



# FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

## Refugee Integration in Austria



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EU funded study on factors influencing refugee integration



European Refugee  
Fund of the European  
Commission

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# Project Overview

For the majority of refugees in Europe and, thus, also in Austria integration is the most relevant durable solution. European Union (EU) Member States have placed integration high on the policy and political agenda, particularly since the mid-1990s. In Austria more focus has been placed on this issue since 2009 resulting in the adoption of a National Action Plan on Integration and the establishment of a State Secretariat for Integration in 2010. Significant investment has been made in programmes and associated support to facilitate immigrant integration and to identify effective practice. In addition, awareness has increased in regard to the importance of being able to evaluate immigrant integration using measurable indicators to help assess the effectiveness of policy and programming as well as integration influencing factors.

In the specific case of refugees, integration is based on the rights flowing from the Qualification Directive (2011). There is, however, no specific EU integration policy instrument. While national approaches vary significantly within the EU, most programmes, including the Austrian one, are mainstreamed into existing integration efforts. The specific situation of refugees and the barriers or facilitators to their integration thereby risk being overlooked and the expert support needed to assist this group in becoming economically productive, self-reliant and ensure dignity may not be diminished. As such, this study has prioritized their specific situation, asking what refugee integration looks like.

The aim of this study, which was conducted as part of a larger research project implemented also in three other Western European States (France, Ireland, Sweden) was to review trends in the development of policy areas relevant to integration, to highlight already used measurable integration indicators and the methods of evaluating integration, and to point out factors that influence integration for refugees. Information for the present report was gathered through desk research and consultations with various stakeholders. With respect to the latter, a total of 84 refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection were consulted either in group discussions or individually. In addition, four thematic stakeholder meetings with each eight to 13 participants with specific expertise in the given areas took place, while another two more general meetings with stakeholders in Provinces were conducted. In addition, one consulted group consisted of members of the receiving society who has contact with refugees and/or persons with subsidiary protection, providing interpretation assistance for other findings of this research. The implementation of the project was accompanied by a national reference group composed of participants from authorities, NGOs and academics.

Through this research, the presence or absence of refugee-specific knowledge and statistical data in literature on integration was highlighted, and refugee-specific barriers or facilitators to integration were identified through consultations with refugees and stakeholders. Within the literature review and consultations, the study considered what kind of approaches to integration appeared to have a positive or successful outcome, on which our recommendations have been based. This report presents the research set out to test if existing integration policy areas and indicators, and known influencing factors, are relevant in the case of refugees.

This research fills a gap in knowledge specifically on refugee integration, which goes beyond the case study approach or a policy analysis. As a broad-ranging qualitative research including the refugee voice, this study presents evidence able to underpin future integration policy and programming as well as future research direction.

## Key findings:

The individuality of each person's integration process is particularly important for refugees who arrive in Austria from very different individual backgrounds. Challenges can only be addressed if refugees are recognized as individuals rather than as a homogenous group for whom the same interventions as applicable are envisaged.



There are refugee-specific concerns of family unity, reception conditions and the asylum process, documentation, and the transition period immediately after recognition, which should be reflected in future integration evaluation.

The transition from asylum-seeker to refugee is a particularly stressful time for refugees because many doors open only at this point, including the full right to work, access to structured language courses and to housing.

Areas which cross-cut and influence each other to a significant extent and which are specific to refugees are family separation, time spent in the asylum procedure and reception facility, absence of documentation, the transition phase upon recognition, language and health. The connections between these are not well understood and data to quantify its effect is largely absent.

There is a general absence of quantitative refugee data on integration policy areas and measurable indicators of integration in project countries, even when this data is well accounted for in the case of migrants.

Indications from statistical data on migrants more widely and from the available literature suggest that refugees may overall have greater incidence of lower educational attainment, lower labour market participation and higher likelihood of being overqualified for their current position, and that significant gaps exist between refugees and other populations relating to poverty, social exclusion and living conditions. These impressions could be challenged or validated with the gathering of statistical data on refugees, especially longitudinal studies.

Employment was the key concern for refugee respondents. Regarding entering the labour market, specific barriers exist for refugees in addition to challenges other migrants face. Challenges evidenced in this research include loss of identity documentation and qualification certificates, non-acceptance of qualifications or educational attainment, trauma and uncertainty, anxiety over family separation, the long period of inactivity during the asylum procedure, and limited social networks.

Refugees frequently suffer from under-employment. Downward professional mobility was particularly hard to cope with for qualified refugees, often adding to poor social status.

Language was found to be a key influential factor on almost every policy area, and the level of language tuition was widely stated to be too low for practical use. Vocational language tuition was found to be useful in addition to combined work/language opportunities. According to consultations, poor housing conditions have a direct negative impact on language acquisition and further qualification.

Appropriate housing was of major concern for most refugee respondents and proved to be a cross-cutting issue. Compared to migrants and the receiving population, refugees struggle to access appropriate, secure, suitable and affordable housing.

Recognition of both vocational as well as academic qualifications due to missing documents or informal education turned out to be a major problem for refugees. Also, insufficient information about education opportunities and the lack of social networks in the host country made it difficult for refugees to improve their skills.

The research revealed that holders of subsidiary protection face a particular set of issues and significantly higher challenges than refugees as regards life and integration in Austria. They were especially struggling with access to housing and finding employment due to the general population lacking knowledge about their status and related rights because of their limited residence permit and restrictions to social housing in some Provinces.

The understanding of integration underpins the government approach to integration policy and support and varies considerably between the government, policymakers and stakeholders. These views might, however, also differ from the refugees' idea of integration, which may lead to different perceptions of "successful" integration.

# Introduction

## Rationale for undertaking this study

UNHCR has been entrusted by the United Nations General Assembly with the mandate to provide international protection to refugees and, together with Governments, to seek permanent solutions to the problems of refugees.<sup>1</sup> For the majority of refugees in Europe integration is the most relevant durable solution. UNHCR's interest and involvement in integration thus stems from its mandate to seek solutions; the 1951 Refugee Convention's Article 34,<sup>1</sup> which encourages States to facilitate the integration and naturalization of refugees; as well as various soft law and policy documents related to integration, such as UNHCR's ExCom Conclusion No. 104 on Local Integration and the 2009 note on strategic approaches for combating discrimination.

The logic of the Convention framework is that, with the passing of time, refugees should be able to enjoy a wider range of rights as their association and ties with the receiving State grow stronger. In this sense, the 1951 Convention gives refugees a solid basis on which they can progressively restore the social and economic independence needed to get on with their lives (UNHCR 2005b). In this regard, ExCom Conclusion No. 104 (UNHCR 2005a) calls on States to facilitate, as appropriate, the integration of refugees and recalls that special efforts may be necessary to facilitate this.

While refugees within the European Union have rights commensurate with those set out in the 1951 Convention, support, information and advice is however often required before refugees can integrate successfully as fully included members of society.

Many countries in Europe have in recent years been working to improve integration of third-country nationals generally. Refugees, as part of this group, however have specific needs which must be taken into account, including their loss of the protection of their country, their experiences of persecution or armed conflict, and their particular difficulties obtaining documentation and the separation and loss of family which often follows as a consequence of flight. European governments have made efforts to measure both social and economic impact of integration policies and support. In the case of refugees, measuring impact of integration policies without an understanding of refugees' particular needs, may lead to misguided policy development and to lack of crucial support needed to avoid long-term dependency, marginalization and isolation of refugees, which in turn can lead to an increase in irregular movements or challenge social cohesion in the receiving State. This

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<sup>1</sup> UN General Assembly, *Statute of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*, 14 December 1950, A/RES/428(V), available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3628.html>

<sup>2</sup> UN General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>

study aims to provide evidence to enable a better understanding of refugee integration with which to inform policy and measurement relating to integration.

This national report is part of a larger research project implemented in Western Europe (Austria, Sweden, France and Ireland) and in Central Europe (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). In Austria, UNHCR sees significant investments by authorities and civil society in integration programmes and projects for migrants and refugees, including evaluation and identification of good practice. Efforts were made by authorities, academics and NGOs over the years to identify relevant integration indicators, gather data to measure the level of socio-economic integration and identify the most effective policies and support. Despite these efforts, there is little available research specific to refugee integration or that identifies which integration indicators are most relevant for refugees. UNHCR has indications that there are a number of refugee-specific issues, including the asylum procedure, which impact integration, but this is under-researched. Therefore there is a gap in knowledge relating to what refugee specific integration barriers and facilitators exist across a wide range of integration policy areas. Such knowledge is necessary to conduct effective measurement of refugee integration and develop further evidence-based policies and programmes. Collecting relevant data on refugee specific issues will enable, the Austrian state and other actors to assess the effectiveness of any existing refugee integration programmes and identify the gaps in refugee integration and their causes.

## Aims of the study

The aim of this study is to review trends in the development of integration indicators; consider the methods of integration evaluation and the inclusion of refugee specific data; and explore specific refugee barriers or facilitators to integration.

Based on a review of literature relating to refugee integration and through dialogue with integration stakeholders and refugees, this study tests assumptions reflected in integration policy and literature about what are thought of as relevant integration indicator policy areas in the case of refugees, what is known about refugee integration based on existing literature and what are the main factors of influence in refugees' levels of 'success' in those areas. In line with the other national reports, this report focusing on Austria has sought to discover if there are differences relating to integration which set refugees apart from other sectors of the immigrant population and, if so, what are those differences. This may include identifying additional integration indicator policy areas for refugee integration or may include identifying influences which are specific to refugees or more critical for refugees when compared with wider migrant integration.

The study did not aim to evaluate refugee integration, nor did it aim to evaluate policies or programming relating to integration at either national or EU level. This report is therefore not an evaluation report. Within the literature review and consultations, the study considered what approaches to integration appeared to have positive or successful outcomes, and sought to identify examples of effective or interesting practice which can be considered by others. However, practices identified in this report are not the outcome of any evaluation nor are the cited examples of practice exhaustive.

## Austrian context

### Migration and refugee flow history

Austria has a widely diverse historic context with regard to migration and refugee trends, which is reflected in Austria's diverse society. Indeed, the Habsburg Empire, which collapsed after World War I, was already a multi-ethnic state.

Since the 1960s, labour and labour-related family migration have been the dominant patterns of migration in Austria, while refugees have also been received. Migration to Austria since the 1950s had different periods (Kraler and Stacher 2002: 51): 1950 to 1973, characterized by the Cold War, refugees and 'guest-worker' migration; 1973 to 1989, mainly labour migration, refugees and family reunification of migrants; 1989 to 2004, mainly family related migration, that is family reunification and family formation, some limited labour migration, especially between 1989 and 1993, and refugees; and since 2004 immigration from the new EU countries increased following EU enlargement, while immigration from non-EU countries decreased (Kraler and Reichel 2012: 44).

