Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

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Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

- 22.5 million refugees worldwide, over half under 18 years old (UNCHR, 2018)
- Refugees' integration in the host society - high on the international agenda

- Refugees' social integration - *Sustainable Development Goal 16*
  - "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels"
    - Target 16.10 - "Ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements"

Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

• Refugee - someone who has “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 or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Geneva Convention, 1951)

• Asylum seekers - people who have left their country of origin, have sought international protection, have applied to be recognized as a refugee and are waiting a decision from the host government (UNHCR, 2016, p.4)

https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/unicef-calls-better-protection-children-under-revised-eu-asylum-rules

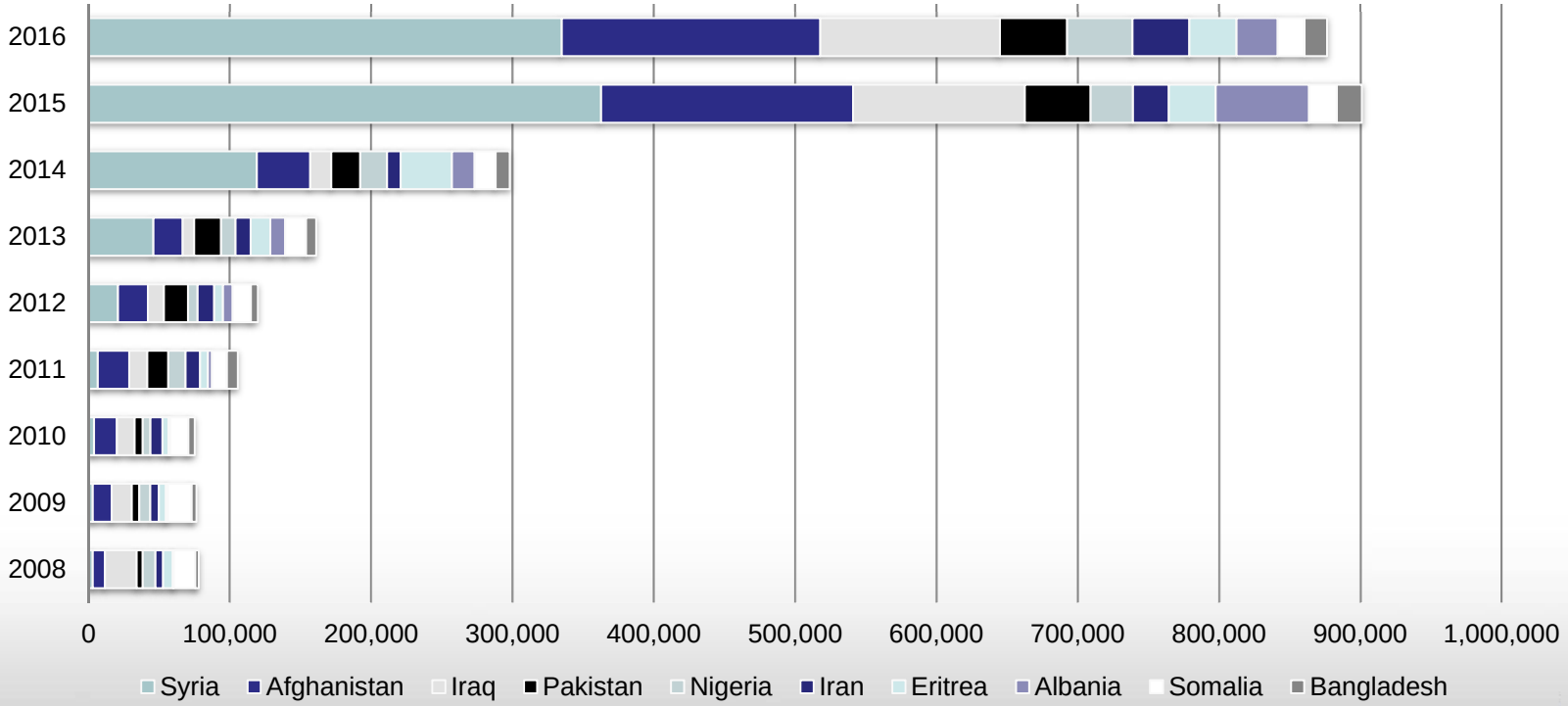
Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

- Berry's (1997) conceptual framework of immigrants' acculturation to the host society
  - assimilation - no wish to maintain their cultural identity and seek daily interaction with other cultures
  - separation - hold on to their original culture and wish to avoid interaction with others
  - marginalization - little cultural maintenance or having relationships with others
  - integration - maintaining of one's original culture while engaging in daily interactions with other groups

