INTEGRATING HUMANITARIAN MIGRANTS IN OECD COUNTRIES: LESSONS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

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Recent asylum application trends in Europe
1. Unprecedented but still uncertain numbers

Evolution of number of new asylum seekers, 1980-2015

- Asylum applications are recorded with a lag compared to entries and may include some double counts.
- In 2015, the early registration system in Germany (EASY) recorded over 1 million entrances, including 200k in November and 130k in December (respectively 58k and 47k in the Eurostat data).
- 4.7 million refugees in neighbouring countries of Syria including 2.6 million in Turkey, 1.07 in Lebanon and 640k in Jordan.

Source: UNHCR, Eurostat, OECD calculations
2. Multiple unsettled crises

- Several conflicts/crises in parallel with little prospect for improvement in the near future
  => Persisting and looming geopolitical crises
- Strong concentration of asylum seekers in just a handful of entry points and destination countries which fuels anxiety and raises the issue of burden sharing; Large unmet needs for supporting refugees globally
  => A solidarity and coordination crisis
- Key building blocks of the European migration & asylum framework are challenged (e.g. Schengen, Dublin) and mutual trust within the EU is undermined;
  => Risks of an institutional crisis
- Welcoming and integration systems are under strong pressure and concerns regarding the integration of refugees and their children are at the highest
  => A forthcoming integration crisis?
How will the refugee surge affect the European Economy?
1. Short/medium term direct fiscal costs

- Germany may spend as much as 8 billion euros this year and has projected an additional 0.5% of GDP per annum of public spending in 2016 and 2017 to meet initial needs of the newly arrived immigrants and to integrate them in the labour market.

- Austria has announced an additional 0.3% of GDP in 2016 and Sweden 0.9% of GDP in 2016.

- Hungary, a major transit country into the Schengen area, has announced additional spending of 0.1% of GDP in 2015, to cover costs associated with the new flows of refugees.

- Since 2011, the Turkish government has provided aid to Syrian refugees amounting to 0.8% of 2014 GDP ($US 7 billion).

- The European Commission has announced additional funding of €9.2 billion to address the refugee crisis over 2015-16 (0.1% of EU GDP).

- In the short run the additional public spending may act as a demand stimulus. The latest edition of the OECD Economic Outlook estimates that in 2016 and 2017, the additional spending to provide support on refugees could boost aggregate demand in the European economy by about 0.1-0.2% of GDP.
Most favorable waiting periods for labour market access for asylum seekers in selected OECD countries, 2015 (in months)

Source: OECD (2015) Migration Policy Debate n°8
Labour market entries will be very progressive and relatively small for most countries.

Under the high scenario, the cumulative impact of the asylum seekers inflow by the end of 2016 is estimated to

- less than one million entries in the EEA & Switzerland labour market, corresponding to 0.4% of labour force.
- less than 400 thousand in Germany or 1% of the total labour force.
Fostering the economic and social integration of refugees and their children
1. Labour market integration takes time

Employment rate by immigrant categories and duration of stay in European OECD countries, 2008


Employment rates of immigrants aged 15-64 who migrated to seek international protection by sex and country of residence, 2014

Source: Eurostat labour survey (2014) ad-hoc module on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants.
2. The integration of very low educated humanitarian migrants requires long-term training and support

Employment rate of humanitarian migrants by level of education and duration of stay in European OECD countries, 2008

- Reaching the minimum standards of what is needed to be employable may take several years - but this investment will pay off in the long run
- Australia, Norway and Sweden have longer introduction programmes for very low-educated refugees
- Support needs to extend beyond training to help refugees enter employment
- Sweden and Denmark offer stepwise labour market introduction
3. The large skills diversity of humanitarian migrants highlights need for tailor-made approaches

- The scarce available evidence suggests a large and growing diversity of refugees’ qualifications and skills

Education level of immigrants aged 16-74 in Sweden by latest country of residence, 2014

![Education Level Chart]

- Tailor-made integration programmes ideally include:
  - *Flexible* durations of integration programmes - as in Scandinavian countries
  - *Modular* language training - as pioneered by Denmark
  - *Targeted* courses for specific groups like illiterate, high educated and mothers
  - *On-the-job* training – as in Australia, Canada and in Scandinavian countries
4. Refugees face particular challenges in having their skills valued

- Refugees’ qualifications and skills are often particularly undervalued due to
  - Different education and training contexts in origin countries
  - Lack of documentation
  - No access to / awareness about existing recognition mechanisms
  - Vocational skills acquired through non-formal learning

- Only few countries have a systematic assessment of refugees’ skills

- Need for systematic assessment and adjusted recognition procedures

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**Norway**

- Academic skills of refugees without verifiable documentation of their qualifications are assessed through expert committees.
- A three-level skills grid has been used by the employment service in pilots.

**The Netherlands**

- The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum seekers maps refugees’ skills as soon as they have obtained a residence permit. Alternative assessment for persons without documentation is done jointly with competent authorities, refugee organisations and business communities.

**Germany**

- Skills of humanitarian migrants with no or insufficient documentation of qualifications are assessed through so-called ‘qualification analysis’ on the basis of work samples.
- Specific online assessment tools for skilled trades are in preparation.
5. Increasing numbers of unaccompanied minors >>> 85000 in 2015

Evolution of the number of unaccompanied minors in EU+, Sweden, Austria, and Norway 2008 – 2015

- Vulnerable group requiring specific (and often expensive) support
- Many arrive with little prior tuition at the end of obligatory schooling

Sources: EASO, Statistics Sweden, Federal Austrian Ministry of the Interior, Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
Making integration of refugees work

1. Provide activation and integration services as soon as possible for humanitarian migrants and asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay

2. Facilitate labour market access for asylum seekers with high prospects of being allowed to stay

3. Factor employment prospects into dispersal policies

4. Record and assess humanitarian migrants’ foreign qualifications, work experience and skills

5. Take into account the growing diversity of humanitarian migrants and develop tailor-made approaches

6. Identify mental and physical health issues early and provide adequate support

7. Develop support programmes specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling

8. Build on civil society to integrate humanitarian migrants

9. Promote equal access to integration services to humanitarian migrants across the country

10. Acknowledge that the integration of very poorly educated humanitarian migrants requires long-term training and support
Thank you for your attention

For further information:
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