In terms of types of migration, a majority (53.3 per cent) of immigrants in Austria have migrated for family-related reasons, 25.7 per cent for employment, while 9.2 per cent were refugees (Statistics Austria 2009).

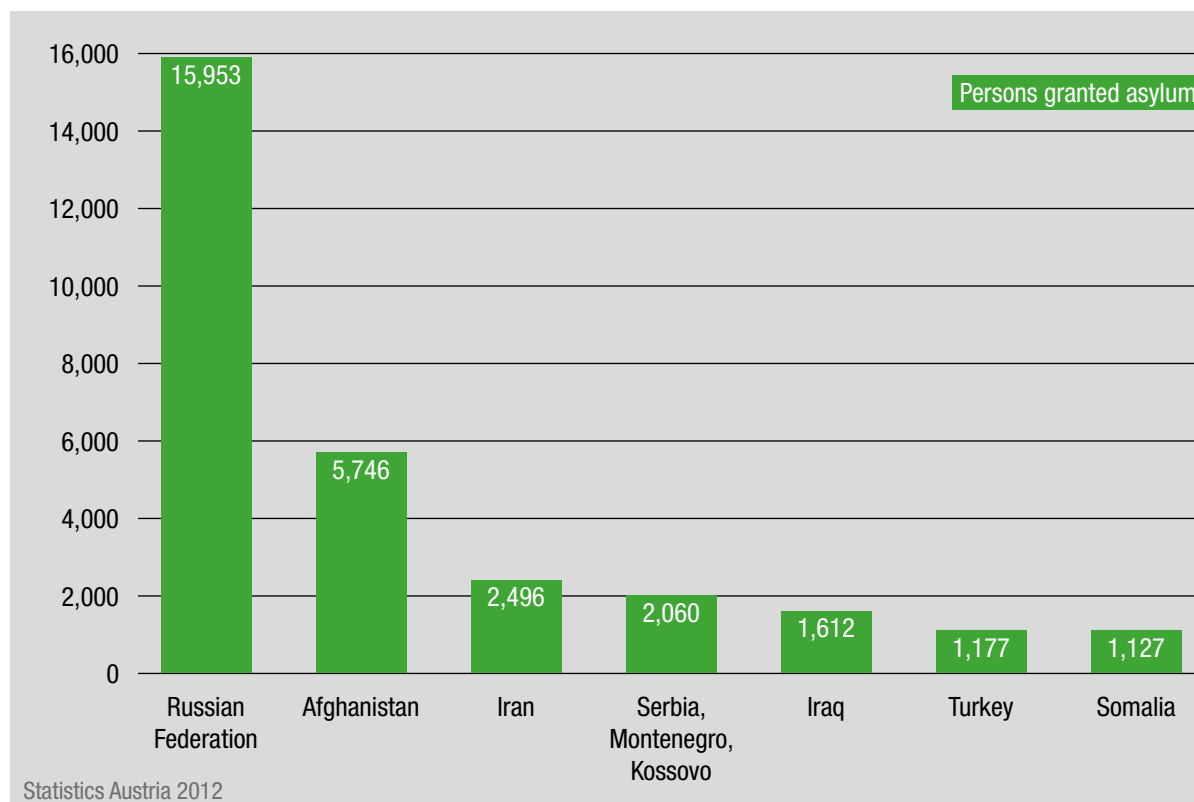
There are no resettled refugees in Austria, therefore refugees come by some other route and apply for asylum. In recent years Austria has not received large asylum-seeker flows: between 12,000 and 17,500 applications for asylum per year since 2007. However, one of the more significant recent refugee groups in Austria claims to be from the Russian Federation, most of them Chechens,<sup>3</sup> with almost 13,000 refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection since 2006. Furthermore, there have been about 8,200 refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection from Afghanistan since 2006. A comparatively small number of refugees has reached Austria in the last few years from the wars in Iraq (2,150) and Syria (1,600) as well as the long-standing crises in Somalia (1,800) and Sudan (200) since 2006.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In asylum statistics citizenship and not ethnicity is recorded, however according to experts the assessment is that these consist of almost 100% of persons from Chechnya (Hofmann/Reichel, 2008:18).

<sup>4</sup> Basis of all figures are the respective annual asylum statistics of the Austrian Ministry of Interior.

Between 2001 and 2011, Austria granted 36,782 persons refugee status (Statistics Austria 2012).



In 2011, 3,572 persons total in Austria received refugee status, most of them from Russia (1,016), Afghanistan (822), Syria (360), Iran (275) and Somalia (261) (Austrian Ministry of Interior, 2012). In 2012, a total of 3,680 persons in Austria received refugee status, most of them from Afghanistan (969), Russia (839), Syria (542), Iran (442) and Somalia (241). (Austrian Ministry of Interior, 2013).

In 2011, 2,023 were granted subsidiary protection.<sup>5</sup> This increased marginally in 2012 to 2,050 persons.<sup>6</sup>

There are no statistics available on how many refugees and persons with subsidiary protection are still in Austria based on this status. As such, some may have acquired other forms of legal stay or Austrian citizenship. It is estimated that at the end of 2012, Austria hosted almost 52,000 refugees and persons benefitting from subsidiary protection for whom integration is relevant (UNHCR 2013). This refers to persons recognized as refugees, persons granted a complementary form of protection and those granted temporary protection. In the absence of Government figures, UNHCR has estimated the refugee population based on 10 years of individual refugee recognition.

The Austrian population was almost 8.5 million at the beginning of 2012 of which 1.5 million persons were of foreign origin<sup>7</sup> representing 17.7 per cent of the total population. Some 971,000, or 11.5 per cent of the total population, were foreign nationals (Statistics Austria 2012).

<sup>5</sup> According to Article 8 of the Austrian Asylum Act, subsidiary protection status shall be granted if the application for international protection is dismissed, if the forcible return or deportation to the country of origin would constitute a real risk of violation of article 2 or article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights or of Protocol No. 6 or Protocol No. 13 to the Convention or would represent for the alien as a civilian a serious threat to his life or person by reason of indiscriminate violence in situations of international or internal conflicts.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics provided by the Austrian Ministry of Interior, 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Combined group of persons with foreign nationality and those born abroad but with Austrian citizenship.

The importance of the city of Vienna regarding the immigrant population is noteworthy since it is by far the largest city in Austria with a key role as the largest municipality and Province at the same time. Vienna therefore has a prominent voice in debates on integration and migration. Many immigrants and refugees select Vienna as their place of residence in Austria, which therefore receives the largest portion of immigrants and refugees of all Provinces. 20 per cent of the total Austrian population live in Vienna, but almost 40 per cent of all foreign-born live in that city (Kraler and Reichel 2012: 45).

## Rights of refugees

Refugees recognized in Austria are granted an unlimited residence permit and have equal rights and entitlements as Austrian citizens concerning access to work, education, health and welfare assistance, freedom of movement and the right to family unity. However, family reunification regulated by the Asylum Act, is confined to the nuclear family which must have existed prior to the entry of the recognized refugee. If the family relationship does not predate the entry of the refugee, family reunification is subject to the regulations of the Settlement and Residence Act.<sup>8</sup>

Persons granted subsidiary protection have fewer rights and entitlements than refugees. They receive temporary residence permits limited to one year<sup>9</sup> and can be granted travel documents currently only if there are humanitarian reasons.<sup>10</sup> Family reunification can be realized only after the first temporary residence permit of the sponsor has been renewed, which was usually the case after one year of residence. Their rights to social welfare are limited; they have no access to social housing in some Provinces and their access to integration measures is restricted.

## Definition of integration

For the purposes of this study on refugees, the UNHCR definition is used in which integration is understood as the end product of a dynamic and multifaceted two-way process with three interrelated dimensions: a legal, an economic and a social-cultural dimension. Integration requires efforts by all parties concerned, including preparedness on the part of refugees to adapt to the receiving society without having to forego their own cultural identity, and a corresponding readiness on the part of receiving communities and public institutions to welcome refugees and to meet the needs of a diverse population (UNHCR 2005a).

At the core of UNHCR's definition is the concept of integration as a two-way process and this is premised on 'adaptation' of one party and 'welcome' by the other. It does not however require the refugee to relinquish their cultural identity and integration therefore differs from assimilation (UNHCR 2002).

The two-way process underlies the three specific dimensions that UNHCR emphasises as being part of the process of refugee integration:

The legal process: whereby refugees are granted a progressively wider range of rights and entitlements by the receiving State that are broadly commensurate with those enjoyed by its citizens. These include freedom of movement, access to education and the labour market, access to social assistance, including health facilities, and the capacity to travel with valid travel and identity documents. Realization of family unity is another important aspect of integration. Over time, the process should lead to permanent residence rights and in some cases the acquisition, in due course, of citizenship in the country of asylum.

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<sup>8</sup> The Settlement and Residence Act (Niederlassungs- und Aufenthaltsgesetz, NAG) covers issuance, denial and withdrawal of residence titles for aliens residing or wishing to reside on the Federal Territory for more than six months, and the documentation of right of residence under EU law.

<sup>9</sup> This entitlement will be extended to two years with a legal amendment entering into force on 1 January 2014.

<sup>10</sup> It should, however, be noted, that this restriction is about to change with a legal amendment entering into force on 1 January 2014.

The economic process: whereby refugees become progressively less reliant on assistance, attaining a growing degree of self-reliance and becoming independent, thus contributing to the economic life of the receiving country.

The social and cultural process: whereby refugees acclimatize and local communities accommodate the refugee to enable refugees to live amongst or alongside the receiving population without discrimination or exploitation, and contribute actively to the social life of their country of asylum.

It is, in this sense, an interactive process involving both refugees and nationals of the receiving State, as well as its institutions. The result should be a society that is both diverse and open, where people can form a community, regardless of differences (UNHCR 2002).

## Integration as understood by refugees

Consultations for this research also dealt with the refugees' understanding of integration and how they relate to it in respect of their own experiences. Not all refugees had thoroughly reflected about "integration" and in their understanding they often mixed up integration itself and facilitators of integration. A majority mentioned learning and speaking the language as precondition for all areas. Some spoke about getting to know different cultures, to become part of a society, "diverse people all living in the same space", disposing of adequate employment and housing as well as knowing and respecting the laws.

“*Integration means to be in a new society. How can I put my foot in a new society?*”

Iraqi holder of subsidiary protection for 3 years, living in Vienna

“*Integration is a difficult subject. Not many know what it means. For me it means to be able to live in Austria the way I want, how it is good for me and how it is also helpful for others. It is mutual. As you can see [points to her headscarf], I am not assimilated but I am integrated.*”

Chechen female refugee, who has already lived 10 years in Austria

“*In one sentence: One has to know one's rights and duties.*”

Afghan man living in Graz, initially subsidiary protection since 2004 and since 2012 holder of a permanent residence permit

Refugee respondents also stated that they wanted the best for their children and their future and called for respectful treatment.

