

Role of public services in integrating refugees and asylum seekers



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Executive summary

Introduction

This study explores the role of public services in the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers. It focuses not only on employment, but also on aspects such as housing, social inclusion, health and education services. It examines a range of integration measures adopted in five EU Member States (Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) in an attempt to identify the main challenges and the lessons learnt. The countries selected vary in terms of the scale of the inflow, tradition of receiving refugees, labour market conditions, social assistance systems and presence of other migrant groups.

Policy context

Following the arrival of over three million asylum seekers between 2015 and 2017, Member States faced a number of challenges. Meeting refugees' basic needs – such as housing and social assistance – as well as financing the integration measures put a strain on Member States' already stretched public finances. At the same time, Member States set about designing tailor-made integration measures which would meet the specific needs of some refugees – such as those with mental health needs – following their traumatic experiences. Language barriers and poor literacy levels also hampered the degree to which the newcomers could participate in integration measures. These issues all require capacity building and extending the resources of public services. Another significant challenge for social integration has been negative public attitudes and, in some cases, the reluctance of employers to hire refugees, particularly where language and cultural barriers still prevailed. At the same time, in a labour market increasingly requiring more workers with high and medium skills levels, a large share of refugees is at a disadvantage due to their lower skills and their lack of formal schooling and certification. This report examines 16 integration measures across the five selected countries that aimed to respond to these challenges.

As the majority of persons granted asylum in the EU are young and male, an increase in family reunification is expected in the near future when they are joined by spouses and other family members. In preparation for this, public authorities and services need to devise special integration measures for these groups, who will most likely enter through another immigration channel (that is, legal migration rather than asylum law). This may limit their entitlement to special integration measures, because some target those with refugee status exclusively. Given the likelihood that this group will consist largely of women, it will be important to pay attention to gender-specific integration needs. Special measures may also have to be devised for children and there will likely be important implications for housing arrangements.

Key findings

- The role of public services differs across the selected measures. In some cases, the public services or another public entity primarily regulated and oversaw the measure; in others, they acted as the service provider; and in other cases, they financed the measure, or combined roles.
- In the area of housing and social integration (including measures such as civic education), municipalities and local authorities play a key role, in collaboration with NGOs.
- An important challenge is ensuring adequate support for refugees and asylum seekers with mental health issues. Many experience psychological trauma, whether in their country of origin, during their journey or in the host communities. Having arrived in the host country, cultural barriers, communication difficulties and the high cost of treatment can make it difficult for refugees to access appropriate support.
- In terms of policy responses to housing challenges, a common thread across countries has been the development of a more coordinated approach between central government agencies responsible for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers and local municipalities. This includes the development of dispersal policies and the establishment of quotas to distribute newcomers across municipalities.

Policy pointers

- Designing culturally sensitive measures that recognise the specific characteristics of refugees may help to offer a more tailor-made assistance.
- Given the length of time it takes for refugees to be integrated into the workforce – on average five to six years – it is important to put more emphasis on holistic integration measures.
- Often being the first point of contact for newly arrived refugees, public services have to be responsive to refugees' needs. Public services in the five EU Member States have been largely proactive in adopting and implementing a range of diverse integration measures, including some innovative approaches.
- Providing psychological and mental health support where needed and accounting for mental health issues in the design of the measures are crucial. Since mental health issues are of common concern across Member States, a European-level forum or platform for experts to exchange experiences and good practice may help Member States to deal with the surge in demand.
- Innovative and engaging measures such as strategies to include refugees in community activities and those supporting social networking, such as mentoring

- projects and volunteer interaction, are having promising results. Public support for such initiatives is, therefore, crucial.
- Service providers (both public and private) frequently experience capacity issues, both human and financial. One example is the specific training needed for staff working with refugees. EU funding has helped, but a more coordinated approach across EU financial instruments (e.g. between the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund and the European Social Fund) may be necessary, especially as demand for longer-term integration measures is likely to increase in the future.
 - An active civil society, a welcoming business environment and the support of NGOs and local communities are all conducive to successful integration. Actively engaging these stakeholders in integration measures can enhance the chances of success. Some EU-level initiatives, such as Employers Together for Integration and the Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, may trigger the involvement of these actors.
 - Given the multidimensional nature of integration, close cooperation between different actors involved in integration measures, including social partners, is a prerequisite of success. Across the various integration measures and areas, different cooperation models – from a prescriptive role for the service provider to more flexible models – have been identified among public services, private organisations and social partners. For its part, the EU, through its multi-stakeholder European Partnership for Integration, encourages the involvement of social partners in decision-making at the EU level.
 - Cooperation can be particularly challenging when numerous and varied stakeholders are involved: good communication is necessary to avoid duplication and maximise synergies.
 - Very few measures include a specific focus on women. Putting in place childcare facilities and classes specifically tailored to the education and vocational needs of female refugees may help to boost female participation.

Introduction

This study focuses on measures in place in EU Member States to facilitate the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Integration is defined as a two-way process, involving mutual adaptation between the receiving society and the migrants themselves – both as individuals and as groups.¹ As previous research shows, even though two parties are involved in the process of integration, they are not on an equal footing: ‘The receiving society, in terms of its institutional structure and the way it reacts to newcomers, has much more say in the outcome of the process’ (Penninx, 2003). In the host society, many actors have responsibility for integration, including the government, other institutions and communities. This research aims to explore the role of public services specifically, focusing on the practical implementation of integration measures. The study sets out to identify lessons learnt from various initiatives within country-specific contexts, including factors that hinder or facilitate successful integration.

Integration policy functions in the context of how migration is managed in a given country, involving policies on admission, naturalisation and citizenship, and security. This study concentrates on integration measures, referring to the context of migration management only when this has direct relevance (for example, while recognition rates are discussed briefly, the issue of return migration falls outside the scope of this study).

Rapid integration into the labour market is especially high on the policy agendas of the main destination countries. In this report, however, the focus is not exclusively on employment but also on public services aiming at broader integration: those related to housing, social integration, health and education. In addition, the study examines the roles of different actors in the success of integration measures.

Scope of the study

The study covers five countries: Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden. The selection of these countries was guided by Eurofound’s research project on ‘Approaches to the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers’, which identified the destination countries most affected by migration, where the need for rapid and sustainable integration is particularly pronounced and where the issue is high on the national policy agenda. At the same time, the five selected

countries vary in terms of the scale of the inflow, tradition of receiving refugees, labour market conditions, social assistance systems, presence of other migrant groups, and so on. Austria, Germany and Sweden are the main destination countries in the EU, but Finland and the Netherlands received a disproportionately high number of refugees and asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016. In common with the three main destination countries, Finland and the Netherlands have also adopted promising practices, as this study will show. Finland does not have the same tradition of receiving refugees as, for example, Sweden, and at the time of the large inflow, its labour market was still struggling with the consequences of the financial and economic crisis of 2008.

A total of 16 integration measures were examined in the five Member States, and these spanned five integration areas: employment, education, housing, health and social integration. The case studies were shortlisted from a long list of integration measures, based on a range of criteria including geographic coverage, evaluation evidence and potential for replication in other contexts or geographic areas.

It is important to note that the majority of measures are still ongoing, and at this stage it is not possible to comment on their impacts due to lack of information, including data from external evaluations. In any case, the purpose and scope of the study is to draw overall lessons from the initiatives examined rather than to comment on the effectiveness of the measures.

The research focuses on ‘refugees’ and ‘asylum seekers’ as target groups.²

With regard to **refugees**, the study covers all third-country nationals who have applied for asylum, as set out in the recast Qualification Directive (European Parliament, 2011)³, and who were subsequently granted international protection – that is, Geneva Convention refugee status or subsidiary protection – or a national (humanitarian) status if they did not qualify for the harmonised EU status. It may also cover third-country nationals who arrive as part of a resettlement or (intra-EU) relocation programme.

With regard to **asylum seekers**, the study covers all third-country nationals who have formally applied for asylum and whose claim is pending – they thus await a decision on the application for international protection as described above (European Parliament, 2011, 2013).

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- 1 The definition of the term ‘integration’ is discussed widely in the academic literature. According to a frequently used conceptual framework, immigrants’ acculturation to the host society includes four strategies: assimilation, separation, marginalisation and integration. Integration is considered to be the best approach, since it is based on individuals’ (including immigrants and natives) daily interaction with other cultures (Robila, 2018, p. 2). Although the concept of multiculturalism (the way immigrants are received in the host society) is closely related to integration, discussion of this concept falls outside the scope of this study.
 - 2 Some measures examined in this research include other migrants. In some cases, other groups of newly arrived migrants (such as so-called ‘tolerated persons’) also take part in initiatives.
 - 3 Directive 2011/95/EU on standards for the qualification of third-country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection, for a uniform status for refugees or for persons eligible for subsidiary protection, and for the content of the protection granted.

Methodological approach

The research is based on a literature review, descriptive analysis of data (to provide a profile of refugees and asylum seekers entering the EU from 2015 to 2017) and case studies of integration measures in five selected countries. A total of 16 case studies were carried out through primary (interviews) and secondary (desk) research. In four countries, three case studies were conducted, while in Germany, four case studies were conducted.

A total of 44 interviews were carried out as part of the 16 case studies, amounting to an average of 2.75 interviews per case study. Face-to-face interviews accounted for 36% of the interviews conducted. These were mainly with service providers and/or representatives of various public services, employers and other partner organisations.⁴

This report is structured as follows.

- **Chapter 1 – Role of the EU in integration measures:** This chapter summarises the key role played by the EU in terms of both framing the Member States' relevant legislation and supporting the integration measures (financially and through coordination actions).
- **Chapter 2 – Policy and regulatory context:** This chapter discusses the policy and regulatory context for integration areas and selected Member States.
- **Chapter 3 – Profile of refugees and asylum seekers and overview of integration measures:** This chapter provides an overview of the refugees and asylum seekers who entered the EU between 2015 and 2017. It then describes the integration measures selected as case studies (Annex A1 provides a more detailed overview of the selected measures).
- **Chapter 4 – Comparative analysis of the integration measures across thematic areas:** This chapter provides a comparative analysis of the selected integration measures according to employment and labour market integration, education, housing, health and social integration. It then reveals, in relation to each of these thematic areas, the challenges and lessons learnt in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.
- **Chapter 5 – Conclusions and policy messages:** This chapter covers the main challenges and lessons learnt and looks into the potential for transferability of the measures to other contexts. It also presents a series of policy messages for key stakeholders.

⁴ Due to the scope of the study, users' experiences were not assessed.

1 Role of the EU in integration measures

The EU plays a major role in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, both in setting up a legislative framework for receiving and dealing with these migrants and in supporting measures aimed at facilitating their integration in the Member States – financially and through coordination of support. This chapter provides an overview of the EU's role by way of context for the cross-country comparisons provided in the report.

The extent of the challenges in the wake of the recent high inflow of asylum seekers is reflected in the aggregated data. Asylum applications rose substantially from the already high number of 626,960 in 2014 to 1.26 million in 2015 – an increase of more than 100%. In 2016, despite efforts to contain the high inflow (such as the closure of the Balkan route and the EU–Turkey Statement⁵), the number of asylum applicants still amounted to 1.21 million. While there had been a continuous increase in asylum applications since 2010, the level of growth from 2015 had not been seen since the Second World War (see Eurostat data presented in Eurofound, 2016). At present, there are 2.1 million recognised refugees and more than half a million asylum seekers with pending applications for asylum stay in the EU, many of whom arrived between 2015 and 2016 (see statistical overview of asylum seekers and refugee flows, Chapter 3). The inflow decreased in 2017, when the number of asylum applications in the EU almost halved to 0.65 million. The EU Member States granted protection to more than half a million (654,610) asylum seekers in that year (Eurostat, 2019a).

The role of the EU in supporting and shaping integration efforts by Member States involves three key elements:

1. policy actions and coordination
2. legislative framework
3. funding

The chapter is structured according to these three elements. It starts with a brief overview of relevant actions and coordination mechanisms and networks. Some of these had already existed and some were set up following the Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals, adopted in 2016. The coordination role of the EU includes providing tools to help Member States manage the measures that are put in place, such as the Mutual Learning Programme, the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals⁶, and the multi-stakeholder European Partnership for Integration. The next part of the chapter describes the pertinent elements of the

legislative framework, where significant changes are currently envisaged. This is followed by an outline of the main EU-level instruments for funding the Member States' integration measures, focusing on the lessons already learnt and looking at the proposals for changes in the new Multiannual Financial Framework.

Since the sharp rise in the inflow of refugees and asylum seekers in the summer of 2015, the EU has made considerable efforts to find solutions for managing the crisis. It became clear very quickly that the system that was in place for determining responsibility for asylum applications – commonly called the 'Dublin system' after the name of the regulation – was not sustainable.⁷ This regulation made those Member States where applicants entered the territory of the EU responsible for examining and making decisions on asylum applications (by accepting or rejecting them).

To date, however, the Member States have been unable to agree on a common solution, although there have been some attempts to do so, initiated at EU level, as detailed below. It should be acknowledged that even though the influx to Member States has slowed down considerably, the root causes of the crisis remain, with the main countries of origin (primarily Syria) still suffering from war and more people fleeing violence arriving in the EU every day.

At EU level, there have been three major policy initiatives aimed at addressing the refugee crisis: the relocation scheme, the resettlement schemes and the EU–Turkey Statement (see details in: Council of the European Union, 2016, p. 7; European Commission, 2017a; and European Commission, 2019).

Current policy actions and coordination on integration

The Action Plan on the integration of third-country nationals, which was presented by the European Commission on 7 June 2016 – in the wake of the massive inflow of asylum seekers – is an important initiative that aims to provide added value at EU level through structural support to the Member States via a common policy framework (European Commission, 2016a). The implementation of the action plan came to an end in June 2018. The Commission did not intend to renew it, seeking rather 'to improve what is already in place'

⁵ On March 18th, 2016, the EU and Turkey signed an agreement to put a stop to migrant crossings from the Turkish coast towards Europe.

⁶ A third-country national is defined as 'any person who is not a citizen of the EU within the meaning of Art. 20(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and who is not a person enjoying the EU right to free movement, as defined in Art. 2(5) of the Regulation (EU) 2016/399 (Schengen Borders Code)'.

⁷ The 'Dublin Regulation' refers to Regulation No 604/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013 establishing the criteria and mechanisms for determining the Member State responsible for examining an application for international protection lodged in one of the Member States by a third-country national or a stateless person.

(IRC, 2018, p. 11).⁸ In this spirit, the Commission is still pursuing monitoring of the actions, and in June 2017, in order to be transparent and inform the Member States on the progress of actions, the ‘tool to monitor EU actions for integration’ was set up on the EU integration website (European Commission, 2017b). Designed as a dashboard, this online tool gives an overview of actions in the five priority areas of the action plan (pre-departure/pre-arrival measures; education; labour market integration and access to vocational training; access to basic services; active participation and social inclusion), as well as tools for coordination, funding and monitoring. Most actions are ongoing: for example, the Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, which brings together cities, national administrations, European institutions and civil society organisations to provide recommendations and take actions to promote integration, has been extended until June 2019. In the area of social inclusion, activities have been completed.

While many of the planned actions aim to assist all third-country nationals, there are some that directly or indirectly target refugees and asylum seekers, and which are closely related to measures explored in this research. One example involves actions related to the first of the five priorities in the action plan – pre-departure/pre-arrival measures – which were designed in the context of resettlement programmes with the help of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). Other examples include measures for the recognition of qualifications and funding for fast-track integration into the labour market and vocational training. In addition, skills assessment, employment-focused language training and on-the-job training are considered important, the main tools being the AMIF and the Programme for Employment and Social Innovation as well as the exchange of information on ‘promising practices’.⁹ Other measures are being implemented through existing networks and programmes, such as the European Network of Public Employment Services, Youth Guarantee coordinators and the Mutual Learning Programme. Another important initiative is funding aimed at strengthening capacities at local level – for asylum seekers, this is particularly relevant at reception centres and for practices focusing on labour market integration.

According to the latest information, activities aimed at pre-departure/pre-arrival were lagging behind but are now on track.¹⁰

European Migration Network and European Integration Network

The European Migration Network (EMN) was established in 2008 with the aim of providing objective, comparable, policy-relevant information on migration. It consists of an EU-wide network of migration and asylum experts who

work together in Member States (except Denmark) as well as in Norway.

More recently, in 2016, the European Commission initiated a European network for cooperation on the integration of migrants, called the European Integration Network. This brings together representatives of national public authorities, mostly ministries responsible for migrant integration, from all 28 EU countries and 2 EEA countries (Iceland and Norway). Many have a role in the planning and implementation of dedicated EU funding opportunities, such as the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, in their respective countries. The members consult with the European Commission on current developments and policy agenda in the field of integration. They also participate in targeted study visits, peer reviews, workshops and mutual assistance actions on specific integration aspects, the main purpose being to exchange knowledge.¹¹

Mutual Learning Programme

Recognising that mutual learning between relevant actors is essential for facilitating integration, various initiatives are taking place under the heading of the Mutual Learning Programme. These include the activity of the European Migration Forum, a platform for dialogue between European institutions and civil society on issues relating to migration, asylum and integration, and the aforementioned Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees.

In addition, with a view to promoting labour market integration, in 2017 the European Commission and European social and economic partners signed up to the European Partnership for Integration. Partners include the European Trade Union Confederation as well as the representative employer organisations: UAPME (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), BusinessEurope, CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services and Services of General Interest) and Eurochambres. They agreed on key principles and made a commitment to support the labour market integration of refugees and migrants legally residing in the EU. Another important initiative, launched in 2017 in the context of the European Dialogue on Skills and Migration, is Employers Together for Integration. Through an online form, private and public employers, trade unions and chambers of commerce in the EU share their planned or current activities to support the integration of refugees and other legal migrants in their workforce or beyond; it was agreed that the European Commission would publish the employers’ commitments on a dedicated webpage.

Besides the EMN, another tool which has been already in place for quite some time is the Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX). This has proved a useful instrument

8 The International Rescue Committee report refers here to comments by the European Commission’s Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Paraskevi Michou, at the conference on *Integration of third-country nationals: Challenges from the European and regional perspective*, organised by the Permanent Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg to the EU on 26 April 2018.

9 See the Commission’s repository of promising practices at <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1208>

10 See the Commission’s website on integration for progress on the Action plan on integration at <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/main-menu/eus-work/actions>

11 See the Commission’s website on integration at <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/home>

for monitoring and comparing, using various indicators, the implementation of government policies in the area of migrant integration.

Skills profiles

While skills assessment is deemed to be a highly important prerequisite for the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers, it has proved challenging for Member States. However, some promising initiatives are in place, such as the MYSKILLS tool used in Germany (which is included in this research and described in the current report). In order to help Member States with this, in June 2017 the European Commission released the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals (European Commission, 2017c). This online tool supports the early identification and documentation of the skills and work experience of third-country nationals; like the MYSKILLS tool, it can serve as a basis for personalised advice on further steps towards labour market and social integration. To facilitate the use of this tool (which is free of charge for the target group), the European Commission has organised seminars for public services to take place at asylum centres, public employment services (PES) or guidance centres.

EU-level legislative framework and proposals for reform

The Common European Asylum System (CEAS) provides minimum standards for applications and for the treatment of asylum seekers across the EU and stipulates the type of protection to be granted to refugees. While these touch upon integration (for example, they concern access to the labour market, education, social benefits, etc.), the development and implementation of integration policies and programmes remains the responsibility of Member States. The CEAS comprises a legal framework covering all aspects of the asylum process and a support agency, the European Asylum Support Office. From the perspective of integration, within the CEAS, the most relevant EU acquis are the Reception Conditions Directive and the Qualification Directive (both of which, as of February 2019, are under review).

As regards resettlement, it is the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees which identifies and interviews candidates for resettlement, while authorities in the Member States make the final decisions.

Although the recast Reception Conditions Directive came into force in July 2015, the refugee crisis had already prompted the need for further harmonisation of existing rules across Member States in terms of:

- requirements for reception conditions
- 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 in 2016, and political agreement was reached on the planned reform on 28 June 2018. The reform has two major objectives: an amendment of the Dublin Regulation (in order to avoid overburdening a Member State in the case of a large inflow) and harmonisation of the asylum procedure and reception conditions. The key objective here is to avoid or at least reduce the incentive for secondary movement within the EU. As regards integration and access to the labour market, it is proposed that the current maximum waiting time for access by asylum seekers to the labour market should be reduced from nine months to six months after submitting an application (Bräuninger, 2018, pp. 9–10). Despite agreements on the major elements of change to the CEAS, there is still some dispute between the European Council and the Commission, with the Council opposing the planned reduction of waiting time for access to the labour market (Bräuninger, 2018, p. 10).

Funding of programmes and integration measures

Current situation

Due to the unusually high inflow in the past few years, funding has increased substantially, partly through emergency funds and partly through the existing designated funds.¹² Despite the substantial increase, however, it is still difficult to meet ever-growing needs. In addition, as already mentioned, it is difficult to plan precisely in terms of needs: if recent applications (e.g. approximately 2.5 million in 2015 and 2016) and recognition rates (e.g. 47% in 2017) are considered, one can see that over one million people need to be returned; however, the return rate was only 46.3% in 2016 (European Commission, 2018a, p. 3). This means that at EU level, over half a million people need some kind of accommodating measures – at least for the period when they cannot be returned.

The two main EU funds directly related to asylum seekers, refugees and other migrant groups are the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund.¹³ But there are other funds, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds (in particular the European Social Fund – ESF), which are relevant, especially in terms of integration measures since they also support the Member States and partner organisations in implementing the approach on migration established by the Commission (see more details below). For example, in relation to increasing the capacity of reception centres, by early 2017 the AMIF had supported the creation of almost 7,500 additional places in these centres.