- Integration - a two-way process and can only be successfully pursued by migrants when the host society is open and inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity (Berry, 1997)

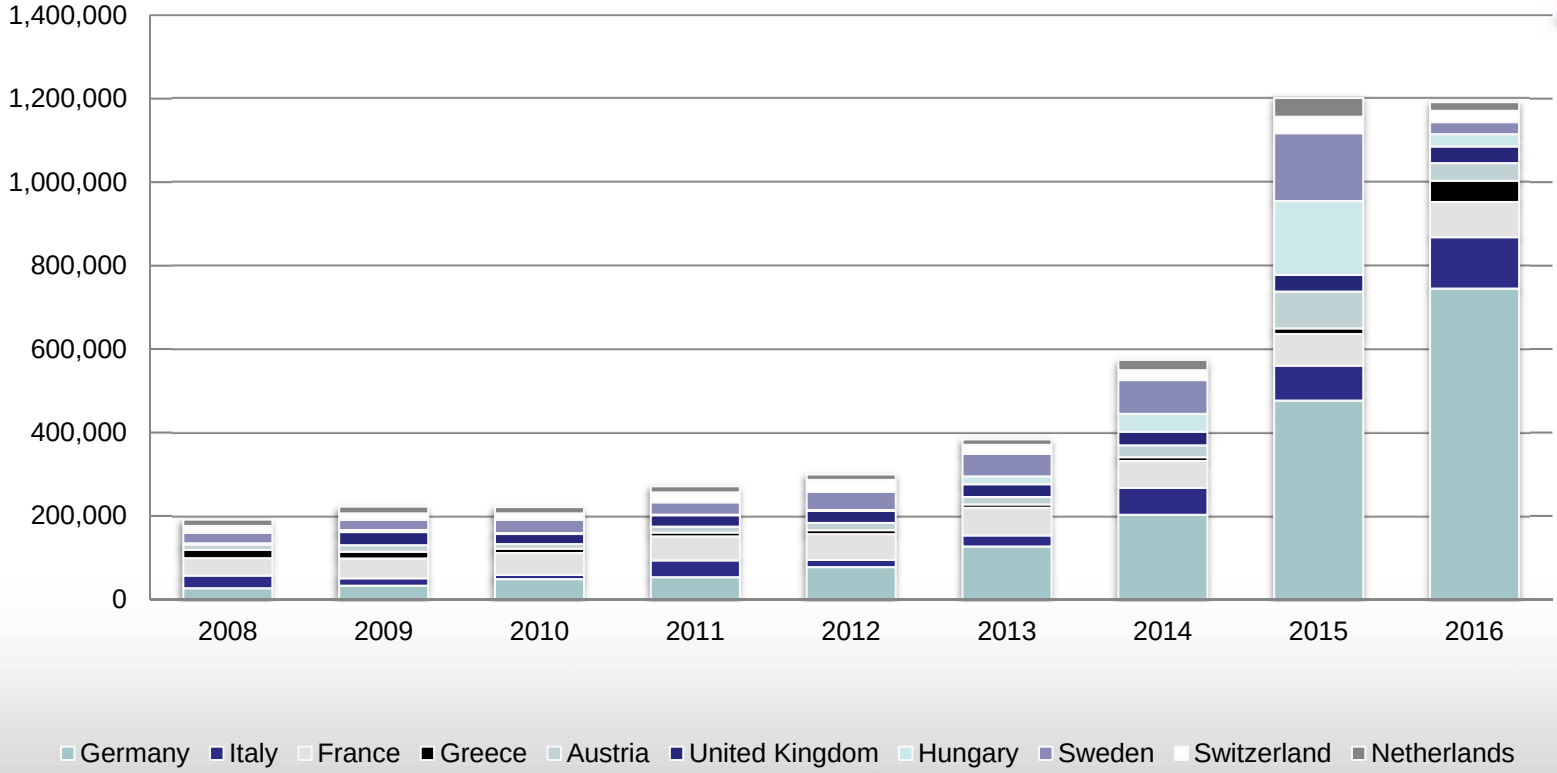
- Inclusiveness means that refugees should be provided with equal access to housing, health care, education, training and employment

Asylum Applicants in Europe
(countries with 10 largest numbers; Eurostat, 2016)