## Integration as understood by the Austrian Federal Government

Integration became a key issue in debates on migration policy in Austria in the early 1990s and has been part of the political agenda since then. In terms of actual practices at the local level integration measures can be traced back to the 1980s. However, integration has only become a major focus of national policymaking since the early 2000s (Kraler and Reichel 2012:43).

In 2009, the Austrian Government undertook a National Action Plan (NAP) on Integration, which focuses on foreigners, migrants and persons with migrant background who have settled permanently in Austria. Refugees and those with subsidiary protection are therefore a target group. The NAP states explicitly in this regard only that the integration of recognized refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection constitutes, due to their need for protection and vulnerability, a particular challenge (NAP 2010:9). One aim of the NAP is to structure cooperation among different actors as well as to optimize and systematically develop their integration measures further. The NAP is considered a process, which has to continuously react to new challenges, together with all relevant state institutions on all levels, with the goal of sustainably securing social cohesion (NAP 2010:3). The State Secretary on Integration was established in April 2011 (see below).

In Austria, the definition of integration forming the basis of the implementation of the NAP encompasses several of the elements of the UNHCR definition. The NAP defines integration as a two-way process, which is shaped by mutual appreciation and respect, whereas clear rules secure social cohesion and peace. Furthermore, successful integration is seen as sufficient knowledge of the German language for employment, for education and further education as well as for contact with public institutions. An integrated society is characterized by social permeability and openness. Such a society allows individuals to shape their lives self-dependently, without being discriminated based on their origin, language or skin colour. Integration aims at participation in economic, social, political and cultural processes as well as compliance with related obligations (NAP 2010:2-3). The seven policy areas of the NAP are language and education, work and employment, rule of law and values, health and social issues, intercultural dialogue, sports and recreation, housing and the regional dimension of integration. Under the seven policy areas of the NAP, 25 specific integration indicators have been defined in order to make it possible to evaluate the various dimensions of the integration process within Austria and to monitor this process long-term (Statistics Austria 2012). These cover 24 objectively measurable indicators and one indicator on the subjective attitude of the receiving population on the issue of integration. Currently, however, no specific refugee data can be obtained from the NAP and its monitoring (see below).

In many ways, the NAP marked a departure from established thinking on integration in Austria which was focused on language skills and related language conditions in immigration law. While language proficiency remains an important issue, integration is now seen as more than just language, as also reflected in integration policy. In addition, while the perception of integration as a ‘two-way process’ was already an issue in the early 2000s, the responsibility of the mainstream population, or the Austrian State, was not a particularly prominent concern in integration policy through the 2000s. By contrast, the NAP places more emphasis on the dual responsibility of both the migrant and receiving society and, among other things, stresses the need to provide opportunities for migrants and counter discrimination and xenophobia. Nevertheless, according to Kraler and Reichel, the NAP still tends to emphasize the obligations of migrants (Kraler and Reichel 2012:51). Finally, the NAP’s concept includes as a basic principle that naturalization, i.e. Austrian citizenship, should constitute the endpoint of a comprehensive integration process (NAP 2010:25).

The Austrian Expert Council for Integration, which was established at the Federal Ministry of the Interior in June 2010 with the aim to support and ensure the NAP’s implementation and elaborate its recommendations, defines integration as “specifically to be supported, preferably equal opportunity participation in the central spheres of society“ (Expert Council for Integration 2012:12). The Expert Council expresses that “a static and essentialist cultural concept would not live up to the reality of a pluralistic and changing immigrant society.” The concept of the Austrian Expert Council also includes that “both sides of an immigration society must develop a competency to accept and to integrate, but they must also develop something like a plurality competency since, when viewed over time, they will simultaneously become more alike, yet more varied” (Expert Council for Integration 2012:13).

These experts of the Council underline that successful integration requires the commitment of both the immigrants and the receiving population, that is a mutual willingness toward openness and acceptance. The Expert Council refers to successful integration as requiring economic self-sufficiency of the immigrant population, trust in the receiving society and its institutions, respect and compliance with the Austrian and European legal order and value systems and the rule of law based on these, as well as relative contentedness with life in an immigration society (Expert Council for Integration 2012:12). At the core of the Austrian Government’s concept of integration are therefore participation and shared integration responsibility.

It should be noted that various actors of civil society in Austria formed an “Alternative Expert Council on Integration Issues” in 2012, emphasizing its political independence. The alternative expert council wants to shape integration in a more factual, independent and solution orientated manner. They presented eight goals, 14 fields of action and 125 proposed integration measures, intended as impulses for politics and considered as foundation for future political campaign work.

Independent of the development of integration indicators at the national level, the city of Vienna had started to develop its own integration monitoring system. Vienna is not the only Province that began to develop an integration monitoring system, but Vienna’s ‘integration and diversity monitor’



is the most elaborate and comprehensive initiative to date. The first Viennese ‘integration and diversity monitor’ was launched in April 2010 and the second in 2012. The Viennese integration and diversity monitor is a two-fold system which includes an integration monitor that focuses on ongoing integration processes in the city of Vienna and a diversity monitor that systematically overlooks the successful implementation of Viennese diversity management. For the purpose of the Viennese system, integration is defined as the incorporation of all sections of the population into central domains of society and their active participation in these domains (Kraler and Reichel 2012:59). Initially 75, currently 60 indicators have been defined for each area in order to describe the status quo of the Viennese population as a basis for the strategic development of policies. The Viennese approach considers monitoring a feasible measuring instrument for integration because differentiated illustrations and evaluations of factors influencing integration facilitate the observation of changes in the population over time. The Viennese integration monitor focuses on the Viennese population with migrant background and defines it as all persons who are born abroad and all persons born in Austria, of which at least one parent was born abroad. Therefore, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are included in the target group. The Viennese monitoring opted to formulate comprehensive indicators, even though not all the corresponding data is (yet) available (Hofmann and Reichel 2012:124). The detailed indicators may also help to identify potential indicators specific to the evaluation of refugee integration, such as the focus on analyzing based on the impact where qualifications were obtained than rather the country of birth. It also emphasizes participation and provides figures of naturalizations of recognized refugees in Vienna from 1998-2010.

## Target group of integration policy in Austria

In Austria, the discourse on integration and development of integration policy are focussed on first and second generation non-EU immigrants and refugees. Asylum-seekers are excluded from official integration policies since integration is viewed as relevant only after a final positive decision in the asylum procedure or after subsidiary protection is granted. However, stakeholders, practitioners and social partners in this study pointed to the impact that lack of support during the asylum phase can have on integration later on. They advocated for some support and measures to be considered for asylum-seekers which may later facilitate integration.

In this report, the focus is on integration of refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries . Asylum-seekers and migrants more broadly are not included in the study.

## A multitude of actors – integration as a cross-sectorial issue in Austria

Implementation of integration policy is a cross-sectorial issue in Austria, concerning all levels of the State and civil society. At Federal, State and communal levels, there are different legally and politically defined responsibilities, competences and actors, each pursuing their own, often diverse, integration political agendas (Expert Council for Integration 2012:13). The main competence in relation to setting the overall legal framework is at the Federal level with the Ministry of Interior. Various federal ministries, cities, municipalities and “social partners” who comprise organized labour and institutionalized business interests are all important actors in the field of integration. The division of responsibilities in integration-related areas between the Provinces and the Federal State is further adding to the complexity. For instance, certain issues of housing and childcare are provincial competencies, while employment and universities fall under the federal competencies.

Another actor, the Austrian Integration Fund (AIF) was founded in 1960 by the UNHCR and the Federal Ministry of the Interior under the name of United Nations Refugee Fund (Flüchtlingsfonds der Vereinten Nationen). In 1991 the AIF legally succeeded the United Nations Refugee Fund, changed its name and separated from the Federal Ministry of the Interior. Since 2002, its service spectrum has systematically broadened. The integration analysis of the AIF is based on a two-way process.

In addition to the Expert Council of Integration, another body called Advisory Committee on Integration is responsible for promoting cross-discipline networking, coordination, conformity and knowledge transfer among all active players on the Federal, State and community levels, including consultation on the findings of the Expert Council. The Advisory Committee comprises representatives of different ministries, Provinces, social partners, municipalities and NGOs.

In April 2011, the State Secretariat for Integration within the Federal Ministry of the Interior was established. The tasks of the State Secretariat are to actively address the opportunities and challenges of integration in Austria and to contribute to the concretization and more objective debate of this topic. According to the State Secretariat, the contribution made to Austrian society by people with a migrant background becomes evident through the “Integration through performance” motto.<sup>11</sup> This concept therefore prioritizes the merit principle while also outlining the framework conditions facilitating and subsequently acknowledging performance. In this respect, the focus is on the seven action fields of the NAP for Integration. In addition, the State Secretary outlines that the receiving society should also be considered in relation to integration measures, in recognition of the reciprocity of the integration process (Expert Council for Integration 2012:2).

Conclusively, the Austrian integration landscape is shaped by a multitude of actors on various levels which makes the analysis of measures complex and necessitates close coordination between all actors involved. This broad approach can lead to fragmentation in the implementation of integration measures, as different actors may be responsible for the same issues. If different approaches and policies are not reconciled, it can lead to parallel efforts. Similarly, for all persons concerned, such as refugees, counsellors or service providers, identification of the relevant actor can represent a challenge or even hamper integration steps. The process of the NAP constituted an attempt for a more coordinated approach to integration policymaking involving different actors.

## Structure of the report

This report is divided into six chapters. After the introduction in Chapter 1, in the second chapter the methodology of the research is set out. In the third chapter, literature review analyzes the existing research on refugee integration in Austria, looking at what literature on integration has considered relevant integration policy areas and what specifically is known about refugee integration. The fourth chapter lays out available national statistical data on refugee integration and the fifth chapter presents qualitative findings on specific indicators and influencing factors drawing from stakeholder group meetings as well as refugee interviews. Interesting or effective practice identified by those consulted during this study is included for each policy area. The concluding remarks in Chapter 6 summarize findings and set out recommendations.

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<sup>11</sup> Mission statement on the website of the State secretary; as well as consistent approach by State secretary in the media, through projects and proposed measures.



# Methodology

This national report forms part of an overall project which itself consisted of two components. One was implemented in four Western European countries (Austria, France, Ireland and Sweden), the other in four Central European countries (Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and Slovakia). The Western Europe study began on 1 September 2012 with consultations taking place in each country until March 2013. The overall duration of the project is from 1 August 2012 to 31 December 2013.