¹² For example, the AMIF has increased by 120% from the initial total allocation for 2014–2020 of around €3.1 billion to well over €6.88 billion by the end of 2017 (European Commission, 2018b, p. 4).

¹³ The predecessor of the AMIF was the European Integration Fund. Among the various objectives of the AMIF, promoting 'effective integration of third-country nationals' is just one. The other objectives include strengthening and developing the CEAS, strengthening fair return strategies and enhancing the sharing of burdens and responsibilities among Member States (European Commission, 2018b, p. 7).

Interim evaluation of the AMIF

The interim evaluation of the AMIF provides useful lessons, even though it has certain limitations.¹⁴ The general conclusions are positive in terms of meeting the key objectives, including strengthening reception capacity. Nonetheless, it is noted that the AMIF could be complemented by and made consistent with other financial instruments (e.g. the ESF or the European Regional Development Fund). As regards added value of the AMIF, the process and scope effects (identified along with other effects in the interim evaluation) are of special relevance to integration measures. Process effects include the quality of administration and budgetary processes: increasing the know-how and capacity of officials and building cooperation processes and synergies between actors in the field. As evidence from this report shows, all these items are key to improving the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of integration measures. As regards scope effects, the Member States reported that support by AMIF was instrumental in

... extending the type of actions implemented, such as: psychological support, start-up projects, legal support, organisation of cultural and sports events, welcoming programmes, language training, translation services ...[and] extending the target groups reached, e.g. vulnerable people such as women, ... young people, non-accompanied minors, people with mental health problems.

(European Commission, 2018b, p. 48)

At the same time, the interim evaluation concluded that there is room for improvement: even if some simplification of administrative procedure has been achieved, at this stage there is little evidence to show whether the administrative burden has been substantially reduced (as also demonstrated by some examples in this report).

Preparations for the new Multiannual Financial Framework

The Commission proposes to reinforce the successor to the AMIF, which is to be called the Asylum and Migration Fund. This fund will provide support to national authorities in their activity of receiving asylum seekers. At the same time, the fund is proposed as an instrument for implementing the common asylum and migration policy. As regards integration, it is planned that the EU Cohesion Policy (including its instruments, the ESF in particular) will provide support for long-term integration after the phase of reception.

The proposed increase to the overall budget for the whole package of migration and external border protection is from €12.4 billion in the current period to €33 billion. As part of this, it is planned that the Asylum and Migration

Fund be further increased (to about €10 billion – European Commission, 2018c).

The refugee crisis has not just prompted a substantial increase in funding: in order to respond to emerging needs, a more holistic approach to financing the measures had to be adopted. As a consequence, other EU financial instruments were increasingly taken up for activities related to the area of the AMIF. In its resolution of 8 March 2016, the European Parliament encouraged Member States

... to make use of the Structural and Investment Funds in addition to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund to promote refugees' integration into the labour market, with a particular focus on childcare.

(European Parliament, 2016)

Complementary funding also requires stronger coordination at EU level and this was recognised early on.¹⁵ A recent example of such coordination is the European Social Fund Transnational Cooperation Network on Migration (European Commission, 2018b, p. 46).

As regards integration measures, it is clear that while the AMIF is designed to respond to short-term integration needs (such as civic orientation), longer-term socioeconomic integration measures (including labour market integration) are supported by the European Structural and Investment Funds, including the ESF+ proposed for the 2021–2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.¹⁶ The regulation proposal on ESF+ includes a specific objective concerning the integration of third-country nationals and also a monitoring indicator.

It should be noted, however, that in terms of the role of public services, through national programmes, AMIF has proved instrumental in ‘strengthening public service organisations through the training of personnel [and] complementary activities such as language courses’ (European Commission, 2018b, p. 32).

Conclusions and key messages from an EU perspective

This chapter provides evidence on the important role the EU plays in assisting Member States in their endeavours to integrate refugees and asylum seekers in the wake of the high inflow in recent years. Revision of the legislation (Common European Asylum System – CEAS) is still ongoing in order to adapt it to the new realities. The funding that was in place (primarily the AMIF) has been substantially increased. Preparations for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (2021–2027) reflect the lessons learnt – especially during the migration crisis – and the main objectives are that Member States should be more prepared for a possible high future inflow and that they

¹⁴ The interim evaluation is based on national interim evaluation reports submitted by the Member States (with the exception of Denmark, which does not participate in the AMIF) to the European Commission. The reports examined the implementation of actions and progress made within the respective national programmes up to 31 December 2017. Thus, one limitation involves timing of the evaluation: it may be too early even for interim evaluation of progress, since the projects only started in 2015 (European Commission, 2018b, p. 4).

¹⁵ Following President Juncker’s State of the Union speech in September 2015, in which he emphasised the importance of integration and social inclusion and the need to create synergies to establish effective implementation, the Commission published a paper entitled ‘Synergies between the Asylum and Migration Integration Fund (AMIF) and other EU funding instruments in relation to reception and integration of asylum seekers and other migrants’.

¹⁶ The total proposed amount for the ESF+ is €101.2 billion.

should be able to integrate those refugees and asylum seekers who are already in EU countries. Although many initiatives were put in place at the time of the high inflow, these have been strengthened, modified and often tailored to the newly emerging needs. In addition, new initiatives and tools have been developed and introduced.

The EU-level contribution to the efforts of Member States in integrating refugees and asylum seekers has many challenges.

- The EU legislative framework sets minimum standards and conditions for the reception of asylum seekers and stipulates the nature of the protection to be granted to refugees. While these touch upon integration (for example, concerning access to the labour market, education, social benefits, etc.), the development and implementation of integration policies and programmes remains the responsibility of Member States.
- To meet the minimum standards as set out in the EU legislative framework, Member States are assisted by EU funding, which increasingly focuses on supporting the integration of newcomers from third countries. The implementation of the integration measures is, however, the remit of the governments of the Member States. Moreover, many of the measures towards social integration, which are important prerequisites for labour market integration (such as housing, education, healthcare) are being implemented at local level. Thus, the role of municipalities in this process is also crucial and special attention should be paid to local areas (there are promising initiatives such as the Urban Agenda Partnership on the Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees and others within the Rural Development Programmes).
- As regards future trends, more emphasis needs to be placed on longer-term integration measures. This means that in addition to AMIF (or the future Asylum and Migration Fund), Member States should be encouraged to make more use of the European Structural and Investment Funds to promote the integration of refugees. On the one hand, mainstreaming migrant integration would increasingly be necessary for longer-term integration; on the other, focus on the specific needs of refugees and asylum seekers is still needed.
- More coordination between the various EU funds (for example, between the AMIF and the ESF) is needed to enable a smoother transition from initial reception services and orientation to integration measures (including access to housing, education, recognition of skills and qualifications) and on to longer-term integration (including access to employment).

2 Policy and regulatory context

This chapter provides an overview of the policy and regulatory context with regard to the integration of refugees and asylum seekers across the five Member States included in this study, focusing on employment and labour market integration, education, housing, health and social integration.

Employment and labour market integration

Integration into the labour market is widely acknowledged as the cornerstone of integration into society. Policymakers across the EU place high priority on effective ways to support sustainable labour market integration.

In the five Member States examined in this study, there is variation in the regulations regarding labour market access, ranging from restricted access in Austria to rather liberal rules in Sweden. In line with EU regulations, in almost all Member States asylum seekers are permitted access to the labour market no later than nine months after filing their application for international protection. The exact waiting period for access varies across countries (Table 1).

Education

Education systems differ considerably across the Member States selected for analysis. The provision of education services for refugees and asylum seekers is complex, given the varied nature of this target group.

- For adult refugees and asylum seekers, education services tend to focus on support to enable them to access the labour market in the host country. This covers activities relating to their professional backgrounds, as well as support to learn the language of the host country or the key skills of numeracy and literacy required.
- For minors amongst refugees and asylum seekers, the focus has been on providing services to enable their access to the compulsory education system so that they can work towards academic and/or vocational qualifications.

In Austria, education is the responsibility of central government, with the federal government setting the policy framework and supporting the implementation of support measures. There are differences between the education provided for adult and minor refugees and

Table 1: Conditions for labour market access for asylum seekers in the selected Member States

Member State	Period of access	Conditions
Austria	After three months of registering an asylum claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Subject to a labour market test (which examines whether the job could be occupied by an Austrian or other EU citizen). ○ Access to paid employment is restricted to seasonal work in the tourism and agriculture sector.
Finland	After three months of registering an asylum claim and providing a valid ID card	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asylum seekers wishing to work after three months of registering in Finland will be granted a work permit by the Immigration Office. ○ Asylum seekers, however, are not entitled to the same support as refugees when it comes to their labour market integration.
Germany	After three months of registering an asylum claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Asylum seekers cannot access employment as long as they are obliged to stay in the initial reception centres. ○ Asylum seekers from safe countries of origin* are obliged to stay in the initial reception centres for the whole duration of their asylum procedures. ○ Access is subject to a labour market test (suspended from August 2016 until August 2019 in 133 out of 156 regions with low unemployment rates).
Netherlands	After six months of registering an asylum claim	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ For the first six months of the asylum process, asylum seekers cannot undertake formal work – they can only work in a reception centre and cannot earn more than €14 per week ○ After the initial 6-month period, asylum seekers can work for only 24 weeks within a 12-month period, and they must request an employment licence for asylum seekers (<i>tewerkstellingsvergunning</i>).
Sweden	No time limit on labour market access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Labour market access for asylum seekers is possible without having to wait, although until recently a work permit was only issued to those with a valid ID. ○ When an asylum seeker meets the eligibility criteria for a work permit exemption, this is registered on their asylum seeker card so that it is visible to potential employers. ○ If a person has been employed during the asylum process for at least four months, they may apply for a work permit after an application for asylum has been rejected, provided that the employer presents an offer of extended employment.

Note: *International Law (Geneva Convention) and EU law (Asylum Procedures Directive) consider a country 'safe' when there is a democratic system and the following conditions are generally and consistently fulfilled: No persecution; no torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; no threat of violence; no armed conflict. To date, 12 Member States already have national lists of safe countries of origin.

asylum seekers. With regard to adults, the main aim is to enable rapid integration into the labour market; hence, the focus is on the recognition of qualifications, including informally acquired skills and competencies as well as vocational education. The main challenges that can be identified are issues with integrating those adults who have no previous education or who need basic rather than vocational education. Regarding minors, measures have focused on two areas: better coordination to enable the education system to cope with the influx of arriving children; and additional support in the form of language classes so that arriving children will be able to participate in the regular education system.

In Finland, it is also national government that is responsible for education issues and the recognition of foreign degrees. Currently, the education of children is the responsibility of local municipalities. Preparatory education before starting general upper secondary education was introduced for migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, by law in 2014 (European Commission, 2016b). Municipalities receive additional public funding for a maximum of one year per person to set up preparatory classes or organise additional support in regular classes. Children staying in reception centres are also entitled to early childhood education, based on the Child Day Care Act. Prior to receiving vocational training, adults can also take part in preparatory studies. For instance, they may complete the syllabus for basic and general upper secondary education (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2016).

In relation to vocational training and upper secondary education in each of these countries, the education of migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, can be organised in a flexible manner, either in Swedish or Finnish. In terms of the content of vocational training, profession-related vocabulary is emphasised.

In contrast to Austria and Finland, education in Germany is a matter for federal states (*Länder*). Access to the education system is in principle inclusive for refugees and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers generally have access to vocational training, and the right (and obligation) to attend school extends to all children who reside in Germany, regardless of their status (Aida, 2019a). All beneficiaries of international protection holding the required qualifications may take up tertiary education or vocational training. Preparatory courses are also in place. Persons granted asylum and persons granted subsidiary protection are entitled to take up vocational training through a variety of measures, including training placements under Section 35 of Social Code III, which match training applicants to employers offering apprenticeships (EMN, 2016a).

Similar to other countries, such as Austria, education provision for refugees and asylum seekers in the Netherlands depends on the recipient subgroup. Regarding the education of minors, education institutions are responsible for creating education programmes that are accessible for new students. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science aims to enable the enrolment of children in schools within three months of arrival in the Netherlands. In the first year at school, children learn basic

language skills with an assigned teacher in preparatory classes (EMN, 2017a). Children of secondary school age attend 'international intermediary classes' before entering mainstream classes. International intermediary classes had been in place prior to 2015 for all newcomers to the Netherlands to provide the necessary foundation to enter the regular education system (EMN, 2017a).

In Sweden, access to basic education (up to secondary school) for newly arrived pupils is the responsibility of the municipalities. The Swedish Migration Agency offers both general and targeted support to enhance the reception and education of pupils. Targeted support measures are offered to municipal schools to develop their operations related to the reception and education of migrant children. The Swedish Migration Agency also provides general support and skills development courses for teachers (Swedish Migration Agency, undated-a). A new regulation came into force on 1 January 2016 requiring the compulsory assessment of migrant pupils' knowledge and introducing part-time introductory classes (European Commission, 2016c). Migrant children can, according to the new regulations, be taught in introductory classes for a maximum of two years but should at the same time hold a place in a mainstream class in which they should take part in the ordinary teaching in accordance with his or her proficiency in the subject. After two years at most, learners need to be accommodated in mainstream classes, with additional education support if needed. Moreover, as of 1 June 2017, a new regulation came into force stipulating the possibility for students at secondary school to receive a new or prolonged residency permit. The residency permits are still time-limited, but a new one with a duration of six months can be granted after graduation, during which time the person can seek employment (SKL, undated).

Housing

Ensuring access to safe and appropriate housing for refugees and asylum seekers is necessary in order to meet one of the fundamental human needs before any further integration in the host country can be considered (European Commission, 2014; IFHP, 2015; EFL, 2016; Housing Europe, undated). In all five countries, access to housing has been provided as part of the basic welfare support that refugees and asylum seekers receive during their asylum procedure.

Upon arrival, asylum seekers are usually placed in reception centres until a decision on their asylum application is taken. For example, on initial arrival in the Netherlands, asylum seekers apply for asylum at the central reception centre, where they reside for a maximum of three days. Asylum seekers are then transferred to a process reception centre, where they will stay until a decision is reached on their application. Applicants who are granted protection are then transferred to an asylum seekers' centre until public social housing is arranged (Aida, 2019b). In contrast, in Germany, upon arrival, asylum seekers are distributed to the different federal states according to a quota system; once allocated, asylum seekers are obliged to remain in their initial reception

facilities for up to six months, with some exceptions. A dispersal policy for refugees was introduced in August 2016 to avoid secondary migration to urban areas and to spread the financial burden.

In Sweden, which also has a dispersal policy, a new act on the reception of newly arrived immigrants for settlement entered into force on 1 March 2016. The reason for the reform was lack of capacity in the system, which was based on refugees' own ability to find housing in combination with voluntary agreements for municipalities to accommodate those who needed help. The high number of persons granted international protection since the refugee crisis has led to bottlenecks where many persons granted asylum continue to stay in reception centres for long periods of time. The act imposes an obligation on municipalities to settle newly arrived immigrants staying at the Migration Board's reception centres. However, the act does not affect the possibility for newly arrived immigrants to find a place on their own. The allocation of migrants between the municipalities takes into account the local labour market conditions, population size and the overall number of newly arrived immigrants, unaccompanied minors and asylum seekers already living in municipalities.

In addition to reception centres, other forms of accommodation are available in the Member States. In Sweden, housing can be at an apartment rented by the Migration Agency anywhere in the country, where the newly arrived migrants usually live with their families and do not share accommodation with other asylum applicants. In Austria, the government has recently funded 'start-up flats' to provide immediate access to housing. Such accommodation is sometimes offered by commissioned institutions (e.g. church-affiliated organisations or voluntary associations). In Finland and Germany, asylum seekers can also opt to stay in private accommodation while waiting for their application decision. However, it has been difficult to find private accommodation after being granted protection status – particularly in big cities – and as a result many remain in collective accommodation centres and emergency shelters for long periods. Remaining in a reception centre raises administrative issues for the municipalities, in addition to hindering the integration of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection into both the housing market and society in general (Aida, 2019c), as refugees will need more time to become independent in their own living and housing arrangements.

In all five Member States, refugees often face difficulties in finding accommodation in the open housing market, especially in metropolitan areas where affordable housing is hard to find. Challenges also include ensuring adequate housing conditions, especially in urban areas having a high concentration of refugees and asylum seekers.

Health

In all five Member States, beneficiaries of international protection with a recognised status (thus considered to be legal residents) are entitled to the same treatment as nationals of the Member State. In the case of four Member

States (Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden), asylum seekers have restricted access and receive 'basic' care only. In Austria, migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, are entitled to the same treatment as Austrian citizens. In Finland, Germany and Sweden, however, all asylum seekers receive a medical examination on arrival. In Germany, asylum seekers have very limited entitlement to care; this is only available for 'acute diseases or pain' during the first 15 months of residence. In practice, while in most *Länder* asylum seekers are provided with a health insurance voucher (*Krankenschein*), in some *Länder*, such as Bremen and Hamburg, asylum seekers receive health cards granting equal entitlements, which enable them to see a doctor without an initial permission from the authorities (Aida, 2019c).

In Austria, within the Austrian integration strategy, authorities define migrant health as a separate field of action; therefore, services are more responsive to migrants' health needs. In Sweden, standards, training and adapted diagnostic and treatment methods were adopted in recent years – these are implemented by healthcare facilities. One initiative explicitly targeting mental health among newly arrived migrants and asylum seekers is the Health in Sweden (*Hälsa i Sverige*) programme. The purpose of this programme is to enable all Swedish regions and councils to make use of effective tools and to train all staff who can contribute to positive health development for both asylum seekers and refugee newcomers, aiming to 'increase knowledge and strengthen capacity throughout the country and at all levels' (SKL, undated). In Germany, several specialised centres are working to develop methods to treat specific migrant health concerns (such as post-traumatic stress disorder, torture, female genital mutilation, transcultural psychiatry) (MIPEX, 2015).

Several measures have been adopted to facilitate access to healthcare and address problems that may impact this, including language barriers. In Austria, interpreters are available free of charge for patients with inadequate proficiency in German. Legal migrants and asylum seekers can obtain information on health issues in several languages through websites, brochures, campaigns and services, although intercultural mediators are still rare (MIPEX, 2015). In the Netherlands, asylum seekers are provided guidance concerning the Dutch health system and how to access it. In Sweden, migrants receive information about health issues and care in different languages through documents and websites and from healthcare personnel (the languages available depend on the region where services are sought). A few regional initiatives involve migrants (mostly newcomer refugees) in designing and delivering information. Patients and services can also use free interpretation services to overcome communication difficulties; these services are provided face-to-face or via telephone. In Germany, migrants receive information on their entitlements and health issues in some languages (e.g. German, English and Russian). Cultural mediators are rarely available, and when they are, this is in most cases due to voluntary initiatives (MIPEX, 2015).

Social integration

Social integration refers broadly to settling in and acquiring the knowledge and skills needed to ‘navigate’ social and daily life in the host society; it includes civic participation, such as language skills and basic information about the legal system, history and culture of the host country. According to the EU’s Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU, ‘integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of Member States’.¹⁷

In the five Member States, social integration is supported through public services and/or voluntary organisations or associations, such as sports clubs, usually provided at local level by municipalities. In four Member States, with the exception of Germany, social integration is typically part of an integration plan.

Social integration courses are provided in all five Member States. Such courses are typically mandatory and include language training (e.g. levels A1 and A2 in Austria). In addition to language classes, social integration courses also entail orientation components which aim to provide an understanding of Member States’ legal order – human rights, democracy, the rights and obligations of the individual, and how the society works – as well as culture and history. For example, in Sweden, the orientation covers eight compulsory components: to come to Sweden, to live in Sweden, to be self-sufficient and develop in Sweden, the rights and obligations of the individual, to form a family and live with children in Sweden, to exert influence in Sweden, to care for your health in Sweden and

to age in Sweden. The courses usually cover the following skills (EMN, 2015a):

- information about the country of destination
- skills to develop helpful attitudes, including: proactivity, self-sufficiency and resourcefulness (knowing how to find the right information)
- skills to facilitate integration, including: how to conduct oneself in certain situations, time management and goal-setting, navigating complex systems such as banking, social, health and emergency services and transportation

The courses are provided by municipalities or outsourced to external providers. The duration of orientation courses differs significantly across Member States. In Germany, the orientation entails 100 class hours, in Sweden, it amounts to 60 hours, while in Austria, refugees must commit to completing a ‘value and orientation’ course lasting 8 hours. Following the German Integration Act of August 2016, the so-called integration course, covering language tuition and orientation, can be accessed not only by refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection but also by asylum seekers with high chances of being recognised and by tolerated persons¹⁸ (if places are available). In the Netherlands since October 2017, the ‘participation declaration’ has been a compulsory component of the civic integration programme for migrants entering the country for family reunification or family formation. The purpose of the declaration is to introduce new arrivals to core Dutch values soon after their settlement and it is mandatory – non-compliance can result in a €340 fine.

¹⁷ See <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/librarydoc/common-basic-principles-for-immigrant-integration-policy-in-the-eu>

¹⁸ See next chapter for details on ‘tolerated status’.

3 Profile of refugees and asylum seekers and overview of integration measures

This chapter presents an overview of the main characteristics of the refugees and asylum seekers that entered the EU from 2015 to 2017, focusing specifically on the five Member States included in the research. It also presents at the end a summary of the integration measures selected for the case studies. The overall aim is to show how integration measures in the selected Member States are seeking to address challenges in relation to education, employment, housing and health.