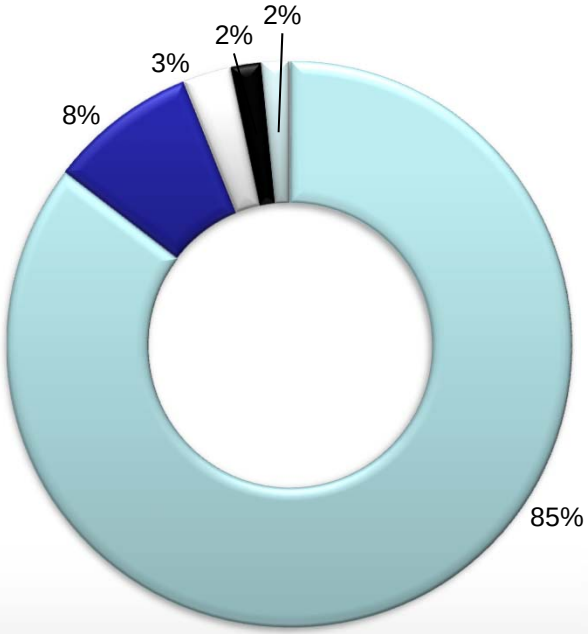


Numbers of Asylum Applicants by Country of Destination

(Eurostat ,2016)



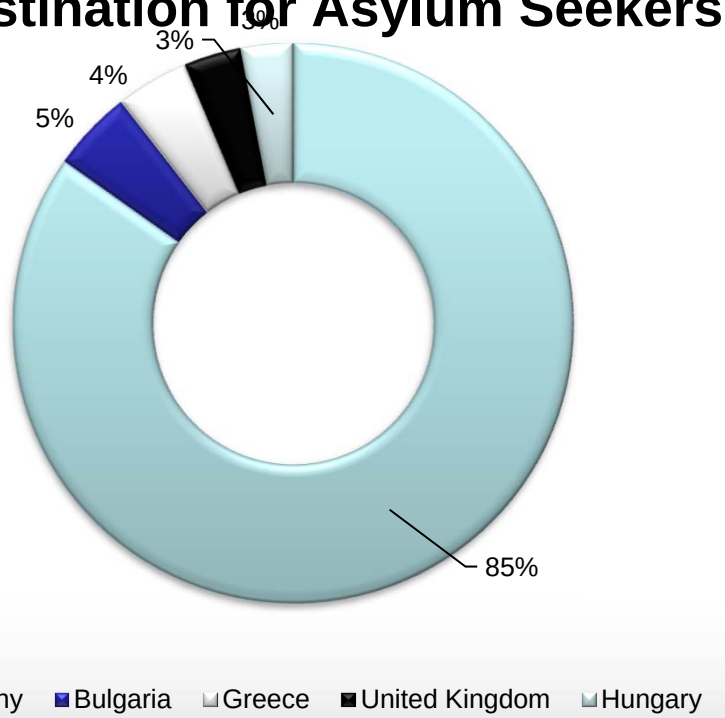
Top 5 Countries of Destination for Asylum Seekers from Syria



Data Source: Eurostat (2016)