## Participating countries

UNHCR has identified challenges to the integration of refugees in all EU Member States. Understanding the particular barriers and opportunities for refugee integration in each of the national contexts is therefore relevant. As such, UNHCR would ideally have provided a comprehensive review of refugee integration in all EU Member States. However, time and resource constraints dictated that a selection of Member States was made to participate in this project. Furthermore, experiences from working with refugees in most EU Member States showed there are sufficient similarities in the barriers and facilitators impacting refugee integration to allow for a more selective approach. The four project countries were selected in order to include countries with different experiences of refugee flows but where commonalities can nevertheless be observed, and where some integration support is already in place and some evaluation has taken place. All four countries have substantial experience receiving asylum-seekers and with integration of refugees recognized in the national asylum systems. Nevertheless differences among the four countries in relation to refugee flows, language, integration strategies and integration support allow for a broader perspective to be presented.

## Gathering data

Information was gathered with two approaches: desk research and consultation. In the consultation phase, the focus was on seeking refugee respondents over eighteen years who had come through the asylum system. Persons with subsidiary protection status were included. Where specific findings for this latter group were identified this has been specified, otherwise findings for refugees are also valid for persons with subsidiary protection. Austria does not currently receive resettled refugees.

In the desk research phase, literature and in particular statistical data rarely discerned between the different types of protection, or between refugees and the wider migrant population. Therefore this report specifies this only where it is known. The language of the primary and secondary data was mainly German. For the report, stakeholder consultations, interviews, some policy documents and academic research have been summarized in English.

## National Reference Group

In Austria, a National Reference Group (NRG) consisting of six members whose support and guidance were instrumental to the project: representatives of non-governmental organizations, the Austrian Integration Fund, the Federal Ministry of Interior and a leading academic. All reference group members have extensive knowledge of and experience with refugee integration. The reference group met in three group meetings in Vienna and deemed certain integration areas as relevant key issues in relation to refugees and research. Consultations in Austria subsequently followed those themes: education, employment, housing and social engagement. Housing and employment were common themes across all four project countries. Selection of themes also reflected already existing indicator and policy areas in Austria. Health, language, family reunification, lack of documents and the impacts of asylum procedure were taken into consideration as cross-cutting issues throughout all consultations. Members of the NRG were also partly instrumental in linking the national researcher with researchers and relevant stakeholders and field visits.

## Desk research

The desk research drew on available literature on integration of refugees. Where no refugee specific literature was available, literature on integration of migrants or persons with migration background was reviewed. Materials on the ways in which integration generally is being evaluated and measured was reviewed and included material by academics and civil society, such as reports, studies and articles, policy documents as well as existing data and statistics. Desk research was done with some guidance from the NRG Group and included searches on-line as well as library searches. The desk research provided an overview of existing information, aimed at identifying trends, policy and presence or absence of refugee specific material and formed the basis for the subsequent steps of the research.

It should be noted that access to research material on refugee integration can be challenging. A number of studies are unpublished and thus difficult to access by researchers as well as the wider public. These include some Government funded research or master theses on refugee integration, only a few of which are turned into more widely disseminated articles in established journals. Generally, there is a lack of quantitative research, and most existing literature on refugee integration looks at projects, barriers or influencing factors rather than performance or progress in relation to a specific integration policy area and related detailed indicators.

## Consultations

This report is based on three types of consultations conducted between October 2012 and February 2013: the NRG, stakeholder meetings, and consultations with refugees and members of the receiving society.

### STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS

Focusing on the main identified areas of integration, stakeholder meetings were undertaken where a number of stakeholders and experts were selected and invited to participate. Stakeholders included NGOs, state officials and civil society actors, integration practitioners and academic researchers active in the identified areas. A few of the participants represented institutions who worked with the (migrant) population in general, not with refugees as a specific target group. Four thematic stakeholder group meetings took place in Vienna, and with two non-themed consultations in Graz and in Linz<sup>12</sup> covering various fields. Between eight and 13 persons participated in each meeting. Specific research questions were developed for discussion at stakeholder meetings, which participants received prior to the meeting. Meeting guidelines were developed by the overall project coordinator to ensure consistency of approaches across project countries. The stakeholder meetings provided the opportunity to draw out examples of effective or interesting practices, as well as identification and analysis of specific barriers to integration for refugees. Stakeholders who represented more generalist institutions sometimes felt unable to contribute significantly to the discussions on refugee-specific issues, and therefore either declined to participate, showed limited participation in the discussion or were not able to address various specific questions. Generally, stakeholders predominantly pointed to limitations and challenges regarding integration of refugees and less to specific detailed effective practices.

In addition to the six stakeholder meetings, individual meetings, phone interviews or written consultations were undertaken with 12 stakeholders who wanted but were unable to attend the meetings.

### REFUGEE CONSULTATIONS

Overall, during the course of the research, consultations with 84 recognized refugees and persons with subsidiary protection were undertaken. The aim of these consultations was to include in the research the voice of refugees, their experience of integration and their ideas for change. A mixed methodology of conducting group and individual consultations was employed. The group meetings, by generating lively discussions, were expected to lead to new insights into particular dimensions of refugee-specific integration factors influencing integration indicators. The majority of consultations were undertaken through individual, personal, face-to-face interviews following a semi-structured guideline. Respondents were able to share their positive and negative experiences of integrating into Austria, looking specifically into main areas of enquiry, their perspectives on integration in Austria as well as recommendations for priorities and suggestions for possible improvements. The consultations were undertaken in Vienna, Graz and Linz. In addition, one interview with a refugee in the Province of Salzburg and another in the city of Graz were conducted by phone. The Provinces examined for this research were chosen to represent the larger refugee communities in Austria in order to access a diverse range of refugees in the time available. Face-to-face refugee interviews were conducted in German, English, French, Dari/Farsi. In 11 cases with use of an interpreter. Interview locations included refugees' homes, NGO and Austrian Integration Fund venues, the Austrian UNHCR office and public places such as cafés.

The refugees and holders of subsidiary protection were selected with the aim to include a diverse cross-section in terms of gender, age, time since status was granted in Austria, region of origin, educational level, and family status. In order to get a time perspective on the settlement experience, efforts were made to include a number of refugees who had received their status at least five years prior. Refugees were accessed through different sources and several strategies: personal and

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<sup>12</sup> Second and third largest cities in Austria.

UNHCR contacts, former projects by NGOs and Austrian Integration Fund, scholarship ceremony, language courses, communities and the “Snowball” system. Information letters about the research project to refugees were translated into Dari/Farsi and Russian, and given to nearly all refugees met.

This project does not claim to have a representative sample of refugees that could allow for generalized quantitative conclusions. Nevertheless, the empirical research provides robust findings regarding challenges faced by refugees in their integration experiences, as well as strategies adopted by them to overcome obstacles. These voices provide insight into the experiences of the everyday life of refugees in Austria. There are therefore statements and quotes by refugees consulted during this research provided throughout this report, which shall illustrate the interviewees’ statements. These quotes reflect the experiences and impressions of refugees without evaluating or reviewing their truthfulness.

38 women and 46 men were interviewed. The average age of interviewees was 34 years. Participants originated from 22 different countries. There were 12 group meetings, which varied in size from two to 16 participants, and 37 one-on-one interviews.

|                                  | Region of Origin         | South Asia | Northern Caucasus | Horn of Africa | West Asia | Eastern Europe | South Caucasus | Central Africa | East Asia | Balkan | North Africa | North Asia | South Afrika | West Africa |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|--------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|
| Age                              | <18                      |            | 1                 |                |           |                |                |                |           |        |              |            |              |             |
|                                  | 18-30                    | 14         | 5                 | 5              | 2         |                |                |                | 2         |        |              |            | 1            | 1           |
|                                  | 31-65                    | 18         | 12                | 4              | 5         | 3              | 3              | 2              |           | 2      | 1            | 1          |              | 1           |
|                                  | 65+                      |            |                   |                | 1         |                |                |                |           |        |              |            |              |             |
| Sex                              | male                     | 22         | 7                 | 6              | 5         | 1              | 1              | 1              |           | 2      |              |            |              | 1           |
|                                  | female                   | 10         | 11                | 3              | 3         | 2              | 2              | 1              | 2         |        | 1            | 1          | 1            | 1           |
| Marital/Family status in Austria | alone                    | 10         | 2                 | 1              | 3         | 2              |                |                | 2         |        |              |            | 1            |             |
|                                  | with family              | 21         | 15                | 7              | 5         | 1              | 3              | 2              |           | 2      | 1            | 1          |              | 2           |
| Status                           | Already Austrian citizen | 1          | 2                 |                |           |                |                |                |           |        |              |            |              |             |
|                                  | Convention refugee       | 21         | 10                | 6              |           | 2              | 1              | 1              | 2         | 1      |              |            |              | 1           |
|                                  | Subsidiary protection    | 11         | 8                 | 3              | 8         | 1              | 2              | 1              |           | 1      | 1            | 1          | 1            | 1           |
| Status since (in years)          |                          | ±5         | ±6                | ±4             | ±4        | 6, 3.5, 7      | 6, 7           | 4, 10          | 1, 0.7    | 4, 3   | 4            | 7          | 7            | 7           |
| In Austria since (in years)      |                          | ±7         | ±8                | ±5,6           | ±6        | 9, 12          | 6, 10, 7       | 12, 13         | 3, 2      | 5, 16  | 10           | 8          | 12           | 12, 8       |
| Location in Austria              | Vienna                   | 9          | 6                 | 8              | 8         | 2              | 3              | 2              |           | 2      | 1            | 1          | 1            | 1           |
|                                  | Linz                     | 15         | 9                 | 1              |           | 1              |                |                | 2         |        |              |            |              | 1           |
|                                  | Graz                     | 7          | 3                 |                |           |                |                |                |           |        |              |            |              |             |
|                                  | Salzburg                 | 1          |                   |                |           |                |                |                |           |        |              |            |              |             |

In addition to consultations with refugees and stakeholders, one group consisted of members of the receiving society. This target group was generated through discussions in the national project reference group. They felt it important to reflect the two-way process of integration in the methodology by involving persons in the receiving country. The aim was to include their perceptions and experiences on important factors influencing integration, as well as their own barriers and challenges encountered. This further consultation was undertaken in Vienna and intended to include those with some kind of “neighbourship” and contact with refugees and/or persons with subsidiary protection. To achieve this, it was attempted to contact and invite persons with some experience with refugees. This included priests of a community including many refugees; neighbours of refugees; teachers and representatives of parents associations in a school with children from refugee families; educational and training providers; employers; mentors or so-called “buddies” or godparents who are volunteers who assist refugees and their families in Austria. However, it proved very challenging to achieve interest and participation of those addressed, so not all these categories were finally consulted. One teacher and two employers/recruiters/instructor were interviewed by phone.