Statistical overview of asylum seekers and refugee flows

This section provides an overview of refugee and asylum seeker flows in the EU, particularly for the five selected Member States (Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) in the period 2015–2017. This is based on Eurostat data on the following:

- first-time asylum applicants
- recognition rates and status granted
- tolerated status
- pending applications
- gender and age distribution of first-time asylum applicants
- country of origin
- education levels
- employment/unemployment rates of refugees and asylum seekers

First-time asylum applicants

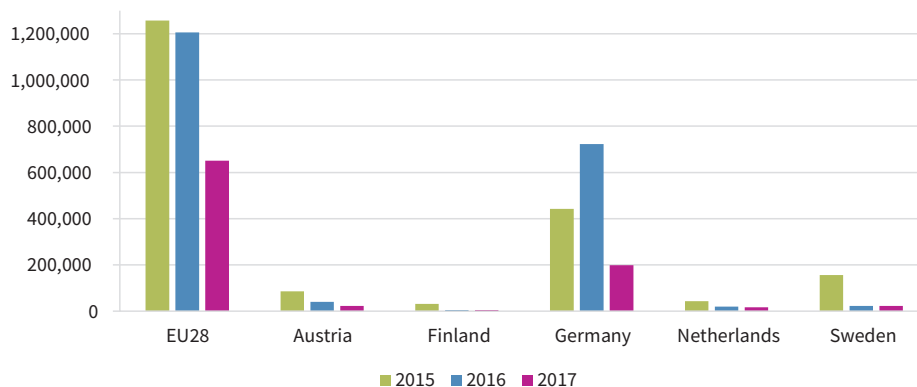
With regard to first-time asylum applications, the largest number was recorded in 2015 (1,257,605), after which the number dropped across the EU28 in 2016 (1,206,434) and again, more notably, in 2017 (651,250). The peaks in 2015 and 2016 can be explained by the unprecedented influx of refugees and asylum seekers into the EU during the height of the so-called ‘refugee crisis’ resulting primarily from conflict in Syria.

Figure 1 provides an overview of first-time asylum applicants to the EU, and separate figures for the five selected countries, from 2015 to 2017. The majority of first-time applicants entered Germany during this period, followed by Sweden and Austria.

Germany was the only country where there was a sharp increase in the number of first-time applicants in 2016 (to 722,364 from 441,899 in 2015). This can probably be explained by Germany’s ‘open-border’ policy, which was introduced in 2015 when the federal government temporarily suspended the Dublin protocol that requires asylum seekers to register in the first EU Member State they enter (EMN, 2017c). However, by 2017, the number of first-time applicants decreased to 198,310, which is in line with the general decrease across the EU.

In the case of Austria, the closure of the Balkan route and the EU–Turkey Statement that entered into force in March 2016 contributed to the significant decline in first-time asylum seekers from 85,521 in 2015 to 22,471 in 2017 (European Parliament, 2018). In Finland, there was also a significant decrease in the number of first-time asylum applicants between 2015 and 2017, from 32,152

Figure 1: Number of first-time asylum applicants, 2015, 2016, 2017



Source: Eurostat Data Explorer, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asyappctza].

to 4,351 (a decrease of more than 80%). Similarly, in the Netherlands, a decline was observed in first-time asylum applications; this was also the case for the total number of asylum applications, and the greatest fall in both types of application occurred between 2015 and 2016.

Sweden had the highest number of first-time asylum applicants in 2015, when 156,197 people sought asylum in the country. This was almost 12% of all the first-time asylum applications in the EU28 in 2015. The number of first-time asylum applications fell to 22,386 in 2016 and 22,227 in 2017.

Recognition rate

For the EU as a whole, the recognition rate (measured here as first-instance approvals given to applications for asylum) dropped from 52% in 2015 to 46% in 2017. The recognition rates in all selected Member States decreased in this period. The sharpest decrease, from 80% to 49%, was observed in the case of the Netherlands (Figure 2).

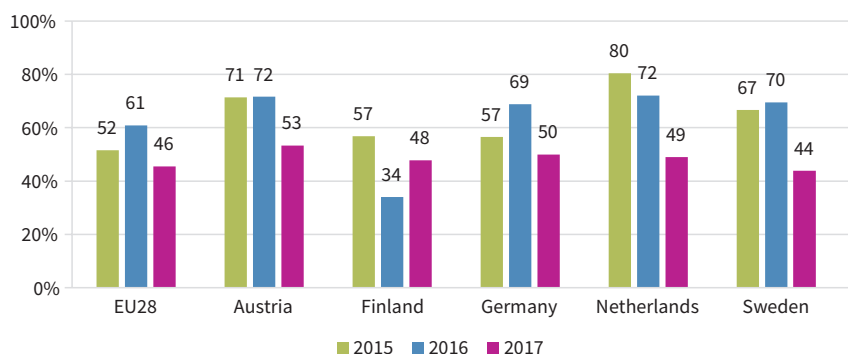
The decrease in recognition rates is due in part to the fact that some countries from which high numbers of asylum applicants originated were considered safe or became safe in the period 2015–2017. For instance, the rejection

rate among asylum seekers from Afghanistan increased in recent years (EEAS, 2016).

Regarding the statuses granted in 2015 in the EU, 74.6% of first-time applicants received Geneva Convention refugee status while 18.1% were granted subsidiary protection and 7.2% received humanitarian status. A significant change was observed over the two-year period until 2017: in this year, only 50.1% of first-time applicants received Geneva Convention status, while the share given subsidiary protection rose to 35.6% and the share obtaining humanitarian status increased to 14.2%. While driven in part by the mix of nationalities of those seeking asylum, this observed change in the type of statuses granted was mostly attributed to changes in the political agenda (European Parliament, 2018). Moreover, Geneva Convention status provides a three-year residence permit while both humanitarian status and subsidiary protection allow for shorter periods of residency, and this shorter duration can have a negative impact on the integration efforts of Member States (European Parliament, 2018).

A similar tendency can be observed among the five Member States, as depicted in Figure 3.

Figure 2: Recognition rate of applications, 2015–2017 (% of total)



Source: Eurostat, First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asydcfst].

Note: The recognition rate was calculated on the basis of the share of positive decisions in the total number of first-instance decisions on applications (Eurostat, 2019b).

Figure 3: Statuses granted, 2015–2017 (% of total)



Source: Eurostat, First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asydcfst].

Tolerated status

All countries included in this research grant the status of ‘tolerated stay’. Exact figures on the number of persons which have been granted this status cannot be provided for each country. According to figures provided by the German Federal Statistical Office, Germany granted tolerated stay status to 155,105 third-country nationals in 2015 and 154,780 in 2016 (Statistisches Bundesamt, undated). Only estimates can be provided for Austria, Finland and the Netherlands. In Austria, 289 persons were granted tolerated stay in 2015 and 270 were given this status in 2016; this dropped to 161 persons being granted tolerated stay up to May 2017 (EMN, 2017b).¹⁹ In Finland, just five persons in 2016 and two in 2017 were granted a temporary residence permit on the basis of Section 51 of the Aliens Act. In the Netherlands, 50 persons in 2015 and 50 persons in 2016 were granted a temporary residence permit.²⁰ No figures are available for Sweden.

Pending applications

In June 2018, a total of 730,930 asylum applications were pending in the EU28.²¹ More than half of these asylum applications were recorded in Germany (410,585), followed by Austria (46,065) and Sweden (43,245) (Figure 4). A major problem with a high number of pending applications is that asylum seekers do not have the same rights as

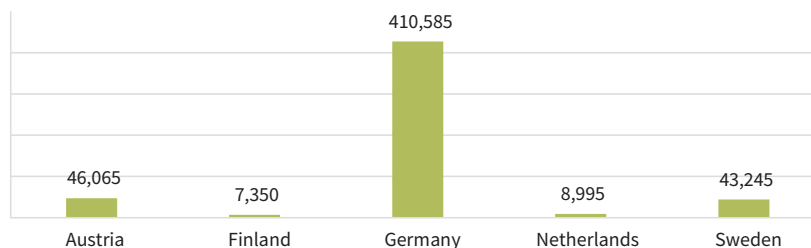
refugees and do not have the same access to the labour market or to integration measures.

Gender and age of first-time asylum applicants

During 2015–2017, there was no significant change in the age distribution of first-time asylum applicants in the EU. In 2015, the majority of first-time applicants (53.2%) were aged 18–34; applications from this age group remained relatively high in 2017 (51.5%). In 2015, Finland had the highest share of those aged 18–34, with 60.6% in this age group; this dropped to 48.6% in 2017. There were similar trends in Germany and Austria: in Germany, applications from this age group decreased from 50.6% in 2015 to 38.8% in 2017; in Austria, their share was 47.4% in 2015, falling to 33.9% in 2017. In Sweden, 39% of first-time applicants were aged 18–34 in 2015. This did not change significantly over the analysed period and was 40% in 2017. Figure 5 shows the age distribution of first-time applicants in the five Member States in 2017.

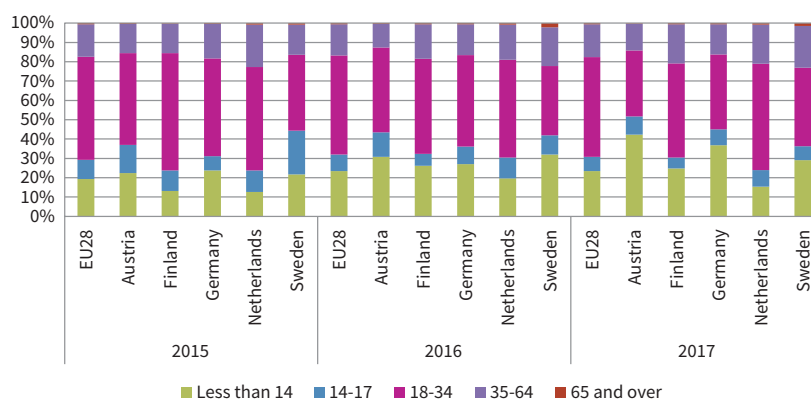
After those aged 18–34, the most common age group among first-time asylum applicants was minors (under 18s); this group represented 30.9% of first-time applicants in the EU in 2017. This was followed by the 35–64 group, making up 16.9% of the total asylum applications lodged.

Figure 4: Number of persons subject to asylum applications pending at the end of June 2018



Source: Eurostat, Persons subject of asylum applications pending at the end of the month by citizenship, age and sex – Monthly data (rounded) [migr_asympctzm].

Figure 5: Age distribution of first-time applicants, 2015–2017 (% of total)



Source: Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asyappctza].

19 In Austria, while persons may have tolerated status, this status is officially deemed illegal according to Article 31, paragraph 1a, subparagraph 3 of the Austrian Federal Act on the Exercise of Aliens’ Police.

20 If a third-country national does not leave the country, with or without assistance from the Repatriation and Departure Service, legal residency can be granted on grounds of special policy for third-country nationals who cannot leave the Netherlands through no fault of their own.

21 The most recent data that include all five Member States are from June 2018.

The share of those aged 65 and older remained low, representing only 0.6% of applications.

In terms of the sex of first-time applicants in the EU during 2015–2017, male applicants outnumbered female asylum seekers. In 2015, almost three in four (72.5%) first-time applications were from males, and this remained high in 2017 (66.8%). A similar trend is observed in all five Member States. Finland had the highest share of male applicants in 2015 (81.5%), a trend which continued in 2016 (65%). In 2017, the highest rate of male applications was found in the Netherlands (72.7%), while the countries with the least variation according to sex of first-time applicants were Sweden (where 58.8% of applicants were male compared to 41.2% who were female) and Austria (58.9% compared to 41.0%).

Figure 6 shows the distribution of first-time applicants according to sex for the EU as a whole and for the five selected countries in 2017.

As would be expected given the distribution of applications according to sex, the majority of those who received Geneva Convention status or humanitarian status were male (71.1% of applicants in the EU in 2015). However, in the period between 2015 and 2017, the share of females steadily increased (from 28.8% in 2015 to 38.0% in 2017). This was partly due to family reunification procedures.

Based on these findings, it can be concluded that in all five Member States asylum seekers are younger compared

to the age distributions in host countries, with most applications coming from those under the age of 34. The majority of these young people are men, likely to be in need of employment or continuing education and training. This means that both the education and training systems, as well as the public employment services (PES) in the Member States, must play a key role in the integration of these newly arrived refugees.

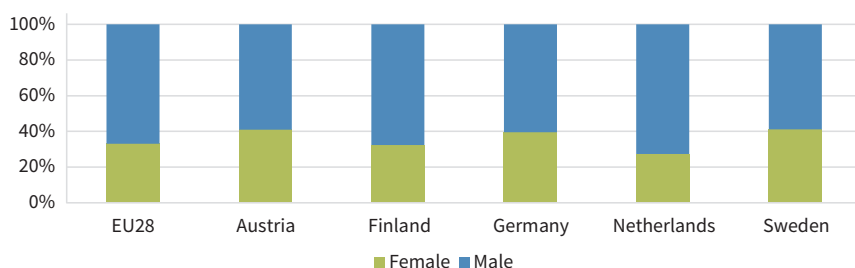
Country of origin of asylum applicants

The majority of asylum seekers who received a positive decision on their asylum application came from Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria. The top three countries of origin for applicants in the EU in 2015 were Syria, Albania and Kosovo while in 2018 they were Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. In 2018, asylum applicants from these three countries represented almost half (44%) of total applications. (Figure 8).

There is great variety in terms of the country of origin of first-time asylum applicants in the five selected Member States. In Austria, the majority of asylum applicants in 2015 were from Afghanistan (29.5%), followed by Syrian (28.9%) and Iraqi (15.5%) nationals. Thus, the top three countries of origin represented 73.9% of the total asylum claims in Austria. By 2017, Syrians lodged 32.3% of the asylum claims, followed by Afghans (15%) and Pakistanis (6.5%).

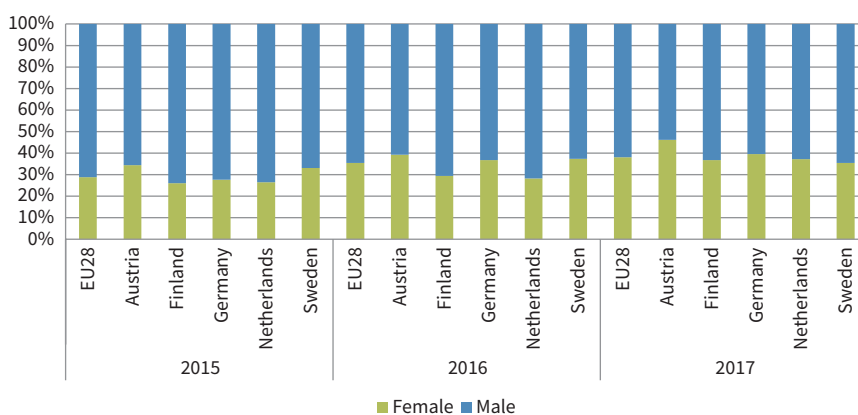
In Finland, 63% of the asylum applicants in 2015 were Iraqi nationals, followed by applicants from Afghanistan and

Figure 6: Sex distribution of first-time applicants, 2017 (% of total)



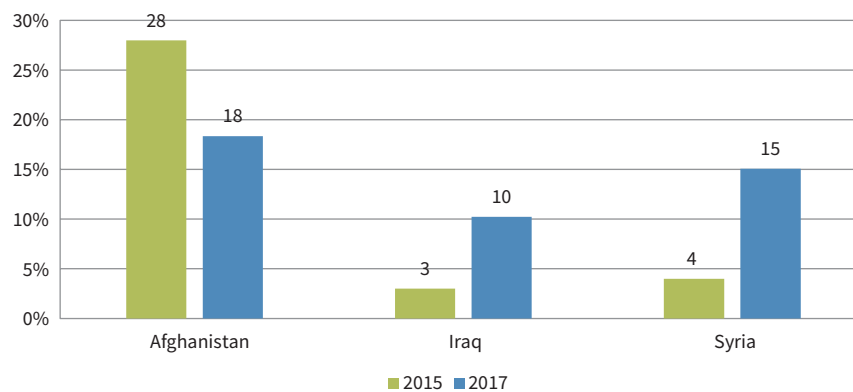
Source: Eurostat, Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asyappctza.]

Figure 7: First-instance positive decisions by sex of applicant, 2015–2017 (% of total)



Source: Eurostat, First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asydcfsta].

Figure 8: Share of the top three countries of origin among total first-time asylum applications in the EU Member States, 2015 and 2017 (% of total)



Source: Eurostat, *First instance decisions on applications by citizenship, age and sex – Annual aggregated data (rounded) [migr_asydcfsta]*.

Somalia. In 2017, the top three countries of origin were Eritrea, Iraq and Syria.

In Germany, Syrians lodged the most asylum claims in 2015 (35.9%), followed by applicants from Albania and Kosovo. By 2017, the top three countries of origin were Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria.

In the Netherlands, Eritrea and Syria were the main countries of origin among asylum applicants in both 2015 and 2017.

In Sweden, 32.6% of first-time asylum seekers in 2015 were Syrian nationals, with a further 26.3% coming from Afghanistan and 13% from Iraq. In 2017, the top countries among the first-time asylum applicants were Eritrea (6.9%) and Somalia (3.0%).

Educational level

It is widely acknowledged that education is key to further integration, yet there is very little data available on the educational attainment of refugees and asylum seekers in most Member States.

In Austria, the educational level of refugees is assessed through competence checks carried out by the Austrian PES. In 2016, the competencies of 6,000 refugees registered with the Austrian PES (24% of the total) were assessed. The assessment showed a strong disparity in educational levels among ethnic groups. While 85% of refugees from Iran, 62% of those from Syria and 57% of those from Iraq had at least school leaving certificates, permitting university entrance or a higher education degree, 25% of applicants from Afghanistan had no formal schooling (European Parliament, 2018). This was confirmed in a recent study conducted by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, which also noted large disparities in educational qualifications, with applicants from Afghanistan making up the highest proportion of those who are illiterate or have low levels of formal schooling (ICPMD, 2017).

In Germany, there are two data sources providing information on school attendance and vocational education: the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey, covering refugees and asylum seekers who arrived in Germany between 2013 and 2017, and registration data from the German PES.²² The Refugee Survey revealed that 35% of refugees had graduated from secondary school in their country of origin, 11% had a degree from a higher education institution and 5% had a vocational education degree. However, 13% reported never having been to school (IAB-BAMF-SOEP, 2018).

In Sweden, data is available on the educational level of those enrolled in the Swedish introduction programme. This shows that among those who participated in the programme in 2016 (about 70,000 individuals), 48% had at most 10 years of education, 22% had upper secondary education and 30% had higher education (European Parliament, 2018).

In 2016, the Finnish Ministry of Education and Culture conducted a survey among 1,004 asylum seekers in reception centres, from 32 nationalities, to measure their education background, work history and readiness for study. Based on this (non-representative) survey, 79% of asylum seekers were found to have basic education (7–9 years), 50% had completed high school education, 14% had done vocational studies, 27% had a university degree (mostly at bachelor's level), 7% had no education at all and 7% were illiterate (Vänskä-Rajala, 2016). No figures were found for the Netherlands.

These significant differences in relation to educational attainment reinforce the need for targeted integration measures, both in terms of education support and access to the labour market.

Employment/unemployment rates

In general, the success and speed of labour market integration depends on language support, legal certainty over residence and, as a result, investments in education

²² From June 2016, the German public employment service identifies refugees and asylum seekers in the unemployment and benefit claimant statistics (but not in the employment statistics) by duration of residence and permit type.

and training, as well as job placement and the labour market situation in the host country. Thus, sustainable labour market integration takes time.

Based on the EU Labour Force Survey 2014 (ad hoc module), data for Austria shows that refugees are less likely (by 12 percentage points) than economic migrants to be gainfully employed. For female refugees, the likelihood is 20 percentage points lower. Employment rates have been particularly low for asylum seekers entering Austria between 2005 and 2014. This gap might be due in part to differences in levels of educational attainment, although the limited access for asylum seekers to the labour market undoubtedly plays a role too (European Parliament, 2018).

Data from the German Refugee Survey in 2017 show that one in four refugees and asylum seekers (including tolerated persons) arriving in Germany after 2013 were in employment after two to three years, rising to 40% after more than three years. On the basis of Swedish administrative data (covering the period 1990–2014), less than 50% of (recognised) refugees had entered the labour market five years after coming to Sweden. After 10 years, the share was about 60% (European Parliament, 2018). Figures are not available for Finland and the Netherlands.

Overview of integration measures in the selected Member States

The above analysis shows that refugees and asylum seekers are often in a precarious labour market situation and frequently lack appropriate education. This, along with language difficulties and lack of social networks in the host countries, makes their integration into the labour market even more difficult. This section describes how integration measures in the selected Member States are aiming to address the challenges in relation to education, employment, housing and health.

In most countries, following the large number of asylum applications in 2015, integration measures were either adapted and/or new ones were implemented in order to address the increased challenges caused by the influx of refugees. Some of these measures are discussed in this chapter.

Thematic areas covered

Table 2 provides an outline of which thematic areas are covered by the range of integration measures. As indicated by the table legend, some measures focus on particular

Table 2: Types of measures covered

Member State	Name of measure	Employment/ labour market	Education	Housing	Social integration	Health
Austria	Jugendcollege	✓	✓			
	Values and orientation courses	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Language courses		✓			
Finland	SIB (Social Impact Bond)	✓				
	SIMHE (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education)	✓	✓			
	PALOMA					✓
Germany	MYSKILLS	✓				
	Step by Step					✓
	IvAF (Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees)	✓	✓		✓	
	Welcome Guides	✓				
Netherlands	Platform Opnieuw Thuis			✓		
	OTAV		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Zeist WegWijZ				✓	
Sweden	Sweden Together/100 Club	✓				
	Short Way	✓	✓			
	Swedish Resettlement Programme			✓		

Table legend:



The predominant integration area(s) addressed by the measure



The integration area is addressed by the measure, but is not the main focus

thematic areas more than others. Seven measures focus predominantly on labour market integration; four are mainly concerned with education; two with housing; three with social integration; and two with health.

