPDATE FOR THIS YEAR – AMENDMENTS IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION SINCE JANUARY 2016, OR PENDING LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES ON RECEPTION AND LABOUR MARKET ACCESS OF ASYLUM SEEKERS (Reply: max. 600 words)

3. **Is there any general change in legislation on asylum seekers as a direct response to the crisis?**
   - Yes/no
   - If yes, what are those changes?

4. **Waiting period for labour market access: Has there been any change in it since January 2016?**

   Please have a look at Table 2 in the enclosed document (Word file) and check data/information on your country in the second column 'Waiting period from filing asylum claim'.

SOME GENERAL LEGAL PROVISIONS CONCERNING ASYLUM SEEKERS

5. **Are there any legal provisions allowing asylum seekers to be engaged in self–employment?**
   - Yes/no
   - If yes, is there any restriction as regards type of self-employment?

6. **If an asylum seeker works, is s/he entitled to social security benefits such as unemployment benefits or healthcare – provided the relevant conditions are met?**
   - Yes/no
   - If no, what are those rules (legal bases) under which they are not entitled to these (contributory) benefits/services?
   - If yes, please specify which are those services/benefits they are entitled to (for example, full access to healthcare services, or other work-related contributory benefits – social security provisions).

PART THREE

SYSTEMS AND PRACTICES: FACTORS FACILITATING OR HINDERING LABOUR MARKET ACCESS (Reply: max. 800 words)

7. **When assigning accommodation, is labour market integration a factor?**

   In this question, we want to know about housing conditions (provided for example, in the reception centres). It is to explore other conditions than those linked to geographical proximity – addressed in the next question. Do they meet those requirements which make labour market integration possible (e.g. decent living conditions, families can stay together, those who are traumatised could have access to mental health services, etc.)?
   - Yes/no
   - Please elaborate

8. Geographical obstacles to or facilitating factors for labour market access for asylum seekers

Is distance of reception centres from jobs a general problem?		Are there constraints on mobility of asylum seekers within the country? (For example, they cannot stay in individually arranged housing, or they lose entitlements then)*		Is proximity of jobs considered when housing is allocated?**	
Yes/No	If yes, please provide details (average distance, lack of availability of public transport) If not a general problem but occurs, please give some examples	Yes/No	If yes, please provide details (possible reason for change; changes in dispersion criteria).	Yes/No	If yes, please provide details

**Please find information on your own country (only on OECD-members) in the last column of Table 3a on pp. 25-26) and update those if necessary.*
***For example, in Sweden asylum seekers can apply for housing allowance, if the period of employment is longer than 3 months and if they have to move to town, where the Swedish Migration Agency cannot offer housing.*

9. Are there any services/measures in place during reception, which specifically aim at labour market integration?

Services/measures in preparation for labour market integration of asylum seekers

Language training		Skills assessment		Help in recognition of qualification		Other (please specify)***	
Yes/No	If yes: eligibility conditions*	Yes/No	If yes: further steps**	Yes/No	If yes: further steps**	Yes/No	If yes, specify

**For example, it has been decided that the application will be processed in that country, and/or duration of stay so far, and/or assessed as likely to stay, highly skilled, etc.*
***For example, help in job search and/or enrolment in further, more specific training, or more intensive, occupation-specific language training*
**** For example, civic, or cultural orientation course, or access to mental health services/counselling*

10. Is compulsory education (in most countries for ages 6-16) available for asylum seekers' children?

- Yes/no
- If yes, how is it provided (in regular schools, specific schools, reception centres)?

11. Please check data on the average duration of asylum procedure (decision in first instance) in your country *in the last column of the enclosed Table 1 (excel file), entitled: 'Integration support for asylum seekers in EU Member States plus Norway (2015, or latest available year)'* – **Do you have updated data on this?**

- Yes/no
- If yes, please provide the most recently updated data

12. Access to employment and other services related to labour market integration Services, offered by the public employment services (PES) for refugees and asylum seekers.

Please provide a brief description of a few words on each service (for example, duration, content, etc.)