## Bias

Statistics in relation to integration indicators, specifying refugees and persons with subsidiary protection, are often not available at the government level or through census. The picture of refugee integration generated by statistics is therefore incomplete for many of the issues relevant to integration and included in this report.

While a diverse group of refugees was consulted in this study, those participating were mainly refugees who had received some kind of support by organizations. Despite efforts to reach a broader group of refugees, it proved difficult to contact persons who were not linked to any institutions or had never encountered integration projects or related counselling. Another factor influencing participation was the level of German language skills. In some cases, those interviewed could not fully express their views, resulting in a lack of structured, detailed answers.

There is some urban bias in relation to the consultations. Although these took place with refugees and stakeholders in different Provinces of Austria, all consultations took place in larger cities. Rural areas with smaller refugee populations and different structural challenges were beyond the scope of this research. They were considered throughout the literature review and the discussions with the NRG and stakeholders.

The consultation meeting held with persons of the receiving society consisted primarily of those who had decided to engage with refugees, even if their encounter initially might have been by coincidence. The NRG advised on the importance to aim to provide a view from the other side of the two-way process. This research tried to reach out to many diverse persons and groups to this end, however it turned out difficult to find adequate persons willing to participate: certain groups which would have been interesting to include declined, showed no interest in joining or felt they would not be able to contribute significantly on the subject. Views expressed by persons consulted are not representative of Austrian receiving society and the results of this rather limited attempt are individual opinions based on individual experiences and can therefore only be seen as an interpretation assistance of other findings of this research.

## Analysis

Qualitative research and analysis methods were employed. These consist of a review of the relevant literature, secondary data analysis, and interpretation of the outcomes of consultations with refugees and stakeholder groups. The empirical thematic analysis of refugee consultations and stakeholder meetings was conducted in line with the initial research questions and provided the basis for the report’s recommendations. This means that relevant themes or emerging patterns within the material have been identified, examined, reviewed in relation to the research questions and formed the basis of the analysis presented in this report.



## Ethics

In research involving interviewing refugees it must be borne in mind that ethical considerations are relevant. Not only may experiences of trauma and insecurity have characterized an individual refugee's flight and journey, but such experiences often continue into the settlement context and may influence the individual's ability and desire to integrate. These experiences may also affect refugees' willingness and ability to participate in research.

UNHCR's guidance on ethics in relation to refugee engagement does not relate specifically to research of this kind; however a set of project ethical guidelines were followed by each team in the Western Europe component. The project's ethical guidelines reflected the role of the researcher as one of respect for persons, beneficence, and equity, and followed principles of transparency, confidentiality, voluntariness and avoidance of undue influence. Regarding refugee respondents, original names have not been used and some contexts were changed in order to ensure anonymity.

Finally, it should be noted that this study was not intended to be representative of all EU Member States. Nor was it intended to be a quantitative study providing extensive statistical data. Instead, this is a qualitative study incorporating consultations across a wide spectrum of those involved in determining policy and support for the integration of refugees, those delivering programmes and initiatives, and refugees themselves. The value of this approach lies in bringing together each of these elements in a way that allows each to speak to the other, enabling the conceptualization of a way forward for future research on integration of refugees in the EU. This approach also allows for a crystallization of some of the barriers and facilitators to refugee integration commonly experienced in the EU and to highlight interesting or effective practices which have worked well to overcome barriers.

# Literature review

Integration of refugees remains under-researched in Austria. Existing research specifically on the integration of refugees, and in particular on integration indicators, is scarce. Most literature in the area of integration studies migrants in general; some materials mention asylum-seekers and refugees often in an introductory chapter or a chapter on migration history as part of the group of migrants or third country nationals as objects of analysis (Reinprecht and Gapp 2006; Huber 2010). Others do not even include refugees to that extent. In the field of asylum, the focus, in particular by NGOs, is mostly on the asylum process and to some extent on those whose asylum applications have been rejected. There is academic literature on asylum-seekers' experiences during the asylum process (for instance Plutzar 2009; Schöpf and Inthorn 2010), but there is limited research on those who are granted refugee status or subsidiary protection.

A few studies and legal normative research limit themselves to the analysis of the legal framework on asylum and integration (Tretter 2005; Hodasz 2006; Nettel 2006; Ammer 2011; Sußner 2011).<sup>13</sup> Research regarding the integration of recognized refugees in the field of Cultural and Social Anthropology focuses on changes in gender relations of refugees through circumstances in the receiving society. Other academic research on refugees exists in the form of unpublished literature, such as master's theses and doctoral dissertations,<sup>14</sup> or is part of broader European research reports or other material. Some of this research only covers a provincial or local level, or limits its focus to a specific refugee group. Given the role of Provinces and municipalities, and their autonomy in respect to the implementation of certain aspects of integration and citizenship policy, a more detailed analysis of refugee integration is certainly warranted.

The following review of literature presents the existing knowledge in this field, outlining methodological approaches of research and data collection as well as target groups, tracing areas of research in regard to specifically refugees and integration, and regarding integration indicators used as well as factors influencing those indicators.

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<sup>13</sup> The latter publication focuses specifically on the legal framework for family reunification of LGBT refugees.

<sup>14</sup> Master theses and doctoral dissertations are collected by university libraries of the university where the thesis was written as well as by the National Library (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek). They are also accessible through interlibrary loan schemes. The required format as well as the scope of master theses are only loosely defined in Austria. Master theses can thus be quite substantial, similar to PhD dissertations.

## Migrants in general and integration indicators

Migration and integration in Austria in general is well studied and researched. As Kraler (2005) outlines in a paper, there is a large number of overviews on the general development and changes of migration policy in Austria (e.g. Bauböck 1996, 1997, 1999; Faßmann and Münz 1995; Jandl and Kraler 2003; Kraler and Stacher 2002; Kraler and Sohler 2005; Waldrauch 2003) and studies (Heiss and Rathkolb 1995; König and Perchinig 2003; König and Stadler 2003). In addition, there are numerous in-depth studies analyzing “specific areas of migration policy, such as citizenship policy, asylum policy, employment policy vis-à-vis non-nationals or anti-discrimination policy” (Dufour 2003; EUMC 2002; Faßmann and Fenzl 2003; Knapp and Langthaler 2003; Waldrauch and Çinar 2003). “With the shift of discourse in Austria on migration policy to an integration paradigm in the 1990s, a relatively large body of literature emerged that analyzed the legal framework for migrant integration, including political integration.” (Kraler 2005) The amount written on migration and integration in Austria in general is therefore considerable.

In the last decade, several EU-funded research studies have attempted to benchmark and measure integration of migrants across EU countries. Those studies aimed to define comparable indicators enabling an assessment of integration in practice in European countries (see for instance Entzinger 2003; Carrera 2008). The main purpose of integration indicators in Austria is to measure the integration of immigrants and their descendants, and make the integration process measurable. Moreover, such indicators help to assess the impact of national and local integration policies and establish long-term integration monitoring. The NAP defines major challenges, principle policy positions and measures for seven thematic areas: language and education, work and employment, rule of law and values, health and social issues, intercultural dialogue, sports and recreation, housing and the regional dimension of integration. The implementation of Austria’s integration monitoring at the State level was officially launched in 2010, with a yearly assessment publication and the involvement of the Federal Ministry of Interior and Statistics Austria (micro-census). As part of the NAP, integration indicators were defined to enable measuring the integration process in Austria and to establish a long-term integration monitoring system. For each of the areas covered, a set of indicators has been defined 25 indicators in seven areas mentioned above. Thus, the NAP for Integration of the Federal Government and statistical results in the form of the annual Statistical Yearbook “migration & integration” covering its 25 indicators for integration, aim to provide continual monitoring of the integration process. In a parallel effort to assess integration is the extensive integration monitoring project which was initiated in Vienna at the level of the municipality as Vienna is both a city and a Province. It is noteworthy that there is no link or interaction between State and Province level monitoring.

There are clear links and similarities between integration policy indicators developed in Austria and those on the European level, called for by the Stockholm programme and the 2010 Zaragoza declaration, and used by Eurostat. Proposed common core indicators of migrant integration to support the monitoring of the situation of immigrants and the outcome of integration policies have been identified in the following policy areas: employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship.

The main areas covered by general policy in Austria are employment and education, and to a limited extent housing and health. The target groups of the NAP are the society as a whole, foreign citizens, long-term residents, Austrian citizens born abroad, persons with “migration background” long-term residents and/or those who recently acquired citizenship. Refugees and those with subsidiary protection are therefore included, and only partly disaggregated for in the data. The empirically measurable participation in society, which is essential to the Expert Council’s definition of integration, includes pre-school institutions, school education, work training, employment and living space, of participation in politics and the different protection and welfare systems of a welfare state and forms part of the direction of indicators and measuring. The Expert Council (2011) also includes that: “for successful integration [to occur], the accommodating population is just as responsible as the immigrants themselves.”

Within the 25 indicators identified in the NAP, assessed and measured over time in the annual Statistical Yearbook “migration & integration”, five in particular are emphasized as core indicators. However, due to small sample sizes, this information is mostly not available specifically for the refugee population.

- Level of education of persons aged 25-64 years by migrant background status<sup>15</sup>
- Employment rates by age and migrant background status<sup>16</sup>
- Unemployment rates by nationality and level of education<sup>17</sup>
- Net annual income by nationality<sup>18</sup>
- At risk of poverty & manifest poverty<sup>19</sup>

In comparison, the Viennese monitor developed initially 75, currently 60 indicators in eight areas: demography: basic information on the Viennese population; immigration, integration and legal status; education; employment and labour market; income and social security; housing; health; social and political participation and social climate, cohabitation and security.

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<sup>15</sup> Statistics Austria micro census employment.

<sup>16</sup> Statistics Austria micro census employment.

<sup>17</sup> AMS Austria, survey, statistics, special analysis.

<sup>18</sup> Statistics Austria.

<sup>19</sup> Statistics Austria.

# Methodology of refugee integration research in Austria

In terms of methodology, few studies on refugees and integration are based on systematic and extensive empirical research. Rather, the research is predominantly qualitative and consolidates reviews of existing data and desk research. Qualitative research methods, such as participative observation, expert interviews and semi-structured interviews with recognized refugees, are the most common methods of research used.

Literature in the form of Doctoral theses and Master dissertations is therefore mainly qualitative, including interviews with actors involved in integration, although some quantitative surveys targeted State and private integration institutions like the AIF, NGOs and counselling centres and refugees (Kucera 2001; Neuwirth 2005; 2007; Scheiber 2007). One study on voluntary engagement of migrants and refugees, in the framework of an EU integration programme, combined a small primary research project with an explorative field study, personal interviews, transnational workshops, review of existing data and literature, desk research and surveys of relevant stakeholders (Reinprecht and Gapp 2006). One thesis combined a survey with questionnaire and an acculturation scale in the form of a six-level liker scale (Kucera 2001). The evaluation of NGO work and projects for refugees and persons with subsidiary protection is also the basis of a few reports and theses (Stubnig and Lackner 2007; Rothböck 2009; Frick 2009; Hoyer 2011). A small number of studies looked at integration measures adopted at lower levels of government and local initiatives set up to facilitate the integration of refugees.