Role of public services and other public entities

The role of public services and other public entities varies across the selected integration measures. In five of the measures, particularly those measures related to labour market orientation and activation, the public services involved were PES. In two cases, the responsible entities were government research entities and public universities, and in one case, a local authority. In six other cases, public authorities, such as ministries and government agencies, were involved, often in collaboration with other public and private actors (for example, in the case of Welcome Guides in Germany, the Chamber of Commerce was involved).

In the majority of measures examined in the study, the public services and other public entities took on the responsibility of ‘regulator’ and were, therefore, responsible for regulating and overseeing the integration measures. In other cases, the public services/other public

entities acted as a ‘service provider’ and implemented the measures (this was the case in just over half of the measures examined). In some cases, the public services were primarily responsible for financing the measures – that is, they took on the role of ‘funder’. Nevertheless, for almost all measures (with the exception of one), the role of the public entities was not an exclusive one, but rather involved a combination of the three primary roles.

Table 3 provides an overview of the types of public service or other public entity that were involved with the integration measures featured in this report. The table also details the specific role those public services or entities played.

The area of integration in which the public services/ other entities work largely determines the types of public services involved and their roles. For most of the labour market integration measures, the public services involved were PES, though the role of the public services differs significantly from case to case. In two cases – Sweden Together/100 Club (*Sverige tillsammans*) and MYSKILLS (Germany) – PES were responsible for the implementation of the measures, and in another two cases – Short Way (*Korta Vägen*) (Sweden) and Jugendcollege (Austria) –

Table 3: Type of public organisations involved with integration measures and the roles they play






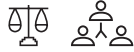







Member State	Integration measure	Geographical scope of measure	Category of public service/other public entity involved	Role of public service/other public entity involved
Austria	Jugendcollege	Regional	PES (regional)	
	Values and orientation courses	National	Integration fund (national)	
	Language courses	National	Integration fund (national)	
Finland	Social Impact Bond (SIB)	National	Ministry	
	Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education (SIMHE)	National	Public universities; ministry	
	PALOMA	National	Government research institute; hospitals	
Germany	MYSKILLS	National	PES (national)	
	Step by Step	Regional	Ministry	
	Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees (IvAF)	Regional	Ministry	
	Welcome Guides	National	Ministry; chamber of commerce	
Netherlands	Platform Opnieuw Thuis	National	Ministries; government agencies	
	OTAV	National	Ministry; government agency; health service providers	
	Zeist WegWijZ	Municipal	Local authority	

Table 3: (Continued)











Member State	Integration measure	Geographical scope of measure	Category of public service/other public entity involved	Role of public service/other public entity involved
Sweden	Sweden Together/100 Club	National	PES (national)	  
	Short Way	National	PES (national)	 
	Swedish Resettlement Programme	National	Government agency; PES	 

Table legend:

-  Responsible for regulating and overseeing the implementation of the measure
-  Responsible for financing the measure
-  Responsible for implementing the measure as a service provider

PES were responsible for designing, overseeing and procuring implementation of the measure from education service providers. In the other cases – the SIB, SIMHE and Welcome Guides – public authorities such as ministries (and not public services) were responsible for commissioning and overseeing the measures. In the area of education, PES have generally acted as regulators in the measures examined, overseeing the education service providers.

In both of the health measures examined, the public services and authorities play a significant role. In Germany, the Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration initiated the measure and was responsible for overseeing its implementation. Similarly, the role of public services is crucial in all phases of the PALOMA (Developing national mental health policies for refugees) project.

Municipalities and local authorities played a key role in the areas of housing and social integration. In the Netherlands and Sweden, municipalities are responsible for housing newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers. In Sweden, the resettlement of refugees is carried out directly through a municipality and not through a transit home or other form of temporary reception – it is in fact quite rare for this to happen. Municipalities also engage in various efforts for integration and establishment from the first day of arrival. In the Netherlands, the onus on local authorities is part of a wider move to decentralise responsibilities and services – predominantly in the social domain – from national to regional and local governments. Local authorities, therefore, have discretion to develop their own social services offer. However, the varying size and capacity of the local authorities has meant that some do not have sufficient capacity to cope with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The decentralised nature of the regions in Germany has also

led to diverging implementation of national rules at the federal level. Nevertheless, local authorities have generally played a key role in the social integration domain, collaborating primarily with voluntary organisations and NGOs in delivering social integration measures in local communities.

Profile and composition of target groups

Nine of the integration measures target both refugees and asylum seekers (Jugendcollege; Values and orientation courses; Language courses; MYSKILLS; IvAF; Welcome Guides; SIB; PALOMA; OTAV), while seven target only refugees (Step by Step; Platform Opnieuw Thuis; Zeist WegWijZ; Sweden Together/100 Club; Short Way; Swedish Resettlement Programme; SIMHE). None of the measures target asylum seekers exclusively.

Ten measures have further conditions for participation depending on their aims and objectives. For example, MYSKILLS is aimed at refugees and asylum seekers without formal qualifications; Step by Step is intended for refugees suffering trauma and in need of psychotherapeutic care; SIMHE is aimed at refugees who have completed a degree or are eligible for higher education; Short Way is aimed at refugees who have at least a bachelor’s degree or who have completed at least three years of higher education in their country of origin. In Austria, resource constraints mean that asylum seekers are only able to participate in language courses if this is approved by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) and if there are available places.

Finally, four measures capture the needs of children: Step by Step does so through direct service provision, while Platform Opnieuw Thuis, OTAV and Zeist WegWijZ do so through the broad and encompassing nature of their work.

Funding mechanisms and budget

Of those measures for which information is available, ministries are the sole funders of three initiatives (Language courses; Step by Step; Welcome Guides) and the co-funders of a further three (value and orientation courses; IvAF; OTAV).²³ PES provide sole funding for two measures (Sweden Together/100 Club and Short Way) and co-funding for one (Jugendcollege). Two measures

draw part of their funding from EU funds: IvAF, until the 2019 period, received €105 million through the European Social Fund, and the European Investment Fund invested €10 million in the SIB (Social Impact Bond) scheme. The SIB is the only initiative that receives private funding: it is based on a social impact bond model, through which private investors finance measures. SIMHE is the only measure financed by public universities.

²³ It was not possible to derive information on the funding mechanisms and budget for three measures: MYSKILLS; Platform Opnieuw Thuis; and Sweden Together/100 Club.

4 Comparative analysis of the integration measures across thematic areas

This chapter provides a comparative analysis of the selected integration measures in the following areas: employment and labour market integration, education, housing, health and social integration. By describing the selected integration measures within the broader policy and regulatory context, the comparative analysis aims to reveal systemic challenges and lessons learnt in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in each thematic area. The key features of each integration measure are presented in Table 3 (pp. 21-22 in the previous chapter), while Annex A1 provides a more detailed overview of the selected measures.

Employment and labour market integration

Policy and regulatory context

According to the EU Labour Force Survey 2014 (ad hoc module), more than 50% of beneficiaries of international protection need between five and six years to integrate into the workplace in the EU. While labour market integration thus requires considerable time, it seems that refugees enter employment much quicker when labour market conditions are good: this has been the case in Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden and also, more recently, in Austria and Finland. Economic factors such as labour shortages as well as labour supply gaps in the context of ageing populations constitute, in principle, an opportunity for better labour market integration in all five comparison countries.

There are, however, diverging employment patterns among migrants across the EU Member States, which may be due in part to institutional and structural factors (e.g. minimum wage) and vocational qualification systems. In Sweden, for example, employment rates among low-educated migrants (including refugees) lag behind those of native-born Swedes by nearly 20 percentage points,

and the gap in unemployment rates between refugees and native workers also exceeds the EU average. Approximately only 5% of jobs in Sweden require low skills levels and less than upper secondary education, and low-skilled refugees are likely to struggle when seeking to gain a foothold in the medium- and high-skilled labour market, where entry wages are higher (European Commission, 2017d). While these issues existed prior to the large inflow of refugees and asylum seekers in the five selected Member States in 2015, they were exacerbated by the inflow. As a result, all five countries put in place measures to ensure the rapid integration of the newcomers into the labour market.

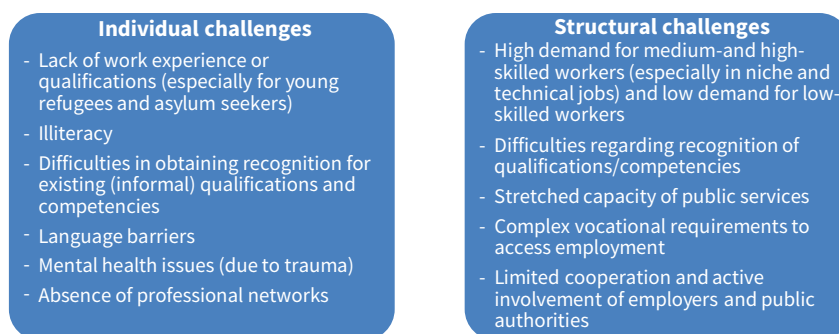
Contextual and structural challenges in the labour market

While refugees and asylum seekers are confronted with a range of individual-level challenges with regard to their labour market integration, there are some challenges facing the public services tasked with integrating them into the labour market (see Figure 9).

As illustrated in Figure 9, there are many challenges facing public services in their efforts to assist refugees and asylum seekers to enter the labour market. The effectiveness of the integration measures across the Member States is further hampered by the following issues.

- The difficulty of anticipating the number of refugees in need of labour market integration measures and the scarcity of data on their education and professional backgrounds affect the capacity of PES to effectively advise and support individual refugees through, for instance, skills recognition and/or tailored placement measures.
- Employers in many countries are often reluctant to offer positions to asylum seekers, due to the perceived administrative burden inherent in obtaining work permits or employment licences, as well as the

Figure 9: Key challenges in the labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers



uncertainty surrounding final status (as applications could be rejected).

- Few of the measures specifically target the labour market integration of the large numbers of young refugees.
- Among the tailored measures offered to refugees, there is a predominance of measures aimed at labour market orientation rather than securing actual job placements – these have only an indirect impact on facilitating access to employment.
- In the absence of dispersal policies, services fall short in designing effective measures to ensure a balanced geographical distribution of refugees matching supply and demand in the job market.
- Ensuring the active involvement of employers remains a challenge. Aside from the lengthy and complex administrative processes involved in obtaining residence and work permits for asylum seekers, the lack of information on available procedures and support measures is a disincentive for employers to hire refugees and asylum seekers.
- The absence of a ‘professional network’ for the refugee could hinder labour market integration.

Lessons learnt from the selected labour market integration measures

Several of the integration measures examined have sought to address the challenges presented above. These have been organised into the following ‘clusters’:

- **preparing young refugees with limited skills for the labour market** – Jugendcollege (Austria)
- **identifying, assessing and recognising skills and qualifications** – MYSKILLS (Germany), SIMHE (Finland), Short Way (Sweden)
- **engaging with the private sector and social partners** – Welcome Guides (Germany); SIB (Social Impact Bond) (Finland) and Sweden Together/100 Club (Sweden)

Preparing young refugees with limited skills for the labour market

In all five countries, refugees and asylum seekers are disproportionately male and young. As shown in the statistical overview in the previous subsection, most

asylum seekers are in the 18–34 age group, followed by those under 18 years of age. Many have no prior education experience or limited experience beyond primary and lower secondary schooling. In addition, many of the young arrivals (including unaccompanied minors) are just over compulsory school age, creating new challenges for education and training systems as they often have no school leaving certificate. Many lack basic knowledge and are not job-ready, with a considerable share being illiterate.

Governments in the five selected countries have reacted differently to this challenge. The Swedish government, for example, has introduced an ‘education duty’ for young refugee adults (18+) with very low education and not deemed to be job-ready (Regeringen, 2016), while the Finnish government launched the Educational Tracks and Integration of Immigrants programme in 2016. In Germany, those above compulsory full-time school age (15–16 years) have to attend ‘integration classes’ in vocational schools up to the age of 18: this involves German language lessons and preparation for work in different occupational fields (including through company internships) for subsequent dual apprenticeship training or for job entry. They also have the possibility to gain a lower-level secondary school leaving certificate. Other countries, such as Austria, have developed specific measures to prepare young refugees and asylum seekers for the labour market through basic education.

The example of Jugendcollege in Austria is particularly interesting, as it provides participants with a holistic basic education, covering not only language classes but also mathematics and soft skills, combined with practical experience in companies. This could be considered by other Member States which seek to address the lack of qualifications among refugees in addition to language skills and the difficulties of integration in general. The young refugees participating in the programme not only receive language and school education, but they are also informed about their potential future educational or vocational path in Austria, which enables them to understand how they can best integrate into the labour market in the long term.

While the project has faced several challenges – such as finding qualified staff, problems arising from participants’ education backgrounds and traumatic experiences and their often unrealistic expectations – it also generates

Austria: Development of basic education – Jugendcollege

In Austria, the regional public employment service in Vorarlberg started the **Jugendcollege** initiative to enable newly arrived young refugees and asylum seekers (15–25 years) to follow a basic education that qualifies them for either further education or entry into vocational dual training or employment. It is based on a pilot project (Talent Scout) which was developed to provide job-oriented measures to the increasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in Vorarlberg in 2015, mostly comprising young people beyond compulsory school age. Jugendcollege is designed as a full-time measure with varying duration (from 6 to 14 months), combining education and training for three different subgroups (educational, outplacement and learning groups). Placement into the subgroups depends on German language proficiency and the level of basic knowledge. After leaving Jugendcollege, the participants can either continue in school to obtain a certificate or enter vocational training or work placements.

Source: *Jugendcollege case study*

some important lessons for public services. This includes the need for constant communication between PES and service providers to be able to react quickly to the need for changes to the programme.

Identifying, assessing and recognising skills and qualifications

Given that a large share of new arrivals either has no formal qualifications (or lack appropriate documentation) or acquired their skills informally (that is, on the job), the validation of informal and non-formal skills and competencies is considered a priority in all five countries. According to data from the IAB-BAMF-SOEP refugee survey, 78% of refugees and asylum seekers who entered Germany between 2013 and 2016 had no vocational training or university degree, but 73% reported having worked before coming to Germany.²⁴ While this constitutes a high disparity with the native population, especially with regard to vocational education and formal qualifications, newly arrived persons often possess highly

relevant professional skills acquired through on-the-job training in trades and technical or commercial professions (Brücker et al, 2016). This confirms the need to identify solutions that allow those who have recently arrived to have their skills and competencies identified, documented and, in the best-case scenario, certified.

Existing national approaches towards the validation of non-formal and informal learning rarely take into account the specific needs of migrants/refugees (Cedefop, undated). While at EU level there are new measures being developed and tested – such as the EU Skills Profile Tool for Third-Country Nationals²⁵ – to date, most EU Member States lack standardised tools (European Commission, 2017d). At regional or sectoral levels, existing tools often rely on self-assessment and/or practical work and are, therefore, not reliable or scalable to large numbers. A measure recently developed in Germany, MYSKILLS, seeks to address this issue.

Germany: Identifying professional competencies – MYSKILLS

In 2015–2016, the German public employment service, in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Foundation (a non-profit organisation that funds and develops social projects), started to develop a pragmatic and easy-to-implement tool called MYSKILLS. The aim was to make the undocumented professional skills and competencies of high numbers of refugees and asylum seekers visible in order to facilitate integration into the German labour market. MYSKILLS²⁶ was developed as an interactive, computer-based tool for testing professional skills among people without formal qualifications. Technology-based tests supported by images and videos are available in six languages (English, German, Modern Standard Arabic, New Persian, Russian and Turkish). The images show concrete occupational actions in real-life settings.

Source: *MYSKILLS case study*

MYSKILLS is particularly interesting as the test results can be attached to job applications to give the employer a quick overview of the candidate's professional knowledge. As such, MYSKILLS might act as a 'door opener' to companies – large employers in particular appreciate the

precise and objective information offered by the tool. The testing of practical knowledge through work tasks and typical work processes within defined professional profiles facilitates transferability to other country contexts. For PES, it could improve matching guided by the potential

Finland: Guidance and counselling for appropriate career path – SIMHE

SIMHE services consist of two main streams of activity: guidance and counselling services and recognition of prior learning and competences. Each stream involves various methods and approaches to define the skills and competences already possessed.

The guidance and counselling services aim to support participants in finding the most suitable study and/or career path. They can receive information and guidance by email, in personal guidance discussions and by participating in Guidance Generalia Lectures, a form of group guidance.

The recognition of prior learning (RPL) and competencies aims at identifying participants' skills and competencies acquired through previous studies in higher education and, if relevant, through study-related work experience. The RPL activities are split over two consecutive phases: 1) orientation (self-evaluation, degree comparison) and 2) in-depth discussion with an expert in the specific field of study. The services are designed to support participants' integration into Finnish society and labour market in a timely manner through recognition of prior skills and competencies.

Source: *SIMHE case study*

²⁴ Patchy data from Austria and Sweden provide a similar picture of educational attainment and professional qualification (see European Commission, 2017d, Table 4, p. 19).

²⁵ See website at: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrantskills/#/>

²⁶ It should be noted that MYSKILLS is also used for target groups other than refugees, including other migrants and natives without formal qualifications.

(skills and qualifications) of the jobseeker, as well as job-oriented matching whereby PES look for suitable candidates based on the specific needs of employers.

Another measure, SIMHE, introduced in Finland, focuses on a different target group: that of highly skilled refugees (and other groups of migrants). This measure is provided by higher education institutions (service providers) and was established by the Ministry of Education and Culture (public authority). It aims to identify and recognise the prior learning of refugees and to provide them with guidance and support to enter the labour market and/or pursue further education.

Similarly, the Swedish measure Short Way, developed by the Swedish PES and implemented by universities or other educational institutions as well as employers offering internships, is a measure for refugees with a bachelor's degree or equivalent that aims to facilitate a shorter path into the labour market based on participants' skills – see Short Way case study on p. 31 below.

Although SIMHE and Short Way have been successful in supporting refugees to have their skills and competencies recognised, both have encountered challenges that should be taken into account by public services interested in adapting the measures for their own contexts. First, participants often face language difficulties, especially in relation to the academic level. Second, the education systems in countries of origin are often quite different from those of host countries, which means that participants need to get used to different teaching methods and learning concepts. Nevertheless, a comprehensive guidance and skills recognition system, such as those provided by SIMHE and Short Way, could be of interest to other Member States that face skills shortages and which

could thus benefit greatly from the swift labour market integration of refugees who are highly skilled.

Engaging with the private sector and social partners

The labour market integration of refugees can only be successful when employers are willing to hire, or offer on-the-job training to, newly arrived refugees. Surveys of businesses in Austria and Germany show that, especially in larger firms, corporate social responsibility motives are important when hiring refugees. Smaller trades and skilled crafts firms, in contrast, see an immediate business case for hiring refugees, as they face labour shortages or anticipate these in the future (Deloitte Future Fund, 2016; OECD, 2016). At the European level, partnerships between public authorities and private organisations are acknowledged as being key to successful labour market integration. Examples include the two recent European Commission initiatives – Employers Together for Integration and the European Alliance for Apprenticeships – both of which aim to improve the role of employers in labour market integration policies. The measures examined here are part of these efforts to strengthen the relationship between the public and private sectors with the aim of supporting refugees into sustainable employment.

Additionally, social partners, such as trade unions or employer organisations have a key role to play in the labour market integration of refugees across the five Member States and are actively involved in policymaking through information provision, or support for getting apprenticeships (Eurofound, 2016). Initiatives to better involve employers and trade unions in sectors with skills shortages have been successfully developed in the measures analysed, for example, in the context of the Swedish Government initiative Sweden Together/100 Club.

Sweden: Joint involvement of companies and other actors – Sweden Together/100 Club

This measure was launched through a national call made by the Swedish Prime Minister to mobilise different actors to be involved in integration efforts. This gave legitimacy to the initiative, enabling it to reach high volumes of beneficiaries. Due to the involvement of large companies operating nationwide, the initiative was able to get off to a good start.

When a company commits to employing at least 100 refugees within three years for internships or work practice, they can make use of special placement services and receive wage subsidies from the state. Beyond internships and supervised work practice, possibilities envisaged by the programme include validation of professional qualifications and/or entry-level jobs. In addition to being in direct contact with individual companies and the public employment service, sectoral employer organisations act as intermediaries between member companies wishing to take on newly arrived migrants to fill specific skills needs and the public employment service, which aims to place its pool of candidates in employment. The public employment service will then consult with the specific company regarding their needs in order to match with appropriate candidates. Employer organisations help companies with monitoring and language development. According to the stakeholders involved, establishing multilevel collaboration between various actors, a major objective of the programme, seems to be functioning well.

Source: *Sweden Together/100 Club case study*

A challenge often encountered with regard to cooperation between employers and public administrations is the administrative burden for companies that is part of this cooperation, particularly in the case of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). SMEs, which make up a large share of employers across the EU, often face skills shortages but have limited capacity to deal with the administrative

requirements inherent in the employment of refugees and asylum seekers. Hence, measures providing support to these companies could incentivise them in their employment efforts. In Germany, for example, as part of the Welcome Guides measure, about 150 guides have been supporting SMEs to fill training and work places with refugees since early 2016.