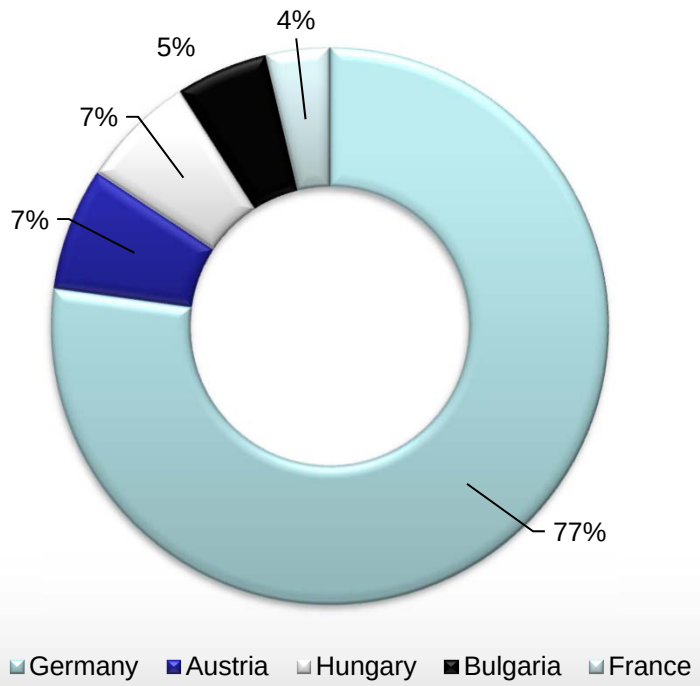
Germany Greece Austria Sweden Hungary

Top 5 Countries of Destination for Asylum Seekers from Iraq



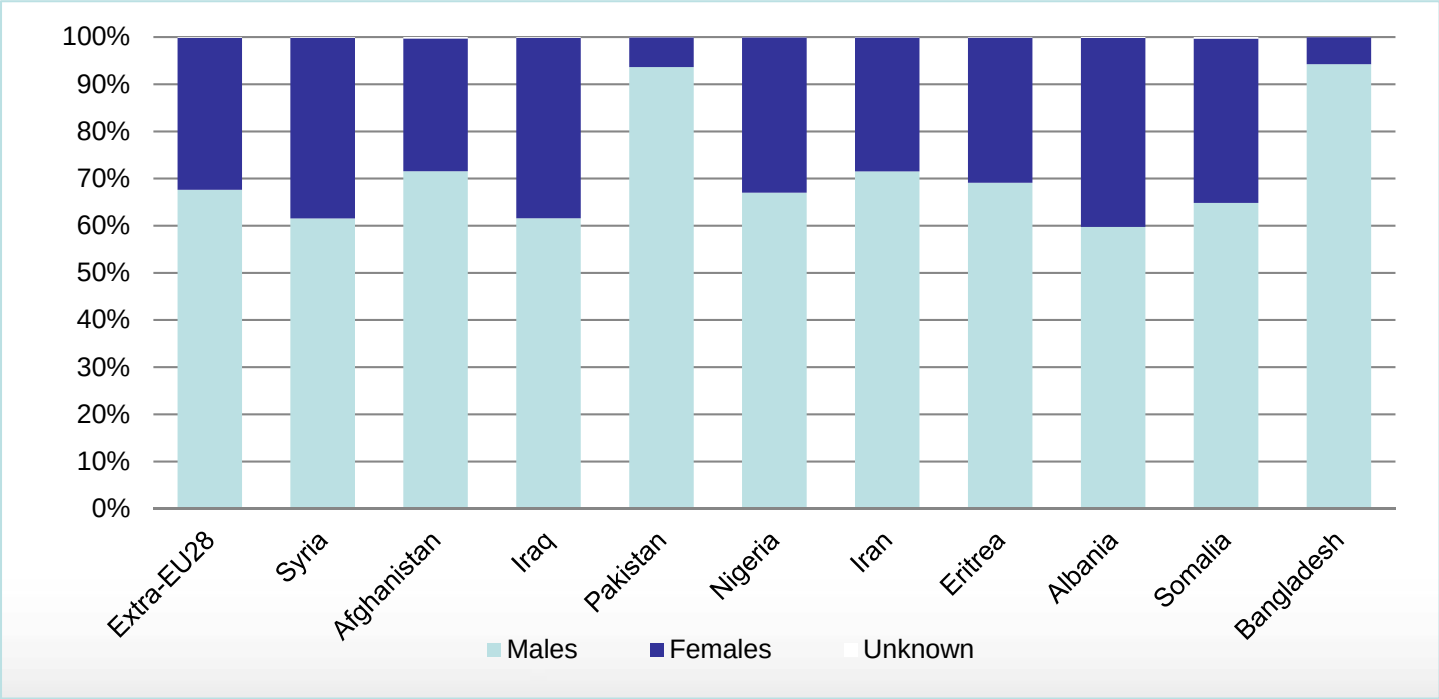
Data Source: Eurostat (2016)