Almost all research defines integration as a two-way process, although sometimes in slightly different terms. Factors influencing this two-way process are not always discussed in the literature. Nevertheless, the following factors are highlighted: information about and acknowledgment by the receiving society on the human rights situation in the country of origin; two-way cultural events, exchange and interaction (Stubnig and Lackner 2007; Schinnerl and Schmidinger 2009); participation of the whole society in social life (Neuwirth 2007); information provided to the receiving society about refugees to overcome barriers and prejudices as well as information given to refugees about basic values, the State structure and living conditions (Neuwirth 2005, 2007); public relations in terms of public opinion, information, clarification and learning opportunities (Rothböck 2009; Frick 2009); language as a basic requirement for refugees to integrate and as key for inclusion; the acceptance as partners on equal rights, empowerment, mutual giving and taking, well-balanced support and demand, tolerance supporting mutual understanding as well as good conditions for equal opportunities for refugees; the recognition of being needed; the willingness of all involved to integrate into society and finally, the openness to receive and accommodate in Austria (Kucera 2001; Neuwirth 2007; Stolzlechner 2007; Frick 2009). Manzana-Marín (2009) refers amongst others to a “process of growing together to a unity”, such as the rehabilitation of refugees into the society of the receiving country and the realization of equal economic and equal life opportunities. Kucera (2001) and Manzana-Marín (2009) also look more broadly at inclusion, acculturation and adaptation. One anthropological Masters dissertation uses, in addition, a broader working definition of integration based on Kalayci (2009) and Vrečer (2010): considering integration as peaceful living together among people of different societies in the same space (Hoyer 2011:47). This implies respect and acceptance of mutual differences and to see them as enrichment to society instead of a threat. Anthropologist Vrečer (Vrečer 2010: 489) further describes integration as learning from each other, from different cultures. (Hoyer 2011:47) Finally, Frick (2009) based her thesis research on four dimensions of integration (and related indicators): economic-structural (housing, employment, and financial situation), cultural (language, coping with everyday life such as authorities and bureaucratic hurdles, handling of cultural differences), social integration (social contacts) and psychological integration (well-being). (Frick 2009: 28)

## Research subjects

Subjects of existing refugee integration research are often asylum-seekers and refugees, including children, unaccompanied minors, youth and elderly refugees. Integration of traumatized refugees, including those who had had traumatic experiences before and during flight, has also been researched (Volf 2001; Ottomeyer 2002; Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Stubnig, Lackner 2007; Schilcher 2009). Some recent research exists on refugees from Chechnya, in Provinces such as Carinthia and Lower Austria, as well as also in particular in relation to health and trauma of this specific group of refugees (Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Stubnig, Lackner 2007; Schilcher 2009; Schinnerl, Schmidinger, 2009). Another specific group covered by existing refugee research is Bosnian or Roma refugees (for instance Tretter et al. 2000, Kucera 2001; Franz 2003; Schreiblehner, Schinnerl 2010). One thesis looked into the second generation of refugees from Chile in Vienna (Manzana-Marín 2009).

Other Provinces than Vienna that appear in the literature on integration are, mostly regarding migrants or regarding the labour market, include Burgenland, Upper Austria, Salzburg, Styria and Tyrol. (Engelke and Kerschbaumer 1999; Pekari 2002; Flecker 2002; Scheiber 2007; Stolzlechner 2007; Gächter and Schober 2009; Fetz 2011a; Lechner et al. 2011; Biffl et al. 2012)

Rarely are persons of subsidiary protection the subject of analysis.

Themes and topics for research in the existing literature on integration seem to correspond broadly with the integration indicators developed for migrants on the EU and national level. The literature looks at the following key areas of integration: employment and the labour market (Neuwirth 2005; Reinprecht and Gapp 2006; Scheiber 2007; Stolzlechner 2007; Kaufmann 2009; Frick 2009; Huber 2010), language and education (Neuwirth 2005; Tretter 2005; Reinprecht and Gapp 2006; Scheiber 2007; Stolzlechner 2007; Rothböck 2009; Kaufmann 2009; Frick 2009), housing (Neuwirth 2005; Tretter 2005; Frick 2009; Fetz 2011a), social integration or inclusion (Volf 2001; Neuwirth 2005; Stolzlechner 2007; Rothböck 2009; Frick 2009; Fetz 2011a; Fabrick 2011) and to some extent health (Kucera 2001; Volf 2001; Neuwirth 2005; Tretter 2005; Frick 2009; Schöpf and Inthorn 2010; Fabrick 2011) with a focus on psychological trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder and psychotherapy, have been highlighted as important by existing research on refugees.

Other topics covered by several publications are public relations and social work and counselling (Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Stolzlechner 2007; Rothböck 2009). Individual research also covers volunteering, civic citizenship and political participation (Reinprecht and Gapp 2006; Langthaler and Trauner 2009, Manzana-Marín 2009), social welfare and allowances (Tretter 2000) as well as (structural) discrimination (Kucera 2001; Scheiber 2007; Fetz 2011a).

Some studies also analyse the impact of the asylum procedure and reception conditions on later integration (Kucera 2001; Volf 2001; Kappeler, Sprung 2002).

In the remainder of this chapter, a review of literature is presented in relation to the seven main policy areas identified in Austria and the influencing factors on integration for which there is relevant refugee-related literature:

- Employment
- Housing
- Education/language
- Social integration
- Active citizenship
- Health
- Family reunification

# Employment

By far the most researched area in terms of integration and refugees are employment and labour market related issues. Ammer (2011) undertook legal research on the access to the Austrian labour market by third-country nationals in need of protection in the light of international law provisions, including legal and factual obstacles in accessing the labour market they face. She considers the right to work not only to provide an essential source of income for an adequate standard of living, but constitutes an important means for independence, personal freedom, self-worth and dignity, thereby furthering mental health; as for instance trauma incited by the refugee experience can be exacerbated by enforced idleness and dependence. In addition, research and policy suggest that key factors in integration and a basic requirement for refugees to build up a new life in the receiving society are occupation and employment (Jobstmann 2002), such as inclusion in the working process and establishment of an economic basis (Volf 2001:112), in relation to educational level achieved in the country of origin (Neuwirth 2005, 2007), employment appropriate to the individual's qualifications (Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Kaufmann 2009), occupational status and type of employment positions in Austria and the unemployment rate including compared to employment status in home country. (Statistics Austria 2012; NAP 2010; Viennese Integration monitor 2012; Kraler and Reichel 2012:57).

Kucera (2001) focuses on the psychosocial situation of Bosnian refugees and outlines that employment is an important precondition for coping with migration and flight for refugees and migrants. Work is an organizing and stabilizing factor in the psychological life of refugees and migrants, especially if the work is satisfying and corresponds to skills. Such fulfilling employment allows refugees to secure self-esteem and to feel that they have a place in society. Furthermore, it represents a major step towards independence (Caritas Linz 2008).

The most highlighted influencing factors on labour market integration are education, non-acceptance of formal education, non-formal qualifications acquired in home country, employment below skills level and consequent loss of social position (Volf 2001:113; Kucera 2001; Kapeller, Sprung 2002:86; Manolakos and Sohler 2005: 27 and 86; Scheiber 2007; Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber 2009; Kaufmann 2009, Huber 2010; Ammer 2011; Fetz 2011a).

Furthermore, literature mentions lack of proof, i.e. missing documents that affect particularly refugees, as they often face difficulties or even impossibility when it comes to obtaining documents from their home country (Volf 2001; Scheiber 2007). Degree recognition is a particular problem for refugees compared to work-related migrants; this is one of the reasons why refugees often end up being recruited for positions they feel do not match their studies or experience, resulting in deskilling and downward professional mobility (Volf 2001:113; ECRE 1999; Schilcher 2009). Lack of formal education or interruption of studies due to flight is another factor of non-acceptance of the qualification on the Austrian labour market, which also leads to low paying unskilled labour jobs (Schilcher 2009:53-54). Volf (2001) also refers to lacking financial resources to accredit certificates and diplomas, which hinder the entry into an adequate job. In addition, Ammer (2011) points to the lack or little knowledge as well as lack of familiarity of employers with the validity of academic or occupational qualifications acquired abroad or with persons in need of protection and their legal status: "This might lead to rather hesitant behaviour" (Ammer 2011:203).

The Public Employment Office (Labour market service, "*Arbeitsmarktservice*") undertakes various analyses, or commissions research, on persons with migrant background. A recently commissioned study on the labour market situation of persons with migrant background in Vienna highlighted the following areas: qualification and further education, language skills and compatibility with private life. The survey's and qualitative interviews' sample included amongst others refugees and regions of origins of Ex-Yugoslavia/Albania, Russia/Ukraine, Africa, Iran, Afghanistan/Bangladesh/Pakistan and the Arab region (Riesenfelder et al. 2011). Riesenfelder et al. (2011:57) show that refugees are often in low-level employment. 40 per cent of refugees in that survey were overqualified for the employment positions they were working in, which shows a problem of labour market integration for this group. (Riesenfelder et al. 2011:124). The impact of lacking documents for this target group is significant according to this study (Riesenfelder et al. 2011:144): In one of its qualitative interviews, a refugee of an ethnic minority in his country of origin outlines how the effort and costs of obtaining the necessary documents deterred him from the strenuousness of a recognition procedure, which

was important to complete his studies (Riesenfelder et al. 2011:295). Another study conducted on 101 refugees in Upper Austria found that under the 19 per cent of interviewees with university degree from the country of origin, none exercised an adequate profession. Under the 26 per cent, who had finished school in their home country with a high school degree or similar, there was only one student, all the other professions were under high school level. (Scheiber 2007:157)

One report (Huber 2010) states that the phenomenon of deskilling, or rather, the mismatch between qualification and employment can be observed, with over 40 per cent, specifically for persons who came initially as asylum-seekers and for women who come to Austria because of family reunification. The report concludes that there are thus problems with transfer of knowledge acquired abroad to Austria particularly for those who came as asylum-seekers (Huber 2010:14). The report also finds a difference between men and women, as the latter have a lower employment rate. Another study reports that the probability of obtaining employment in a job below actual qualification is four times higher for first-generation migrants than for individuals without migration background (Stadler and Wiedenhofer-Galik 2011: 397). Also, Kucera (2001) and Manolakos and Sohler (2005: 27 and 86) describe how many Bosnian refugees were affected by professional dequalification and Kucera (2001) outlines that dequalification is closely linked to language barriers and non-recognition of Bosnian diploma. Bosnian refugees found employment mostly in fields like agriculture, health and geriatric care, tourism and cleaning. (Kucera 2001; Volf 2001). Volf (2001) and Manolakos and Sohler (2005: 27 and 86) stated that Bosnian refugees with academic qualifications or other professional education hardly found employment in their acquired fields. Many refugees, including those with good qualifications, work in sectors with poor earnings. Volf (2001) did not find any gender differences with regard to employment and language acquisition while younger Bosnians judged their German skills better than older respondents in the research. Refugees, in particular with high professional qualifications and reputations suffer a strong loss of status. Kucera outlines further that often, professional qualifications and skills, as well as certificates and documents acquired in the country of origin, are not or only partially recognized — or the recognition proves to be very difficult. Many refugees therefore have only low status work as an option, which they often experience as humiliating and a blow to their pride. The little that they are able to save from their country of origin, namely their working capacity and qualifications is not recognized in the receiving society (Kucera 2001). Finally Ammer (2011) concludes that, given de facto barriers refugees face in adequate accessing wage-earning employment, they are often forced to accept unskilled low-paying and insecure jobs, thus dequalification.