Germany: Support for SMEs – Welcome Guides

The large influx of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, combined with growing shortages of skilled labour, prompted the Alliance for Initial and Further Training, comprising representatives from businesses, trade unions, PES and federal states, to set up the Welcome Guides programme in September 2015 under the aegis of the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy. The Ministry developed and provides funding (70%) for the initiative, and the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts coordinates the programme. It is implemented by regional chambers of commerce and skilled crafts and other industry organisations throughout Germany. The measure has been created to establish an interface of new arrivals and companies looking to employ or train refugees. Welcome guides inform, advise and provide practical support on all issues related to work permits, vocational training and recruitment for the refugee community.

Source: *Welcome Guides case study*

Another measure, the Finnish Social Impact Bond (SIB), focuses on support for municipalities, which in the wake of the refugee influx in 2015 had to deal with a 60% increase in demand for their integration services. The Finnish Government viewed this as an opportunity to mainstream issues regarding immigration and activate civil society in support of municipalities (Vänskä-Rajala, 2016). To tackle

the lack of capacity in an innovative way, the Finnish Ministry of Employment and Economy launched the SIB to bring together stakeholders in a new form of cooperation where the emphasis was on results and not only on activities, using a combination of private and public resources.

Finland: Engaging private investors – SIB

The SIB (Social Impact Bond) encourages institutional and private investors to finance projects that improve the integration of refugees. The advantage of this approach is that as companies invest in the fund, less public funds are needed for integration measures. The government pays a bonus to the fund of 50% of the saved labour market benefits and added tax income. The social impact model has been designed as an experiment and is managed by a private company, which was selected through a competitive process.

To measure the effectiveness of the measure, two immigrant groups are compared: participants in the trial and a control group who follow ‘the normal path’ (integration training, other employment services to find a job, etc.). Applicants are selected for the experiment through a process of random sampling: 70% are allocated to the experiment and 30% to the control group. The aim of offering performance-based financing contracts to private investors is to show the benefit of labour market integration for society as well as in financial terms. Social impact investing provides a means to increase effective cooperation between the private, public and non-profit sectors to prevent and resolve various kinds of problems relating to well-being and the environment.

Source: *SIB case study*

Education

Education is an important component of integration, as it can facilitate both labour market and social integration. In addition to focusing on labour market activation, Member States have placed emphasis on both developing new and expanding existing education integration measures as part of their response to the increased number of refugees since 2015 (see Chapter 2 for details of policy measures in the five Member States).

Policy and regulatory context

As shown in Chapter 3, there are large disparities in the educational attainment levels of refugees depending on their nationality, with some groups having had limited or no schooling. Illiteracy is a huge problem, especially among persons above the compulsory school age. A key challenge is how basic education for adults can be better adapted to the needs of refugees with the limited financial resources available. This is a new challenge for Member States and one which requires designing education

courses targeted to this group. Some specific measures have been undertaken in Member States to that effect (for example, literacy classes). For example, the Educational Tracks and Integration of Immigrants programme, launched in Finland in 2016, entails 56 actions including basic education for adult migrants (including refugees and asylum seekers) over the compulsory education age. The overall aim is to better meet the needs of migrants (Ministry of Education and Culture, Finland, 2016). Sweden has also made significant efforts to enable the education of refugees and asylum seekers, with specific support services for refugees. Regarding the education of minors, Sweden has introduced ‘part-time introductory classes’ where children are taught for a maximum of two years while a place for them is held in a mainstream class. This enables pupils to improve their literacy while attending mainstream education.

Contextual and structural challenges in the area of education

Several common challenges across the five selected Member States have been identified in existing literature and through the review of current practices in the education system. As depicted in Figure 10, these can be categorised broadly into individual challenges – relating to the learning needs of the refugees and asylum seekers that have to be addressed before they are able to successfully integrate into the labour market – and structural challenges associated with the education system itself.

As highlighted above, the main individual challenges are limited knowledge of the national languages and limited or prior education or schooling and, in some cases, illiteracy. Groups that are particularly vulnerable include young adults at the final stages of basic education and persons exceeding the age of compulsory education. The issues around adult illiteracy are further exacerbated by learning deficiencies and concentration difficulties in class due to trauma and mental health problems pertaining to personal experiences. Where individuals have had prior education or schooling, a major challenge involves recognition of their qualifications, especially where formal certification is not available.

Lessons learnt from the selected integration measures in education

The following clusters of education measures have been identified in the context of the common challenges for integration of refugees and asylum seekers, in terms of their innovative potential, success factors and transferability:

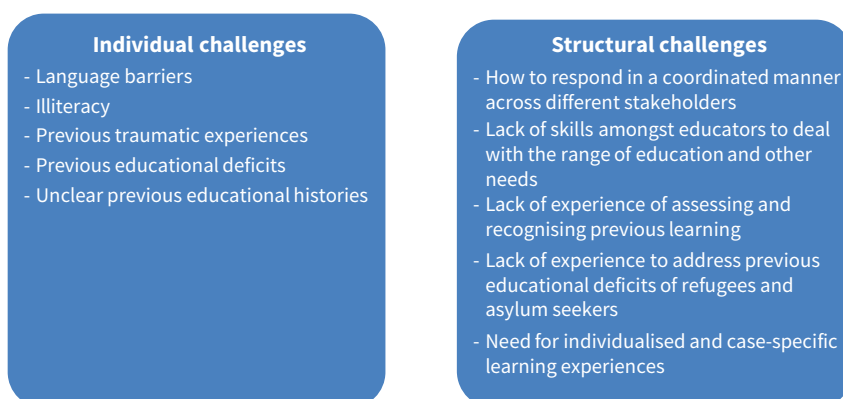
- **education measures to prepare for the labour market** – Short Way (Sweden), SIMHE (Finland)
- **engaging hard-to-reach target groups** – language courses funded by the Austrian Integration Fund and Jugendcollege (Austria)

Education measures to prepare for the labour market

Level of education was identified as one of the key factors relevant to refugees’ employment status. As described in Chapter 3, unemployment rates among foreign-born populations are higher in all five selected Member States, with an especially low employment rate among female third-country nationals. Introducing measures related to education is one way for Member States to support newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers in their integration into the labour market. One cluster of measures supports this process by bridging the gap between refugees’ previous education and current labour market needs.

In Sweden, Short Way was first introduced in 2008 as an ESF-funded project against the backdrop of systematic challenges in integrating newly arrived refugees with at least a bachelor’s degree into the labour market. This group faced higher unemployment rates than the native population and required a much longer time period to establish themselves in the labour market (on average, seven years). In addition, they encountered a lack of recognition of their academic degrees and a high degree of ‘misplacement’ in unrelated professions, forcing them to re-train. To better take advantage of the competencies of newly arrived migrants, the purpose of Short Way is ‘to promote, through in-depth and broader regional and intergovernmental cooperation, the long-term and efficient utilisation of newly arrived foreign academic skills that facilitate their establishment in the Swedish labour market’ (Swedish ESF Council, 2009).

Figure 10: Key challenges in providing education services to refugees and asylum seekers



Sweden: Labour market integration measures – Short Way

Short Way is a preparatory labour market integration measure for newly arrived refugees and immigrants with an academic background, aimed at facilitating routes into the labour market. Developed by the Swedish public employment service, it is implemented by universities or other private education institutions, as well as employers offering internships. The measure targets refugees with at least a bachelor's degree or three years of higher education in their country of origin, providing courses which last 26 weeks each, including Swedish language training and a labour market-based learning experience in participants' fields of expertise. Other education components such as validation of skills and career counselling are also included in the measure.

The education provision of the measure is delivered by the higher education institutions that have won the contract with the public employment service. The role of the service providers, a university or a university together with private service providers or 'folk high schools' (upper secondary), is to evaluate the immigrants' academic expertise, provide education, further education and career guidance, and search for qualified internships in the participants' education fields.

Source: *Short Way case study*

Finland, too, has faced a significant rise in the number of asylum seekers since 2015, and as a result the number of residence permits issued to refugees has increased. This poses a significant challenge for Finnish public services. Based on a survey of asylum seekers conducted by the Ministry of Education and Culture, around one-quarter of the newly arrived asylum seekers have university degrees but require more support to facilitate their

integration. In response to the need for a new model of support combining individual education and work, SIMHE was introduced in 2016. Created by the Ministry of Education and Culture to support the education requirements of migrants as well as enhancing their access to the labour market, the initiative is currently being implemented nationally at six higher education institutions.

Finland: Validation of qualifications – SIMHE

The general aim of SIMHE is to enhance the identification and recognition of prior learning among highly educated migrants of different status in order to make it easier to direct migrants into higher education and/or the labour market, both on a national and a regional level. The measure ensures that the previous studies and qualifications of highly educated migrants are identified and recognised as quickly as possible so that beneficiaries can find their way into appropriate education and career paths. As need for this service has steadily increased over the past few years, the lack of human resources was identified as one of the main challenges of implementation.

Source: *SIMHE case study*

Despite the challenges identified, an important success factor across all the measures has been the strong cooperation among partner organisations, including service providers and public services, especially in Sweden. The Swedish public employment service oversees the design, content and drafting of the procurement contract for the Short Way initiative. The public employment service procures the service from education providers within a specific county. Contracted service providers can be universities working separately or in collaboration with other education providers. The local PES offices are then responsible for managing and ensuring frequent dialogue between the education providers – for example, about enrolment and marketing. Several universities and education providers cooperate to deliver courses within specific subject areas. Other stakeholders involved in the measure include employers and recruitment companies, as well as trade unions that are invited to lecture about their role. Similarly, in Finland, universities taking part in SIMHE cooperate closely with various governmental organisations working in the field of migration. Cooperation is ensured at the following levels:

- cooperation among advisors (counsellors) once every two months to go over problems/cases
- higher-level cooperation organised by the ministry, with more strategic planning involving the Ministry of Labour and Finnish National Agency for Education
- meetings among universities to discuss the main functions of SIMHE

Engaging hard-to-reach target groups

A second cluster of integration measures in education focuses on the challenges of engaging hard-to-reach groups, such as illiterate persons and those lacking basic education, who tend to encounter more difficulties in their integration. Overcoming language barriers is a prerequisite for successful social integration. For illiterate and low-educated persons, this requires specially designed language courses, such as literacy courses.

In response to the increased number of refugees and asylum seekers in Austria, such language courses have been developed following the Austrian government's

50 point plan for integration, introduced in 2015 (Faßmann et al, 2015). The aim is to offer the same language courses across the country: that is, following the same structure and based on the same curriculum. The Ministry of

Integration appointed the Austrian Integration Fund to design the curriculum and fund the external organisations selected to deliver the courses.

Austria: Funding for language courses – Austrian Integration Fund

- The Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) provides funding for language courses to refugees with the aim of reaching German level A1. The courses have been implemented throughout Austria since September 2016 by external organisations (private or public) in the different federal states.
- Views on the structure and content of the courses is positive overall. They are considered as being innovative and giving clear guidance to service providers as well as participants. However, there are some challenges associated with the target group, which is very diverse and includes those who are illiterate and have very low chances of completing the language courses successfully. Finally, there is no follow-up with participants after language courses end, which means the effectiveness of the measure cannot be assessed.

Source: *Language courses case study*

Similarly, Jugendcollege in Austria provides services for the target group of young refugees and asylum seekers between the ages of 15 and 25.

The rationale for this measure was to support the high number of young people beyond compulsory school age arriving in Austria and to tackle the lack of job-oriented

measures for this group. Therefore, the Chamber of Workers and Employees and the public employment service in the region of Vorarlberg, together with Integra, developed a programme to prepare a significant number of these young people for a career. There were also strong social motivations for this measure in terms of the desire

Austria: Providing basic education and work experience – Jugendcollege

- The aim of Jugendcollege is to provide young refugees and asylum seekers between the ages of 15 and 25 with the necessary language skills and a basic education combined with practical work experience in preparation for their subsequent access to compulsory education or entry into the labour market. Activities include the creation of a daily structure, language courses, practical training and communication around culture and values. Currently, Jugendcollege is implemented in three federal states in Austria (Vorarlberg, Styria and Vienna). There are no plans to upscale the measure further. It has been developed by the Vorarlberg public employment service and is implemented by the service provider Integra Vorarlberg.
- The key challenges in implementing this measure relate to participants' limited basic skills in German and lack of other skills such as mathematics or soft skills. Other challenges include the limited involvement of young women, who make up just 15% of participants.

Source: *Jugendcollege case study*

to make sure that this group is not 'left behind' (Häfele, 2017).

One of the main challenges identified for both of these measures relates to participants' experience of trauma and mental illness, for which little professional psychological support is available. While it is often trainers who offer support to participants in relation to these issues, this goes beyond their roles and abilities. The psychological needs of participants must not be underestimated, including their ability to adapt to new environments or to pass through administrative hurdles. All these factors impact on their ability to learn and concentrate.

Housing

Access to suitable housing is considered a fundamental precondition of integration for refugees and asylum seekers, as having a stable environment makes it easier to take part in integration activities and play a more active part in society in general.

Policy and regulatory context

The policy contexts of the two housing measures included in the study – in the Netherlands and Sweden – are similar, as both countries have a dispersal policy (although in Sweden, it is also possible for refugees to find

accommodation independently). Historically, the Swedish dispersal policy was based on voluntary agreements between the state and the municipalities which set out the numbers each municipality was willing and able to take. However, as there was no obligation to respect these commitments, too few locations were nominated, and the set-up failed to encourage the establishment of refugees (Regeringen, 2015). The policy was therefore abolished. However, it was reintroduced in 2016 (following the Resettlement Act), this time imposing an obligation on municipalities to settle newly arrived immigrants staying at the Migration Board's reception centres.

In the Netherlands, municipalities have targets regarding the number of refugees they must house, as stated in Articles 28 and 29 of the Housing Law 2014 (*Huisvestingswet*). This law established a formula which sets a dynamic biannual target (number of refugees to be housed) for each local authority based on its size (the number of inhabitants) relative to the number of inhabitants of the Netherlands and the total number of refugees. The inflow of refugees in the Netherlands started to increase from 2012 and reached a peak in 2015. Local authorities were struggling to find spaces in their local social housing offer and were encountering difficulties in meeting their housing targets, leading to refugees often staying in reception centres for longer than intended and, in turn, restricting the provision of temporary shelter to new asylum seekers. In response to this bottleneck, the Secretary of State for the Ministry of Justice and Security provided a mandate through Decree no. 615667 to set up Platform Opnieuw Thuis (Home again platform) to spearhead joint commitment to timely and adequate housing for refugees.

Contextual and structural challenges in the area of housing

As well as challenges faced at an individual level by refugees and asylum seekers, several structural challenges have been identified in relation to housing provision for this group (see Figure 11).

In terms of policy responses to the challenges of housing provision for refugees and asylum seekers, a common thread across the five countries has been the development of a more coordinated approach between central government agencies and local municipalities, as housing is usually the responsibility of local or regional governments. This includes the development of dispersal policies and the establishment of quotas to distribute newcomers more equally across the different municipalities.

Lessons learnt from the selected integration measures in housing

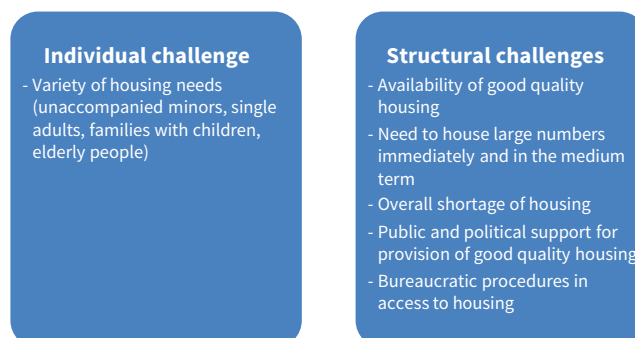
The following 'clusters' of measures to address the key challenges have been identified:

- **Providing appropriate and affordable housing options:** Platform Opnieuw Thuis (the Netherlands), Resettlement Programme (Sweden)
- **Balancing the quality of housing:** Platform Opnieuw Thuis (the Netherlands)
- **Addressing onerous bureaucratic procedures:** Platform Opnieuw Thuis (the Netherlands)

Providing appropriate and affordable housing options

Safe and good quality accommodation is important for integration and helps to ensure that refugees want to stay in their new communities. However, one of the main problems encountered relates to the overall difficult housing market, where there is a lack of suitable housing options in terms of space and affordability. The problem is even more severe in cities, where most refugees and asylum seekers prefer to live but where housing shortages are even more prominent and prices often much higher. In both the Netherlands and Sweden, municipalities have struggled to find affordable rental accommodation for refugees in a context where housing demand was exceeding supply even before the influx.

Figure 11: Key challenges in providing housing to refugees and asylum seekers



Sweden: Supporting the integration of newcomers – Swedish Resettlement Programme

The Swedish Resettlement Programme aims to help refugees from around the world to resettle in Sweden as part of the country's refugee resettlement quota. The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for the selection and transfer of the resettled refugees, having assessed their need for protection. Every municipality in Sweden is required to receive a specified number of resettled refugees. The municipalities are responsible for the integration of refugees, which includes providing them with accommodation upon arrival. From the very first day of their arrival, municipalities engage in various ways to support the integration and establishment of newcomers: they meet the refugees at the airport and transport them to their new housing, which they will have organised and equipped with basic furniture and some food ahead of arrival. Some municipalities with greater experience of taking on resettled refugees act as 'mentor-municipalities' to which less experienced municipalities can turn for advice and guidance.

Recognising that simply providing housing is not enough for integration, municipalities have set up an entire chain of efforts that refugees are invited to take part in during their first two years in Sweden. These are aimed at helping refugees integrate into the different areas of society, including their working lives and leisure time, and to understand the democratic processes of society.

Source: *Swedish Resettlement Programme case study*

The key challenge encountered as part of the Resettlement Programme in Sweden is to find appropriate and affordable accommodation for the resettled refugees, even in areas of the country where this was previously not a problem. While less expensive housing can usually be found outside the cities, resettling refugees in these locations often incurs higher costs due to poor local transportation links. Moreover, resettlement in rural areas might not be conducive to refugees' labour

market integration, as these present fewer employment opportunities than semi-urban and urban areas. One municipality solved the problem of transportation by providing minibuses to transport refugees to the nearest city.

In the Netherlands, Platform Opnieuw Thuis has similarly been engaged in more innovative solutions at the municipal level to address the lack of housing.

The Netherlands: Housing solutions – Platform Opnieuw Thuis

In the Netherlands, asylum seekers who enter the country are first housed in asylum seekers centres. Once they receive a positive decision about their asylum application, and thus become refugees, they are assigned a local authority. The assignment to a local authority is based on available housing opportunities as well as the refugees' work, study, family and/or medical situations. The local authority is responsible for providing housing for the refugee (and their family, if applicable).

Platform Opnieuw Thuis was established in an effort to stimulate other parties to pool existing housing opportunities and create new ones, to raise awareness at the local administrative level and to provide space for policymaking discussions. The Platform collects knowledge, publishes tools and monitors pilot activities that provide unconventional solutions to the lack of housing, such as using empty office buildings for social housing purposes. One such example is the guide on 'house sharing' for single refugees, which provides local authorities with information on the types of contracts that exist for house sharing and the impact on refugees – for instance, on their income and benefits. The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA) also organised a competition for architects to come up with innovative housing solutions. While this did not lead to a catch-all solution, it did deliver some housing ideas that were implemented on a small scale.

Source: *Platform Opnieuw Thuis case study*

Moreover, the characteristics of the inflow of refugees and asylum seekers – consisting largely of single men or large families – also had an impact on the provision of adequate housing, as the Dutch housing market does not cater very well for either of these types of household. For single refugees, the Platform collected knowledge and published guides and best practice around housing solutions, such as the above-mentioned guide on house sharing. For large families, however, the lack of flexible housing that can be made available as and when required remains a concern in

the Netherlands, despite more opportunities having been created.

Balancing the quality of housing

In both housing measures, public opinion regarding housing for refugees has proved challenging. In the Netherlands, local authorities struggle to provide housing for refugees while, at the same time, having to organise emergency or flexible housing for other vulnerable groups. Problems have arisen in cases when municipalities were

seen to offer higher standards of housing to refugees than to the local population, leading to tensions and public outrage in some municipalities. For this reason, gaining local and national support for the provision of housing has been a key challenge in the Netherlands. The Platform encountered challenges with local municipalities that did not want to provide social housing to refugees, as they found it politically difficult to justify to local inhabitants that refugees were given priority over citizens who might wait years to be assigned social housing. This should also be seen in the context of the crisis and move towards decentralisation (mentioned in the section on Role of public services and other public entities in Chapter 3) – which in some cases has led to citizens feeling hard done by.

The issue was further amplified by refugees being housed in less affluent areas (where support may be lowest), as housing corporations have to make sure that refugees (like anyone else renting a house through them) are provided with housing which is commensurate to their income. In response, the Platform gave advice to local authorities experiencing these issues on how to manage negative public perception and create more positive images. In one local authority, communication experts were hired through the Platform to help with messaging, but it is unclear what the impact of this was. Resistance in terms of the type of housing offered to refugees was also seen at the national level, resulting in a political steer to provide refugees with basic housing and to not offer more than would be provided to Dutch nationals.

The experiences of the Swedish Resettlement Programme also show a gradual hardening of the public perception around immigration, including views on the provision of housing for refugees. For example, one municipality experienced opposition from the local community to plans to create small cottages. Nonetheless, interviewees from municipalities emphasised that there was also a lot of support from local communities in helping the refugees to integrate.