Top 5 Countries of Destination for Asylum Seekers from Afghanistan



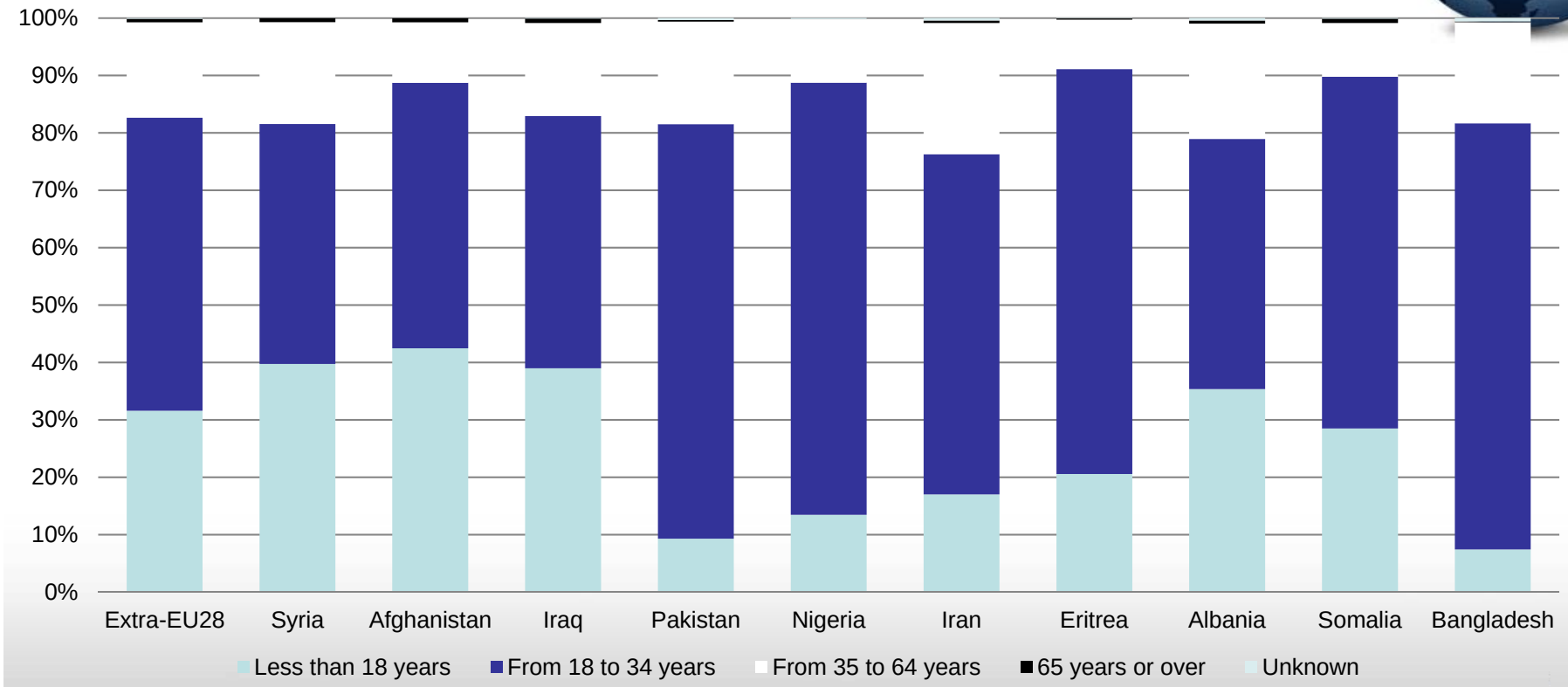
Data Source: Eurostat (2016)

Asylum Applicants by Gender and Countries of Origin



Data Source: Eurostat (2016)

Asylum Applicants by Age and Countries of Origin



Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

• Refugees' level of integration and adaptation depends on:

• *Pre-migration* – trauma, mental and physical torture, mass violence and genocide, witnessing the killings of family members and friends, sexual abuse, kidnap of children, destruction and looting of personal property, starvation and lack of water and shelter (Craig, Jajua, & Warfa, 2009)

• *The departure* - complex endeavor, associated with life threatening risks

• *Post-arrival* - although arrival in a safe place provides initial relief, frustration develops as new problems emerge (e.g., family separation, language barriers, legal status, unemployment, homelessness, lack of access to education and healthcare)

Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

•The circumstances and experiences of forced migration - profound effects on refugees' health and integration

• Refugees who fled from armed conflicts and persecution
  –high rates of pre-migration stress and mental health problems
  –post traumatic stress disorders (PTSD)
  –depression (Stenmark et al, 2013)

•Children of refugees - separated from their parents, witnessed or experienced violence or torture
  – these experiences - internalized and impact on subsequent development
  –holistic focus on rehabilitation, social integration, care, asylum, education, health and support (Melzak, 2009)

http://www.un.org/en/sections/issues-depth/refugees/index.html

Integration policies

• Policies turn some refugees into undocumented migrants and shield EU Member States from their international legal obligations

• EU Member States - asylum procedures across the EU - all those applying for asylum in EU Member States are guaranteed certain basic conditions of reception and access to the asylum procedures, protections, and rights to reduce the incentives for those seeking asylum to move from state to state (Schuster, 2011)

• The state that allows someone to enter or remain in their territory - responsible for examining that person's application for asylum and no other state needs to examine that claim - burden on countries of first arrival

• Legal status - significant implications for refugees' social and economic integration