Lack of adequate screening of professional backgrounds and working experiences upon arrival of immigrants to Austria is another reason for the prevalent deskilling. A study conducted by experts on labour migration argues that in fact, it is not known which qualifications are “immigrating to Austria every day” (Gächter and Stadler 2007: 1). According to the authors, this holds especially true for family and forced migration, in which qualifications are widely ignored by State institutions. Moreover, professional backgrounds that were acquired abroad are frequently deemed less worthy on the Austrian labour market than equal education or experience pursued in Austria. While these reports are mainly on migrants in general with just a few refugee relevant observations, consultations done in this present study with stakeholders and refugees point to similar difficulties for refugees.

Another barrier to labour market integration is the lengthy asylum procedure, especially in relation to the inability to work and the lack of available language courses resulting in deskilling. In this regard, Ammer (2011) points out the quality of access to wage-earning employment, to placement services, vocational guidance and training of asylum-seekers, as well as the uncertainty as to the length of their stay and lack of perspectives considering in particular that their situation does not improve over time as long as they are still being considered for asylum which may, in certain cases, last several years. The long period of “doing nothing” leads to a lack of command of German and unfamiliarity with regular work routine (Volf 2001; Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Langthaler and Trauner 2009; Kraler et al. 2013:103). Indeed, according to Neuwirth, one of the main difficulties refugees face on the job market is that they are not used to a regular work routine because of the long waiting period during the asylum procedure. Kraler et al. also describe the conditions induced by the asylum framework as factors contributing to deskilling of subsidiary protected and refugee families (Kraler et al. 2013:97). Ammer also names de-skilling with regard to persons in need of protection through longer periods of forced idleness, that is potential loss of qualifications during lengthy asylum procedures as a major obstacle for finding adequate employment (Ammer 2011). Asylum-seekers



are, with few exceptions, “factually excluded from the labour market during the asylum procedure. Since procedures regularly take several years, the lack of possibilities to exercise a profession or engage in economic activity” contributes significantly “to dynamics of deskilling: once the person has obtained international or subsidiary protection, the years of professional inactivity are hard to overcome (Rosenberger 2010; Gächter and Stadler 2007:17).” Interestingly in this context, a study in Upper Austria showed a position correlation between employment during the asylum procedure and the kind of employment after recognition as refugee (Scheiber 2007:160).

On the other hand, the 2006 study of Reinprecht and Gapp points out that volunteering can improve employability in the labour market as it can counter dequalification through use of existing skills and gaining new qualifications and knowledge. Similarly, Schilcher (2009) highlights the crucial role of social networks for employment and the challenges for refugees.

Refugees’ limited knowledge of the German language is often mentioned in the literature as a factor influencing employment (Jobstmann 2002; Stubnig and Lackner, 2007; Scheiber 2007; Stolzlechner 2007; Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber 2009; Huber 2010; Ammer 2011; Fetz 2011a; Kraler et al. 2013). Language represents a barrier to employment access since good knowledge of German is a general working requirement. According to Neuwirth (2007), recognized refugees face as the second main difficulty on the job market the lacking command of German. Lack of language knowledge is an issue in particular for those who came shortly after the age of compulsory secondary education. This group faces difficulties finding apprenticeships (Neuwirth 2007). Indeed, a very recent study on family reunification, also highlights that language contributes to deskilling and potentially hinders individuals from acquiring further qualifications. “Lacking” knowledge of German language was identified as the primary reason, why refugees could not exercise former professions (Kraler et al. 2013:98). Volf (2001) also points in addition to general orientation difficulties of refugees on the labour market as an integration barrier (Volf 2001:112).

One academic paper hints at culture as an additional factor, i.e. attitude towards employment (Neuwirth 2005) and two publications stress that the traumatic experiences by refugees in the country of origin and/or during flight can hamper refugees’ labour market integration (Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber 2009) and may reduce a refugee’s ability to work under pressure (Neuwirth 2005). With regard to refugees, Stubnig and Lackner (2007) further suggest to look at health as an influencing factor on employment. Other factors briefly mentioned in various literature include earlier work experience, gender and age (Engelke and Kerschbaumer 1999; Huber 2010). Ammer also points out to the age when entering the labour market as a potential obstacle to employment: “The older a person is when arriving, the more likely it is that he or she is overqualified or finds a job at all. Even though persons in need of protection will often have a similar level of education and working experience (acquired in their countries of origin) relative to citizens of the host state, real access to wage-earning employment is hampered because they are often quite old when they enter the labour market” (Ammer 2011:202). In addition, urgency to find employment upon recognition of status is compounded by the pressure to quickly earn a living and to secure and afford housing (Scheiber 2007).

The final report of a Caritas integration support and counselling project for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Upper Austria (Caritas Linz 2008) describes that for the persons concerned and the social welfare office a quick commencing to work was the main focus. Indeed, the report and another publication (Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber 2009:86) both state that there is pressure to take up work to support oneself by social welfare authorities on refugees who are beneficiaries of social welfare. The placement therefore occurs mostly among personnel leasing companies and almost exclusively lies in the unskilled labour sector. (Caritas 2008; Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber 2009:86) In practice this means that many cases undergo frequent change of working places, interruptions of employment ever and anon, no long-term secure employment. Particularly challenging is the search for employment in Upper Austria for older persons, women with childcare obligations, and those with still very weak German knowledge and lack of mobility such as driving license or a car. (Caritas 2008) This also leads to drop out of German and education courses (Wolf-Maier and Kreuzhuber 2009:86).

In addition to the above, structural discrimination and discriminatory encounters in the working environment or during the search for work (Kucera 2001; Scheiber 2007; Ammer 2011; Fetz 2011a; Kraler et al. 2013) serve as obstacles to refugee employment; however, this is not extensively

discussed in the refugee-specific literature. There are a number of qualitative and quantitative surveys that report discrimination experienced by individuals with immigration background or discrimination exercised by employers based on grounds of country of origin, language, skin colour or the wearing of a headscarf among Muslim women (Ataç et al. 2009; Littig and Segert 2008; Gächter and Stadler 2007). Another study on the relevance of qualifications for the recruitment of individuals with immigration background hints at potential barriers for young immigrants of the first-generation. From the employer's perspective, 'normal' educational and professional careers are strongly connected with a coherent biography and biographical timeline. Individuals that do not 'fit' into this scheme are either excluded from recruitment or required to produce enormous additional efforts to enter the labour market (Littig and Segert 2008: 47). A Study on Upper Austria refers to discrimination on the labour market as a main problem: Many refugees report of problems with access to existing employment possibilities, because employment placement agencies a employers do not know about the rights of refugees and due to racism and xenophobia. According to that study on Upper Austria, refugees from Africa feel most frequently discriminated and disadvantaged on the labour market (35 per cent of the interviewees), whereas refugees from the former Yugoslavia claimed this less often (even though still 18 per cent felt discriminated). (Scheiber 2007:160)

Literature also identifies employment as a factor influencing many relevant issues, including economic independence, housing, family reunification, perspectives for the future, interaction with members of the receiving society leading to developing language skills and learning other cultures and traditions, self-esteem and a sense of identity (Caritas Linz 2007; Hoyer 2011).

### ➤ Gaps in the literature on refugees and employment

Few publications discuss ethnic networks and how these help refugees access employment, for instance in the informal economy.

Moreover, there is only limited specific research on the impact of a lack of professional network as well as on refugee health and the impact it has on labour market integration.

Potential areas of discrimination affecting specifically refugees would also need further research.

## Housing

Little academic research has been undertaken on the housing situation of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection in Austria. According to the 2012 statistical yearbook on migration and integration, generally based on the NAP indicators, persons with a migrant background have one-third less living space than the average. In addition, people of foreign origin have higher housing cost quotients. Findings show that immigrants live more frequently in substandard accommodation. With regard to regional distribution and segregation, immigrant residents in Austria live in relatively few districts only: some 80 per cent of residents of foreign origin live in only 10 per cent of Austria's districts, while only slightly more than 50 per cent of Austria's native population live in these same areas. More than 53 per cent of all Austria's immigrants lived on 1 January 2012 in districts in which immigrants constitute more than 25 per cent of the population. The majority of the population of foreign origin lives in larger cities. "Some 62 per cent of persons of foreign nationality and/or who were born outside Austria lived in towns and cities with more than 20,000 inhabitants" (Statistics Austria 2012:78). There was a particularly high concentration of persons of African and Asian origin (70 per cent and 68 per cent) in districts with a high immigrant population.

The main influencing factors highlighted in one study (Neuwirth 2005) as facilitators and barriers in relation to housing integration include the length of the asylum procedure; social assistance; “start accommodation” or other organized housing projects or support for a limited amount of time after recognition; availability of social counselling; affordable housing; lack of sheltered accommodation; time pressure (four months after granting of status) to find private accommodation after the housing originally provided for refugees ends as well as bail and fee for real estate agents (Neuwirth 2005). According to the findings of Neuwirth’s survey, actors in Lower Austria expressed that more sheltered accommodation in integration projects as well as continuative counselling and support structures would be beneficial after granting of status.

The final report of a Caritas integration support and counselling project for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Upper Austria (Caritas Linz 2008) describes the following factors leading to a difficult housing situation in Upper Austria: lack of housing offers by the authorities, overpriced private housing as well as prejudices (also mentioned by Fetz 2011b) and racism. Many private property owners refuse to rent to foreigners. The situation is particularly difficult for unemployed persons and families with many children. Regarding the latter, apartments in necessary sizes either do not exist or are not affordable for refugees (Caritas Linz 2008).