Addressing onerous bureaucratic procedures

Long stays in reception centres can be detrimental to the integration of refugees, as they are unable to fully participate in local communities during these periods. In the Netherlands, a bureaucratic issue around the registration of refugees as residents was unnecessarily prolonging the stay of refugees in reception centres, delaying their access to individual housing and prohibiting them from accessing many other public services. The issue was identified by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA), which monitors the duration of different phases of the asylum application process. It found that the longest delays involved the matching of refugees with local authorities and their subsequent moves to the local authorities (for which the prerequisite was availability of housing).

The Netherlands: Early registration of refugees – Platform Opnieuw Thuis

A large part of the Platform's remit is about identifying the rules and procedures that create bottlenecks in the housing process. While many of the issues identified were specific to individual local authorities, a general bottleneck concerned delays incurred in refugees acquiring a citizen service number and being registered with the personal records database, the BRP (*Basisregistratie Personen*). As a result, refugees were unable to access certain government services or open a bank account, which also meant that their housing was delayed; in some cases, even if they had housing, their benefits were delayed, leading to the accrual of large debts. To remedy this, accelerated procedures were introduced for registering with the BRP as well as applying for benefits. Under the new system, both processes took place as soon as the refugee received a positive decision in relation to their asylum application.

The accelerated procedures were first tested in a pilot programme (BRP-straat) in which the COA, the Immigration and Naturalisation Services and the local authority of Vlagtwedde trialled the early registration of refugees through a specific process. Previously, registration took place in the local authority in which the Asylum Seekers Centre was located. These were often small local authorities that did not have the capacity to process registrations for thousands of refugees, which quickly led to large backlogs. Under the new system, the backlogs were removed and the burden carried by these small local authorities was alleviated. The pilot was later rolled out to all local authorities with asylum seekers centres.

Source: Platform Opnieuw Thuis case study

To remedy this, accelerated processes were introduced for the registration of refugees, which was done as soon as they received a positive decision.

Health

Policy and regulatory context

The issues confronting healthcare authorities in the area of integration are similar across the Member States, the main challenges being due to the complexity of health

conditions among refugees and asylum seekers. The health of refugees and asylum seekers is impacted by the traumatic experiences and circumstances of fleeing war-torn and conflict areas. They have dealt with the harshest of conditions in their countries of origin, including war, violence and torture; in addition, refugees and asylum seekers often experience extremely difficult circumstances on their journey towards the EU, such as extensive and exhausting walks, boat trips in inhumane conditions, hostile weather, lack of food and water, lack of basic hygiene and health necessities. Once in the host country,

they might experience hostile living conditions as well as poor socioeconomic conditions. All these factors often lead to physical and psychological damage, with negative consequences for the health of refugees and asylum seekers. Additional challenges can arise depending on the level of preparedness and capacity of healthcare systems to care for refugees and asylum seekers and their various needs.

While current legislation in each of the selected Member States covers the physical health of refugees and asylum seekers, mental health issues are often not dealt with to the same extent. Finland and Sweden are among the few countries where asylum seekers' routine medical check-ups include mental health assessment (European Commission, 2016a). Germany is also currently improving its efforts to treat mental health issues among this group (MIPEX, 2015).

Contextual and structural challenges in the area of health

As with other areas of integration, a range of challenges can be identified in the field of health which relate to individual challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers and structural challenges that affect service providers (see Figure 12). All these factors can have a negative impact on the health of refugees in terms of injuries, disease and mental health issues (PICUM, 2017).

Lessons learnt from the selected integration measures in health

Two measures have been identified which include a specific focus on the key issue of mental health and which seek to address the common challenges identified: Step by Step in Germany and PALOMA in Finland. These integration measures also show potential for innovation and transferability. In addition, information has been drawn from other measures that address mental health and trauma in some way (though not as the main focus): Jugendcollege (Austria), SIMHE (Finland) and OTAV (the Netherlands).

While mental health problems and experience of trauma are among the most frequent health issues encountered by refugees and asylum seekers, these issues also hinder the extent to which newcomers can take part in the local community and integrate successfully.

Step by Step focuses on the mental well-being of refugees and asylum seekers in Hesse, Germany. The Hesse state government, while providing accommodation and other services to an increasing number of new arrivals, recognised that a high share displayed significant signs of trauma. Consequently, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration decided that a more rigorous form of psychotherapeutic care was needed to treat traumatised refugees.

Germany: Providing psychotherapeutic care – Step by Step

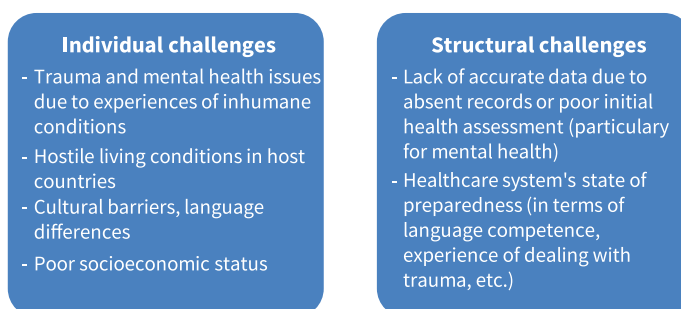
Step by Step was a pilot initiative providing psychotherapeutic care to traumatised refugees in the state of Hesse in Germany. The programme aimed to provide direct care to vulnerable groups of refugees at the Michaelisdorf reception facility in Darmstadt, while simultaneously offering an opportunity to test key concepts from both psychoanalytical trauma research and social pedagogical research.

The project was initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration and developed and implemented by the Sigmund Freud Institute (a research institute) and Goethe University Frankfurt. The German Red Cross was an additional partner in the implementation of the pilot project.

A total of 70 members of staff and 140 volunteers were involved in the implementation of the project. In terms of reach, 80% of refugees housed in the Michaelisdorf reception facility during the project duration regularly participated in activities run by Step by Step.²⁷

Source: *Step by Step case study*

Figure 12: Key challenges in providing healthcare to refugees and asylum seekers



²⁷ The reception centre had a maximum capacity of 1,000 refugees.

The Step by Step initiative was based on five key concepts: providing safe, reliable structures; being aware of the ‘unimaginable’ – what people can do to one another; enabling alternative relationship experiences to strengthen resilience; favouring useful activity over passivity; and the need to regain human dignity. The

implementation around these five concepts was processed, thereby ensuring sufficient flexibility to adapt activities to the specific needs of target groups.

Similar efforts to tackle mental health issues were made in Finland through the PALOMA initiative.

Finland: Handbook on mental health for working with refugees – PALOMA

The aim of the PALOMA handbook is to provide a reference for different professionals working with refugees and to help them identify, prevent and treat mental health issues among refugees and asylum seekers. The handbook covers the whole field of mental health work, from prevention offered outside of health and social services to general and specialised care provided by health and social services. The handbook is being implemented nationally.

The main target group is professionals who work with refugees and/or asylum seekers. The handbook is also, to a lesser degree, aimed at refugees and asylum seekers themselves. A large number of different public service providers have been involved in the writing of the handbook, including social and health professionals from the district and central hospitals, professionals from NGOs, representatives from ministries and researchers from several institutes.

Source: *PALOMA case study*

One of the key observations based on these case studies is that mental health ties in with all other integration areas. Another important lesson learnt is that traumatised refugees benefit from being encouraged, immediately upon arrival, to remain active and to avoid passivity. Providing clear information to refugees upon arrival (regarding legal issues, social assistance, etc.) is crucial to countering the likelihood of re-traumatisation. Education opportunities for refugees of all ages were also seen as key to promoting proactive attitudes and preventing refugees from succumbing to psychological withdrawal.

Social integration

Refugees’ social integration into host societies is high on the EU political agenda and is in line with the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal 16, which is to ‘Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels’ (Robila, 2018, p. 2). The social integration of refugees and asylum seekers is a complex issue with multiple dimensions, such as social inclusion and public acceptance, civic education and participation, access to services and access to social assistance. Therefore, the social integration measures covered in this study overlap with the other areas of integration.

Policy and regulatory context

Austria, Germany and the Netherlands have all implemented policy measures to facilitate the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers, each focused on ensuring that members of this group are aware of the values and norms that permeate society in their host countries. For instance, the Austrian National Action Plan for Integration includes a specific objective referring to the need to inform new immigrants about the legal system, history and culture of Austria (EMN, 2015b). Through funding by the AMIF and the Federal Ministry

for Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs (during 2015–2016), specific focus was placed on projects focusing on values and creating a welcoming culture. As part of the ‘integration declaration’ that refugees must sign as part their ‘integration year’, individuals are asked to familiarise themselves with and commit to Austria’s core values by completing a ‘values and orientation’ course (European Parliament, 2018).

The Netherlands introduced a similar measure focusing on promoting ‘Dutch values’. Since October 2017, the participation declaration has been a compulsory component of the Civic Integration Programme for migrants entering the Netherlands for family reunification or family formation (EMN, 2015c). In the period leading up to the signing of the declaration, participants are required to take part in a participation declaration trajectory of at least one day, the purpose of which is to introduce new arrivals to core Dutch values early on in their settlement. The declaration is mandatory, with the onus of responsibility for the Civic Integration Programme resting with the refugees. They are expected to select a provider and get started on a course. However, the work and the language courses are currently not linked and refugees’ obligation to attend can conflict directly with participation in labour market activity. According to the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, this and some other regulations will change following a review of the Civic Integration Programme, expected to be in force from 2020. Municipalities will be the driving force for the renewed Civic Integration Programme, responsible for purchasing courses and ensuring a close fit between participation in language courses and employment.

Germany follows an early intervention strategy whereby asylum seekers with good prospects of being allowed to stay have access to language and labour market integration measures – for example, access to the main integration instrument, the integration course, which combines German language training and civic orientation.

A new Integration Act came into force in July 2016 (EMN, 2017c). This promotes rapid integration into the labour market by suspending the labour market priority test for three years for asylum applicants and those who have been granted a tolerated person status, allowing them to also engage in temporary agency work (BMAS, 2016). Following a ‘rights and responsibilities’ approach, participation in integration courses has been made mandatory and refusal to participate can be sanctioned by benefit cuts.

Contextual and structural challenges in the area of social integration

In the area of social integration, there are a range of individual challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers as well as broader structural challenges (see Figure 13).

Lessons learnt from the selected social integration measures

The following ‘clusters’ of measures addressing these key challenges were identified among the social integration measures:

- **adopting a holistic and comprehensive approach to ensure social integration in local communities:** Values and orientation courses (Austria), Zeist WegWijZ (the Netherlands), IvAF (Germany)
- **changing the public perception of integrating refugees:** OTAV (the Netherlands), Zeist WegWijZ (the Netherlands), IvAF (Germany)
- **providing social assistance:** Values and orientation courses (Austria), OTAV (the Netherlands)

Adopting a holistic and comprehensive approach to ensure social integration in local communities

A common measure to enable refugees and asylum seekers to integrate into society is civic orientation courses. In Austria, the values and orientation courses provide refugees and asylum seekers with information about everyday life as well as basic values in Austrian society.

In 2016, when the courses were first introduced, there was some criticism of their content: while the values and orientation courses were generally regarded positively, educational scientists and sociologists commented on an

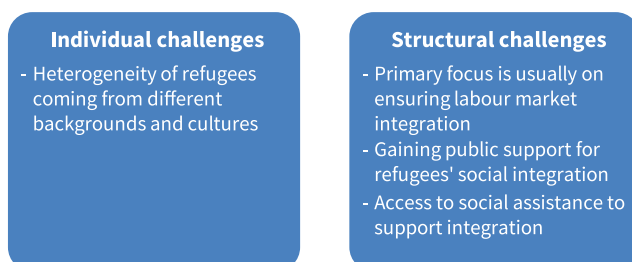
Austria: Basic knowledge about society – Values and orientation courses

The values and orientation courses were initiated in 2015 by the Austrian government with a pilot project in Vienna. Following the pilot, courses were rolled out across the country in 2016, and in 2017 participation became compulsory for refugees. The values and orientation courses cover, in different modules, key topics relevant to everyday life in Austria: history, language and education, the labour market and economy, healthcare, housing and good neighbourliness, legal integration and cultural integration. Each course has a duration of eight hours, and following completion of the course, participants should have a basic knowledge of the functioning of Austrian society. According to the Austrian Integration Fund, the short duration of the courses enables the provision of basic knowledge, and those participants who are interested in learning about a certain topic in more depth have the opportunity to voluntarily participate in courses focusing on, for example, labour market, culture, environment, gender equality and health.

Early findings showed that there was an increase in 2017, compared to 2016, in the number of courses offered as well as in the numbers participating, mainly due to the legal obligation to do so. After the courses in these two years, the ÖIF commissioned an external evaluation. This showed some positive results, with the majority of participants signalling that they had learnt more about Austrian society. The evaluation also indicated the need to further develop the methodology for teaching the courses as well as the need for courses of longer duration so that trainers can go into more detail about certain topics (Güngör, 2017). Following the evaluation, the courses have been adapted, and in-depth follow-up courses have been introduced on specific topics such as the labour market, culture, environment, gender and health.

Source: *Values and orientation courses case study*

Figure 13: Key challenges in enabling the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers



underlying assumption that refugees and asylum seekers coming to Austria did not possess the right ‘values’ and needed to be taught these. This initial scepticism faded once it became clear that the courses offered information on how to navigate important aspects of Austrian society, including the labour market, education services and healthcare (see, for example, der Standard, 2016; Deutschlandfunk, 2016).

Other Member States have also implemented civic orientation courses, although these vary in content and

duration. For instance, in Germany, the civic orientation courses are much longer (100 hours). In fact, having received criticism as to whether eight hours is sufficient for participants to really understand the functioning of Austrian society, the ÖIF has already made efforts to further develop the courses and now offers non-compulsory courses that are more in depth.

Civic integration courses are not the only way of integrating refugees and asylum seekers into society. Another example is found in the Netherlands, with Zeist

The Netherlands: Holistic approach to social integration at the municipality level in the Netherlands – Zeist WegWijZ

Local authorities are responsible for the integration of refugees in the Netherlands, and Zeist is keen to be an inclusive local authority. As the city had access to budget left over from previous years, this was deployed to support a comprehensive approach to refugee integration. The local authority designed the WegWijZ initiative, launched as a pilot in December 2016, to support refugees towards successful integration in Zeist through a holistic approach involving all local organisations providing relevant services and including a mix of tailored and general service offers.

The approach is directed by one central point (the ‘social matchmaker’) that collects and maps the individual needs of the refugees through interviews and, subsequently, makes tailored referrals to the appropriate services. Supporting activities such as a mobile phone app and meetings provide a general channel to keep all stakeholders and refugees involved. The app was introduced because most refugees have access to smartphones. This was considered a good way to allow refugees to find organisations and public services, but also for organisations and public services to communicate with each other and, in this way, provide a truly integrated service.

Source: *Zeist WegWijZ case study*

WegWijZ aiming to provide comprehensive support for the successful integration of refugees that come to live in the local authority of Zeist.

In designing the Zeist WegWijZ measure, policymakers first defined what constitutes integration, outlining four key domains around which the approach to integration should be built:

1. speaking, reading and writing Dutch
2. establishing and maintaining a social network
3. participating in society, according to ability
4. knowing one’s way around (e.g. knowing about sports activities, libraries, etc.)

The municipality thus recognised the different elements that constitute social integration and the various means through which refugees and asylum seekers could participate in the local community. This provides an interesting approach to social integration which goes beyond civic orientation and demonstrates how municipalities can play a key role in ensuring the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in local communities. Initially, Zeist WegWijZ tried to get organisations to take people to various activities and, in this way, help them acquire a social network, but this

proved very resource intensive and was not feasible on a large scale.

The pilot phase of Zeist WegWijZ was evaluated and ended in October 2017. The evaluation found that the WegWijZ integration route had helped to speed up integration. Refugees moving to Zeist were quickly engaged and their needs mapped so that they could be referred to the correct local services. The measure is still ongoing, and improvements to its design are made continuously based on experiences to date and inputs from partners. For example, improvements are currently being made to the app; the domains of establishing and maintaining a social network and knowing one’s way around are currently receiving extra focus, as feedback has shown that progress in these two areas has been slower than in the other domains.

The partner organisations are also performing their own monitoring. For instance, one voluntary sector partner, run by social workers, coordinates volunteers who are in direct contact with refugee families. The help offered by these volunteers aims at either avoiding or reversing families’ isolation by engaging them in activities and helping them to take steps to create their own social networks in Zeist. In this way, they get to practice their Dutch and are encouraged to participate in everyday life in the Netherlands. The coordinating team carries out home

visits and also follows the progress of families by checking in with volunteers; progress is assessed according to topics such as housing and work, linking in also to the four domains of WegWijZ. Findings are then communicated to the social matchmaker.

The IvAF programme in Germany is an example of a measure introduced to facilitate better cooperation

between stakeholders in order to improve the integration of refugees and asylum seekers. The IvAF programme has around 200 individual projects where asylum seekers and tolerated persons receive support, information, orientation and advice of all kinds.

While the programme emphasises the importance of integration of refugees and asylum seekers into the labour

Germany: Provision of holistic information, orientation and advice – IvAF

The IvAF (*Integration von Asylbewerbern und Flüchtlingen*) programme is implemented nationally and is managed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). The ministry provides financial resources as well as the regulatory framework for the various IvAF projects. Over 40 different organisations, including municipalities and NGOs, are involved in the implementation. The role of the BMAS also includes providing support and advice to these organisations. The primary aim of the programme is to ensure efficient networking between employment agencies, job centres, migrant registration offices, employers, providers of job training measures, education institutions and so on at the local level to support refugees and asylum seekers in getting access to the labour market (European Commission, 2017e).²⁸ Support is also provided in areas such as language proficiency, school and work, law, claiming of benefits, family life and parenting, and health.

The IvAF networks tailor advisory and support services to the individual on a case-by-case basis. As reported by one service provider, projects which concentrate on a small group of individuals and provide tailored support achieve higher success rates overall. This is because they recognise the heterogeneity among refugees and asylum seekers and target their activities to the needs of specific groups. The IvAF networks have particularly good contact through their work with local projects that work directly with refugees, companies and other strategic partners close to the labour market (e.g. chambers of commerce, NGOs, unions).

Source: *IvAF case study*

market, it is recognised that other aspects of integration are important for achieving sustainable results. While labour market integration is indeed important, it may often be better to first concentrate on needs that must be met before the individual can be ‘work ready’, including their orientation in the new society and easy access to other relevant services (for example, healthcare, education, housing). This, too, requires a coordinated, multidimensional response to refugees’ and asylum seekers’ needs through multi-sector collaboration among relevant authorities and other stakeholders responsible for social integration.

It is also important to account for cultural differences when tackling social integration, as the WegWijZ project in Zeist soon realised. Lack of knowledge about the cultural differences between refugees and Dutch society sometimes continued to appear even after some aspects of integration had been successful; for example, when the refugee is in work. While communications around annual leave or the need for time off work due to illness or bereavement, or to celebrate Ramadan, are implicitly understood by Dutch nationals, it should not be assumed that refugees have the same level of understanding. The

Zeist local authority encountered particular challenges with regard to cultural differences when seeking to engage with a group of Eritrean refugees. To stimulate their participation in the integration activities, the local authority approached an ‘expert by experience’ – an Eritrean refugee who had been in the country for some time – to host meetings with this group. His experience and insights helped to uncover cultural differences and taught the local authority about the importance of role models in Eritrean society.

Changing the public perception of refugee integration

The extent to which refugees and asylum seekers can be integrated into the local community depends in part on the degree to which local communities are willing to let them integrate, an issue closely linked to overall public perception. Public opinion presented challenges in three of the social integration measures. In both Germany and the Netherlands, this concerned negative views on the level of social support that refugees and asylum seekers should receive, which in turn placed limits on the solutions that could be offered. This is illustrated by the Dutch initiative OTAV.

²⁸ Migrant registration offices are dedicated offices dealing with the day-to-day paperwork concerning migrants, including asylum seekers. The asylum application process itself is conducted by the Federal Office for Immigration and Refugees (BAMF).

The Netherlands: Countering negative public opinions on refugee integration – OTAV

OTAV was developed to support local authorities in providing housing and other integration support for the increased inflow of asylum seekers. Platform Opnieuw Thuis was set up to deal with housing provision, but there was a demand for wider support across various topics relevant to integration. OTAV commenced its activities in October 2015, managed by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (BZK) in close cooperation with the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG). Together, VNG and BZK were the public services overseeing this measure and responsible for its implementation.

Aside from local authorities generally struggling with the integration of refugees and asylum seekers, for some authorities, the provision of reception facilities for asylum seekers and the housing and integration measures for refugees caused friction with the local community. As the emotions of local citizens ran high, the safety of mayors and local council members in some local authorities was at stake.

OTAV provided advice and support for local authorities in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers through education, health, social assistance and participation in society. The support provided by OTAV was strongly demand-driven, and the team had a strong presence in the regions which helped them find out what the needs were. OTAV provided a help desk for local authorities, answering questions on integration. As the country is split into regions, this support covered topics relevant to the regional context. OTAV also ran a network of experts from which local authorities could request tailored support along six thematic areas: education; health and care; integration and participation; emergency shelter and asylum seekers centres; communication and support; and refugee housing.