Refugees' Family Reunification

- Multiple factors impact refugees' family reunification in Europe – including legislation (Costello, Groenendijk, & Storgaard, 2017)
  - Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EUCFR) - Article 7 - guarantees everyone's right to respect for his or her family life
  - 2003 Family Reunification Directive (FRD) - common rules for exercising the right to family reunification in EU Member States (excluding the United Kingdom, Ireland and Denmark)

- Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights - recommendations:
  - Ensure that family reunification procedures for all refugees are flexible, prompt and effective
  - Strengthen the position of children in the family reunification process
  - Reduce practical barriers to family reunification

Refugees' Family Reunification – Restrictions

- Some countries - treat 1951 Convention refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries in the same manner as regards family reunification, some differentiate and postpone family reunification for persons granted subsidiary protection for two years (e.g., Germany, Sweden)

- Long waiting time - subsidiary protection beneficiaries in Austria (3 years), Denmark (3 years), and Switzerland (3 years)
    - subsidiary protection beneficiary - someone who may not be returned to their country as he or she faces "serious harm" if returned (e.g., death penalty; torture, inhuman or degrading treatment)

- Short deadlines for family reunification – refugees required to submit applications within three months of being recognized (Germany, Luxemburg, Sweden, Hungary)

Refugees' Family Reunification – Restrictions

- Most countries - the right to family reunification of unaccompanied minors - to parents

- Often applicants will "age out" of the protective provisions for unaccompanied minors before they have the legal or practical opportunity to apply for family reunification
  - In Netherlands, Finland the law requires that a minor be under 18, when the decision on that application is made (it could take 9 months for decision-making)

- Extended family members – the degree of their dependency
- Pre-flight vs. post-flight families – right to "pre-flight families" (families formed in their country of origin)
  - UK, Norway - post-flight families - subject to all the normal immigration rules on family reunion (high financial thresholds, language tests)

Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

- **Integration policies**
  - Multi-professional approach – multi-sector collaboration with social workers, refugees organizations, housing and employment agencies
    - **Economic**
      - Employment - most important factor in securing the integration of migrants into society; enables interactions, increases opportunities for learning the language, build a future
      - Inability to locate work and underemployment are the most significant barriers to their successful integration into society
      - State sponsored integration programs and housing and employment assistance (e.g, Sweden, Norway)

Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

- **Integration policies**
  - **Education**
    - Children - Access to education

– Because refugee families underutilize formal mental health services, schools can have a key role to play in identifying problems and facilitating access to appropriate care

Refugees Social Integration

- **Integration policies – Health**

• Mental health - varies between migrant groups (e.g., previous patterns of help seeking) and access to psychosocial care facilities is influenced by the legal frame of the host country (Lindert, et al., 2008)

• In many European countries migrants fall outside the existing health and social services

• Working with refugees –cultural awareness

• *Scaling up effective strategies*

–WHO - mental health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) to provide treatments through primary and community care

• implement *task-shifting* - a task that originally performed by a specialist ransferred to a less specialized worker

Refugees and Social Integration in Europe

- ***Gender issues***

- Gender differences in post-traumatic stress in asylum seekers and refugees
  - Women - significantly more somatic symptoms, emotional outbursts, and loss of sexual interest than men who reported more detachment (Renner & Salem, 2009).
  - For women, typical coping strategies were concentrating on their children and various indoor activities, while men preferred looking for work and socializing

- Social psychiatric interventions - take gender-specific symptoms and coping strategies into account

Recommendations

- Streamlining of the asylum process to reduce the waiting period and facilitate refugees economic and social integration in the host society

- Assuring refugees access to health services and promoting their use (including mental health services)

- Assuring refugee children' and adults' access to the education systems

- Facilitating refugees' access to adequate employment commensurate to their qualifications

Recommendations

- Developing multidisciplinary professional teams to work with refugees (lawyers, social workers, family counselors) and provide systematic and coordinated services to facilitate refugee integration

- Promoting cultural sensitivity when interacting with the different cultural groups (e.g., using translators)

- Developing policies to facilitate families to immigrate together or/and to speed up the family reunification process

Conclusions

- Refugees integration - high on the current international political agenda

- U.N. General Assembly (2016) adopted the **New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants**
  - importance of the international refugee regime and a commitment by Member States to strengthen and enhance mechanisms to protect them
  - Two global compacts on refugees – 2018

- Supporting refugees' integration in society - achievement of SDG 16 focused on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies

  – Video – Europe and refugees**:** **https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U0CK5ppTAgU**

- Thank you!