Services	Refugees	Asylum seekers
Language courses		
Orientation courses		
Guidance, counselling		
Civic education		
Job mediation, job placement		
Public work		
Vocational training, job-related training		
Other (please specify, e.g. traineeship)		

13. **Are private agencies (for example intermediary agencies/temporary work agencies) involved in planning/delivering any of the services offered by state agencies?**
    - Yes/No
    - If yes, how are they involved:
      - Planning – is it institutionalised? Please provide details.
      - Service delivery – in what way? (Some of the services are contracted out to them?)
      - Reasons for their involvement – e.g. limited capacity of state agencies

14. **What problems do the main types of service providers have? (For example, issues related to their limited capacity)**

	Reception centres	Employment services (PES)	Other (e.g. private service providers)
Problem (e.g. staff shortages , lack of expertise, budget constraints and other)			
Plans to overcome the reported problem			
Source of information (reference)			

15. **Are there any measures to support self-employment for refugees?**
    - Yes/no
    - If yes, please provide details *(e.g. access to credit, lower administrative burden on start-ups, start-up funds for immigrant entrepreneurs, etc.)*
    - Has there been any recent proposal/plan on this? If yes, which organisations advocate/suggest for self-employment?

16. **What incentives are there for employers to employ refugees and/or asylum seekers?**

Incentives	Refugees	Comments (details)	Asylum seekers	Comments (details)
Temporary exemption for minimum wages				
Reduction of non-wage labour costs				
Wage subsidies offered for employers				

17. **New measures for labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers**

Please identify up to two measures which illustrate a response to the refugee crisis, including possibly some measures initiated by private companies.

	Refugees	Asylum seekers
Name of measure)		
Type of support offered (for example mentoring, coaching, job mediation, etc.)		
Brief description including whether it is a standalone measure or part of a larger programme/policy framework		
Initiator of the measure		
Implementing authority		
Other actors involved and their role		
Scale of the measure – number of beneficiaries (if local, regional, national, and if it is a pilot initiative)		
Start date and duration		
Source of funding and cost		
Source of information		

PART FOUR

INVOLVEMENT OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS

(Reply: max. 700 words)

18. **What is the social partners' position on coping with the challenges of the refugee crisis?**

    Please document on stated positions of the national federations of employers or trade unions (about their priorities, upcoming challenges and future opportunities).

19. **Are the social partners involved in any way in the general design of labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers at national and/or regional /local level?**
    - Yes/no
    - If yes:
      - How and to what extent?
      - Is there any institutional arrangement for their involvement?
      - What have been the changes in their involvement if any, since January 2016?
      - Which social partners were involved? (For example, national federations, associations of certain professions/occupations, chambers of commerce, etc.)
      - Has there been any major change in the labour market integration policy of refugees and asylum seekers, which was initially proposed by the social partners? If yes, which were these changes?

20. **Please document on those initiatives, where the social partners cooperated** *(for example, collective agreements between trade unions and employers where the issue of labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers was also addressed; their joint initiatives/proposal how to facilitate their labour market integration, etc.)*

21. **Please describe examples when either employer organisations, or trade unions were involved in integration of asylum seekers and refugees**
    - For example, when employers initiated some measures and became implemented
    - Initiatives by trade unions

      (For example, awareness-raising campaigns on labour rights, launched by trade unions)

22. **If the social partners have not set up any initiatives, what is the reason for that?**

    (For example, because they see no need for it, due to lack of resources, do not wish to become active for any reasons)

PLEASE LIST SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND EXPERTS/RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS CONTACTED

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This report expands on existing research on the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers as a response to the refugee crisis. It updates information on legislation and practical arrangements in the first half of 2016, examines labour market integration in the broader context of receiving asylum seekers and supporting both them and refugees, and explores the role of the social partners. The study finds that the main countries affected made many efforts to provide faster and easier access to their labour markets for asylum seekers. In some, the social partners have been active in designing more effective labour market integration policies and have launched some promising initiatives. The sudden and large inflow of asylum seekers, however, posed many challenges, and it remains to be seen how those obstacles can be overcome.

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