Source: OTAV case study

Achieving a positive public opinion and gaining public support for the integration of refugees locally was a challenge for OTAV, and, politically, some limitations had to be introduced in terms of the solutions offered to refugees. Generally, solutions have had to be restrained and effective in the sense that they should meet the basic needs of the refugees but not go beyond what would be expected by Dutch nationals in terms of social assistance from the government. OTAV referred these challenges to national-level policy discussions and built on a large network of stakeholders to foster public support through knowledge exchange and the involvement of communication experts. Although this form of support was not evaluated, the example is included as good practice for other local authorities.²⁹

Public support is also of key importance in the success of projects in the IvAF network in Germany. It was reported by one service provider that in the past, when there was still a more welcoming culture within the local population, half of the participants in their project received assistance from volunteers. However, support from the general population has decreased, and the current political debate around asylum and migration policies puts additional pressure on the work of the projects in the IvAF network. The current anti-migration rhetoric of politicians has not only reinforced restrictive asylum procedures, but has also led, for example, to a decrease in willingness among SMEs to cooperate with projects for refugee integration. Moreover, ‘everyday racism’ in the workplace is an issue that the IvAF

projects address through awareness-raising activities, such as coaching and workshops to bring the problem to the fore and offer means to reflect on and adapt behaviour.

Municipalities have an important role to play in tackling negative perceptions, as they often work closely with local communities and local actors. To manage public opinion, the local authority of Zeist, as part of WegWijZ, opened a two-way communication process with the local community to share information and gain support. Prior to each major decision regarding the reception of asylum seekers and integration of refugees, the local authority initiated a dialogue through open meetings: these included a plenary session and an open session in which concerned citizens could speak one-on-one with local authority policymakers, including the mayor. Initially, local residents came mostly to complain, but the direct engagement of the local authority helped to improve understanding and contributed to the local community becoming more receptive. In Germany, in order to anticipate anti-refugee sentiments on a national level and to challenge the perception that BMAS activities are overly focused on refugees and asylum seekers, BMAS is now more actively promoting its support for a range of socioeconomically disadvantaged target groups – for example, the long-term unemployed and single mothers. The idea is to avert hostility with respect to the allocation of public resources among refugees and asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups in German society.

²⁹ See, for example, the experience of a project in Bloemendaal that cooperated with OTAV to house refugees assigned to this local authority for up to three years, especially their communication with the local community (VNG, undated (in Dutch)).

However, with OTAV having ceased its activities, there are concerns regarding the sustainability of integration measures in the Netherlands, especially in the light of shifting political discussions. For instance, without OTAV's central signalling function, the general overview of what happens locally and on the ground is lost. As such, structural issues are not addressed proactively, but rather in reaction to problems arising. Longer-term solutions are needed to embed solutions to an issue which is volatile both in terms of influx (size of inflow of refugees and asylum seekers) and public opinion and political acceptance.

Providing social assistance

Refugees and asylum seekers in the EU, albeit to different degrees, are entitled to basic social assistance in order to support their social integration. This is especially important when one considers that it can take several years before they can access employment.

A helpful development in the local authority of Zeist in the Netherlands has been that refugees on social benefits are allowed to keep these (up to a certain point) when they enter low-paid jobs.³⁰ Due to, for instance, the time it takes to verify people's qualifications, it is often the case for refugees and asylum seekers that entry to the labour market involves low-paid work. Being able to receive benefits while in this sort of employment provides a greater incentive to work and, thus, participate in society. However, this is at the discretion of the local authority, and not all of them choose not to deduct income from benefits (as stipulated in the Participation Act, which assigns local authorities the responsibility of administering social benefits).

The OTAV measure in the Netherlands has also been focusing on improving access to social assistance. For example, OTAV produced and disseminated a guide to help local authorities provide support to former unaccompanied minors, which explains what happens when unaccompanied minors turn 18 and includes suggestions on how to provide this group with additional support. One example in the guide refers to Article 12 of the Participation Act, which states that where parents are not able to provide additional support to 18- to 20-year-olds, special financial social assistance can be provided – this is often applicable to former unaccompanied minors.

Sustainability, potential for scaling up and transferability

The majority of measures examined in this report have been implemented only recently and just a few have been evaluated, making it difficult to assess their potential for long-term sustainability. Of the 16 measures reviewed, two have been completed, five are still ongoing but have a completion date, and nine are ongoing and are considered to be more or less a permanent part of the country's approach to the integration of migrants. However, of

course, policy changes can be introduced by existing governments or by newly elected governments, potentially leading to budget cuts and the scaling down and/or cancellation of integration measures.

In terms of sustainability, it should be noted that amidst the changing context (for example, decreasing numbers of new applicants and an expected increase in family reunification), the continuation of certain measures may not be necessary; instead, increased focus could be placed on adapting measures to future changes.

In terms of transferability, given that the challenges encountered regarding the integration of refugees and asylum seekers are similar across the EU, each of the measures included in this report, or specific elements within them, have potential value across Member States – provided some preconditions can be addressed (such as having access to sufficient resources and making some procedural changes). Nevertheless, depending on the respective measure and its set-up, various aspects would have to be adjusted to the specific national context in which public services operate. In this light, it is also important to note that some Member States are further advanced than others in terms of implementing measures to integrate refugees and asylum seekers. Therefore, it follows that some initiatives or elements of integration measures will be more easily transferable across Member States. Initiatives and cross-cutting elements with high transferability are discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

Efficient networking structures among all actors involved

While networking structures would have to be adapted to the specific national context, the measures examined here show that bringing together different stakeholders and different levels of governance benefits the implementation of a measure and, in turn, the integration achieved. For example, the language courses provided in Austria indicate that continuous review and feedback by service providers to lead organisations is helpful to ensure the relevance of measures for participants.

Use of mobile apps

As the Zeist WegWijZ measure shows, mobile apps can be efficient tools to assist refugees to find their way in new environments. The use of mobile tools could easily be transferred to all Member States and across all integration areas, either as a stand-alone tool for integration or to support the implementation of an existing measure.

Unbureaucratic, user-friendly and low-threshold interaction

The unbureaucratic, low-threshold interface between refugees and companies provided by the Welcome Guides initiative in Germany has received particularly positive feedback from both services and beneficiaries. The concept of unbureaucratic support could be transferred to

³⁰ Article 31 (Part 2) of the Participation Law regarding social benefits stipulates what is not counted towards a person's 'resources'. Up to 25% of income from labour, to a maximum of €203 per month, will not be counted as part of a person's resources for at most six months, where the local authority executive board deems this contributes to the labour activation of the person.

other employment-related measures in the EU. This idea is not limited to employment integration: it could also be transferable to measures in other areas of integration where the public service designates a single point of contact for both the refugees participating in the measure and other third parties involved (e.g. local authorities).

In addition to these elements which are applicable across all areas of integration, there are a few promising areas where transferability can be singled out in relation to specific fields or combinations of fields.

- In the areas of **education** and **employment**, the approach of combining language courses with labour market training could be transferred to other Member States. As the examples of Sweden's Short Way and Austria's Jugendcollege show, this improves the language skills of refugees and asylum seekers and their employability at the same time. Measures which combine work, or on-the-job training, with education are particularly beneficial for young refugees who are outside the compulsory education system, as these not only enhance basic competencies and skills but also support entry into the labour market.
- In the area of **employment**, a tool to identify professional skills and competencies, as provided in the framework of the MYSKILLS initiative in Germany, can be an effective way of matching the skills of

refugees and asylum seekers with appropriate job opportunities. While the tool would have to be adapted to the respective national circumstances, the idea of providing an interactive, computer-based testing tool in multiple languages is transferable to all Member States. Furthermore, measures that include mentoring, both in and outside the workplace, can speed up access to employment. Mentors can help refugees to access networks and get in touch with employers, as shown in the example of refugees being paired with mentors to support them in finding the right job placement as part of the Welcome Guides initiative in Germany.

- In the area of **education**, the curricula and structure of relevant measures examined in this report can be transferred to other Member States, taking into account the national specificities – for example, types of participant. Linked to this, models of cooperation between various education providers and other public services, as exemplified by the Austrian language courses, are similarly transferable.
- In **social integration** measures, the interactive set-up of the values and orientation courses in Austria can be directly transferred to other Member States. Importantly, this approach allows for dialogue between participants and trainers about the content of courses.

5 Conclusions and policy messages

Through the examination of selected integration measures in five EU Member States, the present study has explored the role of public services in integrating refugees and asylum seekers in the areas of employment, education, health, housing and social integration. Drawing from the broader policy and regulatory context in the selected Member States and in the EU, as well as examining the implementation of the integration measures, this chapter seeks to identify the challenges faced and lessons learnt by the Member States in approaching integration as a complex social phenomenon. In addition to structural integration challenges, such as language and cultural barriers and negative public attitudes, the chapter also explores challenges and lessons learnt from practical implementation of the selected measures. The final section outlines policy messages and points to emerging future needs.

Conclusions

Main challenges involved in integrating refugees and asylum seekers

Following the arrival of over three million asylum seekers between 2014 and 2016, Member States faced a number of challenges in integrating newly arrived refugees. Meeting refugees' basic needs, such as housing and social assistance, as well as financing integration measures put a strain on their often already stretched public finances. At the same time, Member States had to go through a steep learning curve in designing tailor-made integration measures that were not only appropriate for people from different cultural backgrounds but which also had to meet the specific needs of refugees following their traumatic experiences. Language barriers and low or no level of literacy – highly prevalent among some nationalities as shown in the overview in Chapter 3 – also hampered the degree to which refugees could successfully integrate. These issues all required capacity building and increased resources for public services, including employment, health and education services, in meeting these special needs. A further important challenge for the social integration of refugees and asylum seekers has been negative public attitudes and, in some cases, the reluctance of employers to hire refugees, particularly where language and cultural barriers were an issue. At the same time, the available statistics show that in a labour market increasingly requiring more technical skills in high- and medium-skilled occupations, a large share of refugees are at a real disadvantage due to their lower levels of educational attainment and, for some, lack of formal schooling and certification.

Scope and aim of the selected measures

Faced with those complex challenges, Member States have deployed their public services to facilitate the integration of refugees into their societies. The present study examined 16 integration measures carried out in Austria, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden, where

public services have been active in their integration efforts. These measures were diverse in their coverage (national, regional or local), scope and target groups (particular demographic groups of refugees and asylum seekers) and stage of maturity (pilot projects and well-established programmes).

Some measures, such as MYSKILLS in Germany and the SIB (Social Impact Bond) in Finland, have exhibited strong potential for innovation and scope for replication in other Member States. Although most of the measures cover more than one area of integration, almost half of them focus primarily on, or at least have a component focused on, labour market integration. Not only is participation in the labour market regarded as a highly significant factor leading to long-term social integration, there is strong political will to facilitate employment among refugees (and asylum seekers, particularly those who have high chances of staying in the country). The promotion of fast labour market entry is also encouraged at European level. Moreover, a large number of measures focus on social integration, which covers multiple dimensions, including social inclusion, civic education and access to social services and social assistance, as well as participation in democratic processes. Four of the measures focused on education, three on housing and two on mental health.

Role of public services in the different areas of integration

The study shows that public services in these countries have been largely proactive in implementing a range of diverse integration measures, including adoption of some innovative approaches. The role of public services differed across the selected measures: in some cases, public services primarily regulated and oversaw the measures (regulator); in other cases, public services were responsible for implementing the measures (service provider); and in yet other cases, public services were primarily involved in financing the measures (funder) or provided a combination of the three primary roles.

The study shows that the type of public services involved and their degree of participation depend on the area of integration. In the area of employment, PES were found to be the primary actors across the majority of measures, often in collaboration with employers and employer organisations, education providers and private actors. In two cases, PES were directly responsible for the implementation of the measures (acting as service providers) and in two cases, PES were responsible for steering the project, taking decisions on content and design, pilot testing and engaging with employers (acting as regulators). In the area of education, the typical set-up involves a public employment service acting as a regulator and overseeing the implementation by education service providers. In the area of housing, municipalities and local authorities play key roles. Local authorities also contribute to measures aimed at civic education and participation as well as access to services. Local authorities have

collaborated primarily with NGOs in delivering the social integration measures.

Challenges and lessons learnt

This research revealed a number of challenges in implementing and designing the different measures and highlighted the lessons learnt in dealing with these challenges. These challenges and lessons learnt are discussed below under the following headings:

- Reaching out to target groups
- Ensuring gender balance
- Cooperation among different actors
- Impact of recent changes in legislation, policy and bureaucratic procedures
- Mental health issues
- Education issues
- Countering negative public opinion
- Practical and logistical challenges in implementing measures

Reaching out to target groups

In general, the integration initiatives encountered few challenges with regard to engaging their target groups. This was mostly because the target groups were often pre-identified (e.g. they were registered with a public employment service) or because they had a legal obligation to participate in the measure. Nevertheless, in cases where the target group was not pre-identified and reaching the group relied largely on referrals by case handlers and other intermediaries, challenges arose where the professionals who were expected to refer potential beneficiaries were not aware of the measure themselves (e.g. in Sweden's Short Way and Finland's SIB (Social Impact Bond)). A few lessons can be drawn from the measures examined.

Specific efforts should be made to engage hard-to-reach groups

In the IvAF programme, it was anticipated that traumatised participants would struggle with the rules and schedules of the programme and would be unable to keep up with the curriculum. To address these issues and to support the special needs of participants, the network opted to cooperate with a dedicated trained psychologist who would help identify traumatised refugees and initiate clinical treatment. In addition, all facilitators and trainers in the team were trained to deal with refugees who had experienced trauma.

Some integration measures work well when they are compulsory

The values and orientation courses in Austria are compulsory for all refugees; this means that there are no issues in reaching out to this target group. However, compulsory participation requires a larger budget, which might not be feasible for all measures in all countries.

Using refugee role models can help to promote participation

The experience of the Dutch measure Zeist WegWijZ shows that refugee role models can encourage participation: by recruiting an 'expert by experience', the local authority gained important insights into the cultural differences between Eritrean refugees and native Dutch people, including the importance of role models in Eritrean society. Involving role models is a relatively low-cost approach as long as the target groups are fairly homogenous.

Target groups must be made aware of the measures available

Often, target groups are not aware that a measure exists; thus, a systematic approach to reaching out to these groups is necessary. For example, in the Austrian measure regarding language courses, each organisation involved in implementation is responsible for reaching out to potential participants, and the participants themselves are responsible for registering on the courses. Outreach is conducted mainly through social media and cooperation with public services. In the case of Short Way in Sweden, reaching the target group relied very much on case handlers in the public employment service who raised awareness of the measure. However, due to heavy workloads and the large range of public employment service measures on offer, case handlers themselves often did not know about the measure. Additionally, there are challenges across measures in attracting women to participate, as discussed below.

Ensuring gender balance

Across the different integration areas, a lower share of female refugees and asylum seekers participate in the measures. This in part reflects the gender composition of inflows to the EU between 2015 and 2017, with women making up around 30% of all asylum applicants and around 38% of all persons granted international protection (see the overview in Chapter 3 for more details). However, only a few measures, such as IvAF in Germany or the SIB (Social Impact Bond) in Finland, included a specific focus on women. Even where it was claimed that specific attention was paid to increasing female participation, this was not always visible in terms of concrete activities and outputs. Some measures picked up on the issue during implementation. For example, the Welcome Guides initiative in Germany, recognising the low number of female participants, intends to hire more female welcome guides in the future to improve outreach to refugee women. Two main lessons emerged in relation to ensuring gender balance.

Putting in place accompanying activities may help to boost female participation

Some measures have provided childcare facilities to increase the participation of women (e.g. the Austrian language courses, the Finnish SIMHE initiative and IvAF in Germany). Additionally, in the IvAF initiative, the service provider plans to offer classes that specifically match the education and vocational needs of female refugees.

The Finnish SIB implemented a special programme to help women return to the labour market.

The presence of women in cultural orientation courses helps to promote equality

Good practice identified in the Austrian values and orientation courses involves the public service working to ensure gender balance in classes; both men and women are invited to actively participate and make their voice heard, thus preparing them for their professional lives in Austria.

Cooperation among different actors

Given the multidimensional and complex nature of integration, close cooperation between different actors is a prerequisite for successful intervention. Across the various measures and integration areas, different cooperation models between public services, private organisations and social partners have been identified. Cooperation has been found to be particularly challenging when a high number of actors from a wide variety of stakeholders are involved, requiring good information and communication flows to avoid duplication and maximise synergies. Challenges encountered relate to information exchange between the actors (e.g. the WegWijz initiative in the Netherlands) and ensuring close communication with other partners who have a similar brief (e.g. the Platform Opnieuw Thuis, also in the Netherlands). Several lessons can be drawn in terms of cooperation.

Close cooperation between different actors supports integration

An example of successful cooperation is found in Sweden Together/100 Club in which companies cooperate with the Swedish public employment service to offer internships or work practice to at least 100 newly arrived refugees within three years. The companies can make use of special placement services and receive wage subsidies from the state. In addition, employer organisations act as intermediaries between companies and the public employment service.

Public services may take up different roles, impacting on cooperation with service providers

While public services are the main driver in several of the selected integration measures, in some cases their role involves the provision of funding, with service providers being left to design and implement the measures themselves. This is most notable in the Finnish SIMHE initiative, where the role of the public service is to provide incentives to universities to participate, and to a lesser extent to provide general guidance, while the universities choose how to provide the services. In other measures, such as the Austrian language courses, the public service is rather prescriptive, and the service providers' role is to implement the measure. Here, although the education service providers (28 public and private education providers) can offer advice to the public service regarding the running of the measure, they cannot implement changes independently. In some cases, it may be more effective and cost efficient to 'outsource' services to an

external (public or private) provider; however, proper regulation and supervision should be carried out by the public service or public entity involved.

Impact of recent changes in legislation, policy and bureaucratic procedures

External developments, such as changes to legislation and policy as well as to bureaucratic procedures, have either impacted on the selected initiatives or are expected to affect them. There are three main lessons relating to this issue.

Budgetary cuts may impact on future implementation of measures

Service providers in most of the countries referred to recent or upcoming changes which could have an impact on the integration measures that were being implemented (this was also noted at EU level in the interim evaluation of the AMIF). For example, in Sweden, elections have created some degree of uncertainty, especially for the Migration Agency in terms of the financing of the Resettlement Programme. In the Swedish initiative Short Way, as budget cuts have already been announced, this measure will most likely have to be offered to a narrower target group. In Austria, Jugendcollege is affected by policy changes regarding the funding of integration measures, and the Austrian government has cut the budget for measures offered by PES almost in half.

Bureaucratic procedures slow down implementation

Lengthy bureaucratic procedures often hinder the efficient implementation of a measure, as noted in the case of Welcome Guides in Germany and Platform Opnieuw Thuis in the Netherlands. In the first case, long bureaucratic procedures for granting work permits and rigorous structures for vocational training have prevented the timely start of vocational training; in the second case, difficulties in registering refugees as residents delayed their access to housing.

Policies in place in Member States can influence implementation

Additional challenges related to the implementation of policies are rather specific in certain contexts. For instance, the IvAF measure experienced problems across the German federal states due to regional disparities in the implementation of national policies. In the case of the OTAV measure in the Netherlands, the regulatory framework regarding unaccompanied minors posed a challenge. Lastly, it should be noted that Member States' family reunification policies will probably have an impact on the number of female refugees. Given recent changes in government policies in this regard, possible fluctuations in the number of female refugees should be taken into account in the design and implementation of integration measures.

Mental health issues

One of the main difficulties identified across the different integration areas and Member States concerns the mental health of refugees and asylum seekers. Many refugees

experience psychological and emotional traumas in their countries of origin, during their journeys or in host communities, which increases the risk of mental illness, including psychological trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, panic attacks, and mood and anxiety disorders. In particular, there are issues around timely identification of trauma and the availability of support geared toward the specific needs of different groups of refugees with respect to mental health. In addition, cultural barriers and difficulties in communication, coupled with the cost of treatment, can make it very difficult for refugees to access appropriate care in their host communities.

A few measures, such as Step by Step in Germany, focus specifically on providing psychological and mental health support. Some, like the IvAF network, cooperate with dedicated initiatives that can identify traumatised refugees and initiate clinical treatment.

There is one main lesson in relation to mental health issues among refugees and asylum seekers.

There is a need for psychological monitoring and support for target groups

Analysis of the selected measures indicates a need for psychological support in all integration measures. All measures will be more successful and sustainable if the underlying mental health problems of those being served are identified and addressed. This is also an issue that applies across all Member States.

Education issues

Challenges encountered in the area of education are related to the relatively high number of low-skilled and illiterate refugees, who struggle to take part in many of the integration measures examined due to poor language skills and unfamiliarity with classroom environments. For example, in the case of Step by Step, the refugees' poor German language skills combined with the fact that staff members did not speak the refugees' native languages made communication very difficult. In the case of the Welcome Guides, inadequate German language skills often hindered the successful completion of vocational training. In terms of lessons for education measures, two key points emerge.

Tackling the challenges of low-skilled refugees is crucial for integration

In Sweden, municipalities provide customised education activities for this group in order to shorten the route to integration. In one municipality, as part of the Resettlement Programme, the course covers refugees' self-esteem, their expectations of Sweden and Sweden's expectations of them and learning Swedish. They also offer internships and other customised courses. In the Austrian language courses, the presence of illiterate participants without any education, who struggle to follow the pace and structure of the courses, have prompted service providers to initiate a dialogue with the public service on how to better deal with these participants. The public service is taking this feedback into account while revising the current course curricula.

Language barriers are the main obstacle to successful integration

The ability of refugees to communicate effectively is key to the successful implementation of any integration measure and, in turn, to the integration of participants into host countries. To achieve this, access to language courses which are appropriate to refugees' levels of proficiency is desirable. At the same time, as the Welcome Guides measure shows, implementation of integration measures benefits from the involvement of staff who can speak the mother tongue of the refugees participating – this makes it possible to approach users at a basic level.

Countering negative public opinion

The increasingly negative public opinion across the Member States on the integration of refugees and asylum seekers has impacted on measures in the different areas. Local authorities involved in the regulation, funding or implementation of integration measures may wish to avoid prioritising the needs of refugees over those of other vulnerable citizens, fearing backlash from local communities. In relation to the Dutch initiative Platform Opnieuw Thuis, the initiative found that local municipalities did not want to provide refugees with social housing, arguing that there were disadvantaged Dutch citizens who had already been on social housing waiting lists for long periods of time and that local communities favoured provision for the latter. The Platform discussed with these local authorities how to manage the negative public perception and create and use more positive images. In some local authorities, communication experts were hired through the Platform to help with this. One main lesson emerges in terms of dealing with negative public opinion.

Ensure the 'buy in' of local communities when the measure is applied at local level

Ensuring that local communities are informed prior to the adoption of measures at local level is a prerequisite for successful implementation. In the case of the Swedish Resettlement Programme, it became clear that strong municipal leadership that was committed to welcoming refugees was key in counteracting a negative shift in public opinion.

Practical and logistical challenges in implementing measures

Public authorities and service providers implementing integration measures have been faced with a number of practical challenges. For example, the profiles and characteristics of refugees and asylum seekers participating in measures often vary substantially in terms of language skills, cultural background and legal status. This requires a high level of flexibility on the part of those involved in implementation, but flexibility is not always supported by the structure of the initiative. A separate issue concerns the costs to participants of accessing services. In the Short Way initiative in Sweden, some participants struggled to take part in the activities on offer as they could not pay for travel costs. One key lesson can be noted in relation to practical challenges for implementation.

Measures benefit from a high level of flexibility on the part of implementation actors

Although not always feasible due to financial and structural constraints, some measures have shown the value of being able to adapt quickly to the specific circumstances and needs of participants. For example, the content of language courses in Austria is constantly reviewed by the lead organisation following feedback from service providers and adapted accordingly. Similarly, Sweden's Resettlement Programme and the Finnish SIB (Social Impact Bond) both show that an individual focus, providing information and support tailored to participants' needs, is important.

Policy messages

Emerging trends and future outlook

Following a spike in the number of asylum applications in 2015 and 2016, the number of asylum applications from 2017 onwards has decreased. EU-wide, almost 730,000 applications were made in 2017, representing a 44% drop on the 1.3 million made during 2016. However, prolonged uncertainty and volatility in the EU's neighbouring regions may mean that although the number of arrivals is expected to decrease in the immediate term, it is hard to predict future flows in the medium and long terms. The measures examined in this report show that integration is a long-term process, so even though the inflow has declined since 2015, those Member States which are most affected by the large inflow of new arrivals will continue to face many challenges in the years to come. For this reason, the lessons learnt from the selected measures in the five Member States, which received a disproportionately high number of refugees, are particularly valuable.

Policy message: Public authorities and services, in collaboration with other actors in the Member States, should actively learn from the implemented measures in their specific national contexts to ensure preparedness and an effective response should flows increase again in the future. Replicability and transferability of success factors should be encouraged: coordination actions (e.g. cooperation of different networks) at EU level could play a leading role in this.

As the majority of persons granted asylum in the EU are young and male (approximately 65% of beneficiaries of international protection are male and in the 18–35 age group), it is expected that in the coming two to three years, family reunification will increase as these individuals are joined by their spouses and other family members.

Policy message: In preparation for this expected trend, public authorities and public services should devise special integration measures for the expected newcomers. These measures will most likely fall into other immigration channels (i.e. legal migration rather than asylum), which may limit the entitlement of new arrivals to special integration measures that target

refugees specifically. Women are most likely to make up a large share of this group, and thus paying attention to gender-specific integration needs is expected to be an important area in coming years. Specific measures may also have to be devised for reunifying children.

Prerequisites for successful social integration

A fundamental feature of integration is a dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation (as per the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the EU). Orientation and civic courses that aim to provide instruction in the values and habits of host countries are only one type of social integration measure. More innovative and engaging measures are showing promising results: these include measures which involve refugees in community activities and those which support social networking, such as mentoring projects. Public support for such initiatives is important. An active civil society, a welcoming business environment and the support of local communities and NGOs are conducive to successful integration.

Policy message: By offering possibilities for participation in community activities such as sports and other recreational activities, integration can be promoted as an easy way to familiarise newcomers with their new societies.

Ensuring regular cooperation between different actors involved in the implementation of integration measures is seen as crucial for success. Important prerequisites for cooperation include ensuring openness of communication flows across different actors and, where appropriate, institutionalising processes for cooperation. This can also help authorities become more efficient, since they can benefit directly from the experiences of others as well as in the dissemination of best practice (see, for example, the Dutch initiatives OTAV and WegWijZ).

Policy message: The design and implementation of integration measures should be carried out in collaboration with different actors as this will improve feasibility and take-up of initiatives.

Designing and implementing integration measures with the 'end user' in mind

Half of the measures included in this report focus to some degree on integration into the labour market, followed by education and social integration (three measures for each), with a limited number of measures focusing directly on housing and health issues (two measures for each). However, as described in Chapter 3 above, these are often interlinked and success in one area of integration can positively influence integration in other areas: for example, once a person has received a 'permanent' place to live, they can dedicate their full attention to other aspects

of their integration. Similarly, providing good access to healthcare is often a precondition to further integration. Mental health issues especially affect a person's ability to participate in other types of integration measures.

A related point is that while labour market integration is important, it may often be better to concentrate on other aspects of integration first so that refugees and asylum seekers can become 'work ready'.

Policy message: It is important for public services to bear in mind the extent of interdependency among different integration dimensions when adjusting existing measures or developing new ones.

Refugees and asylum seekers have particular perspectives and experiences that have to be taken into consideration. A particular challenge to the swift integration of refugees relates to traumatic experiences, which can give rise to mental health problems including depression and anxiety. Understanding situations such as these and embedding them in the design of integration measures can improve effectiveness. Recognising that integration is a 'two-way' process, it is also important that cultural differences are understood and taken into account in integration measures.

Policy message: Public services should involve refugees more closely in the design and implementation of integration measures, so that their perspectives and experiences can become embedded in the measures. Using role models or 'experts by experience' is also beneficial, as they may anticipate obstacles that are not evident to public authorities or service providers involved in designing integration measures.

Policy message: Design of integration measures should take into account the specific cultural characteristics of the end users.

With regard to education, language acquisition is one of the most important factors in integration, and emphasis should be put on courses that are flexible and can adapt to the different needs of target groups. For example, illiterate refugees need extra support and different teaching methods to learn the language of the host country, and existing language course models on offer across Member States are likely to be unsuitable. To prevent these groups from being socially excluded, specific support should be put in place by Member States.

Policy message: Education measures should also cater for those who are illiterate or who have not been in education, as these individuals make up a relatively large proportion of the recent arrivals.

With regard to reaching out to target groups, as already highlighted in the section on lessons learnt, most measures work when there is a set list of potential participants (e.g. those registered in reception centres), as it makes it easier to engage refugees and asylum seekers. In some cases, participation is even compulsory.

However, more efforts should be made to reach out to vulnerable groups to ensure their participation in integration measures. This might be via compulsory participation coupled with receiving social benefits (for example, in the case of Austrian values and orientation courses) or through offering support that caters for the specific needs of the group in question, such as making childcare available for the duration of an activity in order to increase participation by women (see, for example, the IFAF initiative).

Policy message: In cases where outreach is required, this should be more systematically built in to the design of the integration measure. Outreach should ideally be driven by public services and complemented by service providers through, for example, social media outreach or targeted outreach in reception centres.

The majority of the measures reported here are impacted by political developments and policy changes in the area of integration, and more changes are anticipated in the light of recent elections in Austria, Germany and Sweden. Related to this, anti-immigration political rhetoric across many Member States also impacts on integration measures in terms of, for example, increased difficulty in finding partners (see, for example, IFAF) or local authorities being reluctant to host refugees altogether. In most Member States, public support for refugee arrivals and integration seems to be declining. Sweden is an exception, having an increased level of support.

Policy message: Policymakers need to counteract negative developments by providing clear and accurate information on the implementation of measures and by educating the public about the needs of integrating refugees and asylum seekers across Member States.

Some recent policy developments appear to favour a stricter approach, with far-right governments across many Member States implementing harsher immigration and integration strategies. Nevertheless, the measures captured in this report offer promising examples of the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into Member States.

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Annex A1: Overview of selected integration measures

Country codes

AT	Austria
DE	Germany
FI	Finland
NL	Netherlands
SE	Sweden

Member State	Measure	Main areas of integration	Description	Results and impact
AT	Jugendcollege	Labour market; education	This measure provides refugees and asylum seekers between the ages of 15 and 25 with necessary language skills, basic education and practical work experience as preparation for later compulsory education or entry into the labour market. It is currently implemented in three federal states in Austria (Vorarlberg, Styria and Vienna). Ongoing.	It is intended that a total of 200 participants will ultimately be supported through Jugendcollege. Currently, 75 individuals are enrolled in the programme, and a further 90 have completed it. To monitor the impact of the programme on participants, the public employment service in Vorarlberg conducts a follow-up 90 days after completion of the project to see whether individuals are in education or employment. The majority continue into further education, while some go on to vocational education or employment. Some 35 participants failed to complete the programme due to reasons such as mental health issues, pregnancy and lack of motivation. More courses were offered in 2017 (1,833) than in 2016 (1,092), and the number of people taking part in courses increased considerably: 14,041 people took part in 2016, and 24,115 took part in 2017. The Austrian Integration Fund has had visits from representatives of other EU Member States interested in understanding how the courses are run in Austria, indicating that they are perceived as having potential for success in different contexts.
	Values and orientation courses	Social integration Also <i>labour market; education; housing</i>	This measure provides refugees and asylum seekers with information about everyday life and basic values in Austria. The courses have been implemented nationwide since 2016. The Austrian Integration Fund develops and implements the courses through branches in different federal states. Since the 2017 Integration Act was passed, these courses have become a compulsory element of the integration of refugees in Austria. Ongoing.	In 2016 and 2017, 25 and 28 organisations (respectively) were selected by the Austrian Investment Fund to offer language courses. In both years, the number of participants was around 20,000. In 2017, 85% of participants took the basic language exam. There is no further follow-up with participants beyond this achievement.
	Language courses	Education	The language courses have been implemented throughout Austria since 2016. The courses are funded by the Austrian Investment Fund and implemented by external organisations (both public and private) across different federal states. Funding is provided for organisations offering language courses for refugees with the aim of reaching German level A1. Ongoing.	

			<p>Since the start of the measure in November 2017, some 2,000 jobseekers (of which 1,300 were refugees and 700 were low-skilled workers) have been tested.</p> <p>Due to the very recent implementation of this tool, there are no outcome indicators in place so far. An evaluation by an independent institute is envisaged by 2019. Project managers and job counsellors applying the tool are rather optimistic about the added value of MYSKILLS for tailor-made matching of individuals to jobs or referral to further training.</p>
		<p>Developed by the German public employment service, in cooperation with the Bertelsmann Foundation, MYSKILLS is a tool that provides refugees and asylum seekers with a way to recognise skills and non-formal competencies for entry into the labour market. The tests are operated nationwide for eight professions (e.g. mechatronics technician, salesperson, chef, geriatric nurse).</p> <p>Test results are added to the jobseeker's profile and CV to provide guidance to employers and to PES counsellors when undertaking next steps.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	
MYSKILLS	Labour market		
		<p>This was a pilot initiative that provided psychotherapeutic care to traumatised refugees at a designated reception centre in the Hesse region. The programme aimed to provide direct care to vulnerable groups of refugees at the Michaelisdorf reception facility in Darmstadt, while simultaneously providing an opportunity to test key concepts from both psychoanalytical trauma research and social pedagogical research. The project was initiated by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration, and developed and implemented by the Sigmund Freud Institute (a research institute) and Goethe University Frankfurt. The German Red Cross was also a partner in the implementation of the pilot project.</p> <p>Completed in 2017.</p>	<p>The majority (80%) of refugees accommodated in the Michaelisdorf reception facility at the time of the pilot regularly participated in Step by Step activities. Many of the severely traumatised refugees benefited from 'first steps' activities and were transferred within the 'second steps' pillar to access external psychological and medical support. In the framework of the project, networks for the care of vulnerable refugees, at first reception centres and in permanent accommodation facilities, were established and professionalised.</p>
Step by Step	Health		
		<p>This measure helps to assist a network of different actors working at the local level to support refugees and asylum seekers to gain access to the labour market. The measure is implemented nationally and is managed by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. Implementation takes place in more than 40 different organisations, including municipalities and NGOs. The IvAF programme has around 200 individual projects, which support asylum seekers and tolerated persons by providing relevant information, orientation and practical advice relating to language learning, school and work, labour and social law, claiming of benefits and family and parenting issues.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>With approximately 200 projects involved, outcomes vary according to the initiative being implemented and the target group. IvAF addresses multiple forms of discrimination faced by refugees, such as that based on age, religion, gender, sexual orientation, cognitive and physical restrictions and skin colour. IvAF can address these aspects by tailoring advisory and support services on a case-by-case basis, ensuring that its tenured experts have a solid understanding of the participant's background, society of origin and current living situation.</p>
IvAF (Integration of Asylum Seekers and Refugees)	Social integration Also labour market; education		
		<p>This measure supports small and medium-sized enterprises in the training and employment of refugees. The role of individual 'welcome guides' is to inform, advise and provide practical support on all issues related to vocational training and recruitment of skilled refugees. In close cooperation with employment agencies and regional integration points, they act as the interface between asylum seekers and refugees on one side and companies and vocational colleges on the other. The measure targets young refugees and asylum seekers (including beneficiaries of international protection and tolerated persons) between 15 and 25 who are motivated and qualified to undergo vocational training.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Since the beginning of the programme, welcome guides have referred almost 7,700 refugees and asylum seekers: 3,878 to internships, 542 to work shadowing (learning through accompanying and observing a skilled worker carrying out their daily tasks), 1,156 to introductory qualification schemes, 1,344 to vocational training and 766 to employment.</p>
Welcome Guides	Labour market		

DE

Member State	Measure	Main areas of integration	Description	Results and impact
FI	SIB (Social Impact Bond)	Labour market	<p>This measure aims to improve refugee employment levels by bringing together companies and employees, and by customising training according to needs across workplaces. Beneficiaries have to hold a residence permit on the grounds of international protection and must be unemployed jobseekers who have been out of the labour market for six months.</p> <p>The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment initiated the measure, which is itself realised in the form of a social impact bond. Private investors offer capital for innovative social services that provide a public good. If the expected social benefits are achieved, investors receive back their capital plus a rate of return.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>The project aims to facilitate the employment of 2,500 refugees in the period 2016–2019. Although it is still early in the implementation phase, results are promising, with 50% of the participants to date (250 people) in employment after participating in the programme, a significantly higher employment rate than that achieved by those looking for employment through usual channels.</p>
	SIMHE (Supporting Immigrants in Higher Education)	Labour market; education	<p>This measure aims to identify the competencies and prior learning and qualifications of highly educated refugees and other migrants and ensure that these are recognised; in addition, it provides guidance on suitable education and career paths. By ensuring that previous studies and qualifications are recognised according to national policies, participants are able to find their way to appropriate education and careers paths as quickly as possible. The measure was created by the Ministry of Education and Culture in 2016 and is being implemented nationally at six higher education institutions.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Data collection on the outcomes is currently ongoing. However, based on feedback collected from participants, satisfaction among participants is very high: the average satisfaction rating is 4.68 out of 5.</p>
	PALOMA	Health	<p>The aim of the PALOMA handbook is to provide a reference for different professionals who work with refugees that facilitates recognition, prevention and treatment for refugees and asylum seekers with mental health issues. The handbook covers the whole field of mental health work from preventive work outside of health and social services to the specialised care offered by health and social services. The handbook is being implemented nationally.</p> <p>The main target group are professionals who work with refugees and/or asylum seekers. The secondary target group is refugees and asylum seekers. In the process of writing the handbook, a large number of public service providers were involved, such as social and health professionals from district and central hospitals, professionals from NGOs, representatives from the ministries and researchers from several institutes.</p>	<p>Seminars, presentations and lectures have been given in different settings during 2018. The initial experience of disseminating the handbook has been positive, and professionals have been grateful that information has been compiled on mental health work with refugees.</p>

	Platform Opnieuw Thuis	Housing	<p>This was a nationwide initiative that supported local authorities in providing housing for the increased inflow of asylum seekers. The activities provided included: developing processes for speedy access to housing; advising local authorities about housing refugees; and finding and providing information and conducting analysis.</p> <p>The measure was funded by the national government and brought together a host of stakeholders involved in housing refugees, such as the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, the Ministry of Justice and Security and Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, local authorities, provinces, the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, housing corporations and other relevant stakeholders.</p> <p>Completed in 2017.</p>	<p>The Platform collected knowledge, published tools and monitored pilots that provided unconventional solutions to the lack of housing, such as using empty office buildings for social housing purposes. Additionally, early in the implementation, the Platform held regional conferences (one for each of 12 provinces) with the aim of sharing information and increasing knowledge on the issue of housing allocation.</p>
NL	OTAV	Social integration Also education; housing; health	<p>OTAV (<i>Ondersteuningsteam Asielzoekers en Vluchtelingen</i> – Support team for asylum seekers and refugees) is a nationwide measure set up to support Dutch local authorities in providing accommodation and other services to asylum seekers, as well as a range of integration measures for refugees, in the context of a steep increase in asylum seekers entering the Netherlands in 2015. The main activities include: a help desk, regional account management and an expert network. The measure is funded by the national government and involves a host of stakeholders throughout the process.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Between October 2015 and February 2017, the help desk received around 1,500 queries. Just under half of these (45%) concerned the housing of refugees, and more than a tenth (12%) were related to integration and participation. The expert network fulfilled 171 requests for tailored support. Most of these concerned requests for expertise in housing refugees and communication. A local authority survey revealed that 85% of respondents felt that the OTAV adds value.</p>
	Zeist WegWijz	Social integration	<p>The first app of its kind to be introduced by a municipality in the Netherlands, this helps refugees to build up a social network, learn about language courses, organisations, financial administrative affairs, labour market opportunities and different activities taking place in the municipality. Users can download the app once they have been assigned to Zeist, before they have been allocated housing. This measure is implemented within the Zeist local authority boundaries and targeted at all refugees assigned to this local authority.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>An evaluation found that the WegWijz integration route helped to speed up the integration process for its users. Refugees moving to Zeist are quickly engaged and their needs mapped so that they can be referred to the correct local services to provide them with opportunities and solutions to barriers.</p>
SE	Sweden Together/ 100 Club	Labour market	<p>This measure aims to tackle the severe shortage of qualified labour across various industries and sectors in Sweden. Companies that have signed up, usually larger enterprises (250+ employees), endeavour to take on at least 100 newly arrived people in various forms of internship/employment during a three-year period. The measure is national but handled locally through local public employment service offices.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>As of August 2017, 30 companies have signed a letter of intent under the measure, and in total 2,241 people have been taken on since the measure was introduced in October 2015. In November 2017, 25 companies were actively involved, having received 987 newly arrived refugees and immigrants, of which 282 are in supported employment at one of the enrolled companies.</p>

Member State	Measure	Main areas of integration	Description	Results and impact
SE	Short Way	Labour market; education	<p>This is a preparatory labour market integration measure that aims to integrate newly arrived refugees and other migrants with at least a bachelor's degree or three years of higher education into the labour market. Courses take place over 26 weeks, and these cover Swedish language training as well as a labour market-based learning experience in the academic field of expertise. Other education components such as validation of skills and career counselling are included in the measure. The public employment service (<i>Arbetsförmedlingen</i>) oversees the measure and procures the service from education providers within a specific county. Service providers under contract can be universities or universities collaborating with other education providers.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>The Swedish public employment service reports that all geographical areas are very satisfied with the service. It has provided new opportunities for many jobseekers, especially through the employment-based education. According to the PES evaluation, around 30% of the participants are in work or study 90 days after completion of the programme – this share is higher in some regions, particularly city areas.</p>
	Swedish Resettlement Programme	Housing	<p>This measure helps refugees from around the world resettle in Sweden as part of the country's refugee quota. All 290 municipalities are required to welcome refugees and help them to become established. The Swedish Migration Agency is responsible for selection, instruction and transfer of the resettled refugees, having assessed their need for protection. The measure covers the whole of Sweden, with each municipality receiving a specified number of resettled refugees. The municipalities are responsible for the integration of the refugees, including providing them with accommodation upon arrival. The public employment service is responsible for the establishment of the resettled refugees.</p> <p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>In 2018, Sweden was the third largest recipient country of resettled refugees in the EU, taking on around 5,000 people. The resettled refugees arriving in Sweden are mainly Syrian refugees from the Middle East (40%) and Northern Africa (16%) and refugees from Eastern Africa, including the Horn of Africa (20%) (Swedish Migration Agency, undated-b). The number of receiving municipalities has gone from 7 to 290 following the introduction of the Resettlement Act, which obliges all Swedish municipalities to take on resettled refugees.</p>

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Following the influx of over three million asylum seekers into the European Union in the three-year period 2015–2017, Member States faced a number of challenges related to integrating the newly arrived into their country. This report explores the role of public services – specifically housing, social services, health and education services – in the social and economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers. It aims to identify the factors that hinder this process and the elements that contribute to successful integration. The overall focus is on destination countries, particularly the three countries most affected by the inflow of refugees and asylum seekers: Austria, Germany and Sweden.

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