Employment is a facilitator for refugees to acquire private rental housing according to Kucera (2001), Scheiber (2007) and Fetz (2011b). The absence of secure employment when attempting to access housing leads to difficulty obtaining a rent contract and becomes a vicious circle maintaining refugees in inappropriate housing.

Volf (2001) and Schilcher (2009) outline the tendency of poor quality of housing of refugees and migrants generally and precarious situations that influence various areas important for the integration process. This includes social participation, which is often closely linked to living standards, quality of housing and the residential area (Schilcher 2009). Volf (2001) also argues that the living situation influence highly the personal capacity to orientate oneself in a new environment. Both Volf (2001) and Schilcher (2009) emphasize the importance of housing to physical and mental health.

Volf (2001) concludes that rebuilding a new life necessitates firstly securing an adequate accommodation for the duration of the procedure, secondly “transit housing” after a certain duration of procedure or after a decision was taken in the asylum procedure, and thirdly orientation and financial support for the social and private housing market (Volf 2001:111).

Finally, Kucera mentions discrimination, xenophobia and prejudice refugees are confronted with when looking for housing and employment (Kucera 2001).

## 📌 Gaps in the literature on refugees and housing

Especially obstacles specific to refugees as difficulties linked to language and the lack of social support networks and the impact of flight experiences and refugees’ approach to housing would need more detailed research.

Moreover, studies on housing generally do not discuss the issue of family reunification and its impact on housing access.

On the other side, the landlords’ potential lack of knowledge and preconceptions on refugees needs further investigation.

Finally, the differences of rural versus urban settlement for refugees as well as rural to urban migration of refugees and their impact on integration are also relevant issues for more research.

## Education and language

The NAP underlying notion is that the level of education and language skills has a major influence on the occupation of migrants and how well their social integration subsequently functions. In addition, the NAP states that early acquisition of functionally adequate communicative competencies in German facilitates entry into gainful employment and better orientation in Austrian society. According to the NAP's approach, adequate language proficiency is a pre-requisite to participation in professional life and in society. Its indicators in the field of education emphasize the lack of a school leaving certificate because in a society where educational qualification is of particular importance, this results in a range of problems, including unemployment and poverty.

The Viennese integration monitoring of migrants also has as underlying approach: that education is an important vehicle for social emancipation and social upward mobility. Educational achievements of the Viennese population are being seen as pre-conditions for integration into the labour market and social participation and advancement. The results of the Viennese monitoring indicate that persons with migration background<sup>20</sup> are strongly represented at both ends of the scale, that is with the highest and lowest possible education. The data shows a significant difference with regard to educational background between migrants and persons of the same age whose parents were born in Austria, but the negative difference is less significant than the one between migrants and persons who completed their formal education abroad.

In the literature, language proficiency, and its fundamental role in integration, dominates the area of education (Kucera 2001; Jobstmann 2002; Neuwirth 2005; Scheiber 2007; Stubnig and Lackner 2007). Mastering the language of the country creates access to social and structural areas and gives simultaneously the feeling of social security and belonging (Stolzlechner 2007: 52). Only two studies also include observations on information and orientation on the new country of reception (Reinprecht and Gapp, 2006; Neuwirth 2007).

Reception conditions during the asylum procedure and the lack or quality of language courses during this waiting period are discussed by literature as factors negatively influencing language acquisition (Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Stolzlechner 2007). Interviews with refugees and those with subsidiary protection for a recent study on family reunification "revealed that some interviewees had been in the country awaiting a decision of their asylum claim for years without any possibility to learn the language. Indeed, except for minor-aged asylum-seekers, learning the language remains subject to individual or private initiatives" (Kraler et al. 2013:103). Neuwirth observes further that only a few asylum-seekers have access to German courses during the long asylum procedure, which leads to a series of problems once they receive refugee status, including difficulties finding work (Neuwirth 2007). Limited possibility of German courses also lead to self-study (Neuwirth 2007; Kraler et al. 2013), which sometimes means poor knowledge of grammar, that is difficult to correct later. A further aggravating factor to learn the language during that time is the lack of outside contact with the local population. They communicate mostly in the family circle and within their communities. The possibility of contact with society through employment is also missing (Stolzlechner 2007).

In addition, many years of waiting without daily structure brings difficulties to adapt to a normal life cycle again and also influences language knowledge. Besides cultural adaptation, persons granted asylum are confronted at that moment with numerous simultaneous tasks and challenges, which leaves little time for language acquisition even though language knowledge would in already be necessary in this first phase.

It should be noted that family migrants of refugee families can enrol in German classes relatively shortly after arrival, since their asylum procedure is of comparatively short duration. (Kraler et al. 2013:103).

Learning the language of the receiving country enables refugees to access important information and to social contacts with the local population. Moreover, mutual insecurities, frustrations and mistrust may be reduced. Language competences represent for refugees one of the most important

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<sup>20</sup> Migration background refers to that they or at least one of their parents were born abroad or that they are foreign nationals.

instruments to secure their livelihood (search for employment and housing) and broaden the influence of control they have over their own lives. Only with language acquisition may participation in public life and dealing with the new environment become possible (Kucera 2001). Similarly according to Stolzechner (2007), to experience and understand the new culture as well as to be able to orient oneself in the new environment, it is necessary to engage with and acquire the local language. (Stolzechner 2007: 52). Kucera (2001) refers to other literature that shows that the lack of German language skills of refugees is one of the major reasons for difficulties of orientation to daily life. For instance, refugees may struggle with authorities, at the doctor, on the working place, in education and further education but also in dealing with the local population. Restraints on language acquisition include emotional factors, solidarity with family members and differences between the semantic, grammatical and pragmatic aspects of the language of origin and the new language. In her research, she also found age differences related to language acquisition: with increased age, language skills were assessed as worse. Stolzechner describes that some refugees attempt and succeed in spite of substantial language deficits to enter the labour market to earn for their family. However, this entails that it becomes more difficult, due to lack of time and strength, to attend a course, to learn the language correctly in spoken and writing, while working as unqualified worker or they do not tackle it at all anymore (Stolzechner 2007: 53). Kucera (2001) further refers to another research that found that a German course represented an additional strain for Bosnian refugee women. Women who attended a German course reported more physical and psychological discomforts than women who did not attend a course. Reasons provided for not attending a German course included lack of time due to work and caring for the family; organizational reasons; physical problems; lack of motivation and psychological problems, such as concentration and memory difficulties, nervousness, uneasiness, sleep disorders and fears. (Kucera 2001; Stolzechner 2007). Frick (2009) also refers to possible reduced power of concentration. (Frick 2009:30) Both, Kucera (2001) and Frick (2009) find a correlation between previous trauma and depression, and the difficulty to find the strength, willpower, motivation and concentration to absorb new impression and to learn a new language.

Language acquisition is also challenging due to heavy trauma of refugees and the necessity for some refugees to overcome illiteracy or learn a new script (Neuwirth 2007; Stolzechner 2007). Regarding language courses, the special issues of refugees mentioned above need to be considered in terms of both teaching design and teacher training. In addition, Neuwirth mentions issues related to patriarchal family structures. Problems can occur when the wife and children already speak better German than the father, who therefore cannot realize properly the role as family provider as shaped in the country of origin. Sometimes women are, due to this attitude, even forbidden to attend German courses.

Moreover, organized childcare, a needs-adapted time of offered courses and the availability of courses are essential for successful attendance (Neuwirth 2007; Kraler et al. 2013:102).

Linguistic experts, however, point to the fact, that courses alone contribute rather little to a sustainable command of the language. Rather, the actual learning of the language takes place in 'real life', which makes social contacts crucial. As Plutzar (2010) argues, language courses cannot replace the importance of applying the language in daily life.

Interviews undertaken for a recent report on family reunification (Kraler et al. 2013) show that "regardless of the residential status and with almost no exception, language is viewed to be a central key feature for enabling social interaction, gaining independence, following education and widening job opportunities." Interviewed family members had a very positive attitude towards learning the language, and also mentioned the fact that they were fully funded as being particularly helpful (Kraler et al. 2013: 103).

The fact that children learn the language faster than their parents do leads to restructuring of family relationships, conflicts and confusions of roles. Parents become dependent on the children regarding the cultural and linguistic translation (Kucera 2001).

Measurable integration indicators in policy and research on education include the level of completed education. Scheiber (2007) describes that it can occur that some adults did not attend or finish primary school in their country of origin. Therefore, they lack basic skills and qualifications, which are necessary for a professional education or further education programmes as well as for employment in certain fields. Those who do not have basic literacy, usually encounter serious

problems to learn the language of the receiving country or to acquire other skills, necessary for a self-determined life (Scheiber 2007:158).

Influencing factors regarding education highlighted in literature also include the length of the asylum procedure, the acknowledgment and validation of foreign education (Neuwirth 2005, 2007; Kaufmann 2009) and the difficulties for refugees who lack documents. Kapeller and Sprung (2002) point out in their study on Styria that a special problem field for refugees lies in education. Often, qualifications gained in the country of origin cannot be proven by relevant certificates (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:86; Scheiber 2007:158). Thus, the possibility of further education and appropriate employment according to qualification is lost (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:86) or delayed.

Volf (2001) also refers to lacking financial resources of refugees to accredit certificates and diplomas, which also hinder the entry into further education as well as the continuation of an already started education (Volf 2001:113).

Furthermore, highly qualified persons lose some of their knowledge during the long asylum procedure without the possibility of practice and further education. Their education is thereby no longer up-to-date. However, Reinprecht and Gapp (2006) describe how volunteering can enable migrants in general to acquire basic knowledge of the receiving society as well as participate in society through non-formal and informal education.

Orientation about Austrian society and daily life is another important factor that may be influenced by cultural shock and trauma (Neuwirth 2005, 2007). Other factors influencing education briefly mentioned in the literature are illiteracy, cultural and religious differences (Neuwirth 2007), the health status (Stubnig and Lackner 2007) and discrimination (Scheiber 2007). Again, the lack of information can be addressed through assistance by social workers and labour market services (Fetz 2011a).

In his 2007 academic paper, Neuwirth dedicates a separate analysis on young adults and issues faced by those above compulsory education age, such as public transport costs and difficulties to find places in secondary schools as well as keeping up with requirements there. Neuwirth's evaluation assesses that due to the length of the asylum procedure, financial restraints and the limited capacity of secondary schools, most refugee children only receive compulsory education. It is nearly impossible for them to find an apprenticeship afterwards. As a result, they exclusively rely on their families or are forced to accept low-level jobs. This group therefore risks consequences such as dependence on family, losing contact with Austrian school colleagues due to financial situation and lack of daily structure.

The final report of a Caritas integration support and counselling project for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in Upper Austria (Caritas Linz 2008) describes more advanced German courses or other qualification measures that are often postponed due to the aforementioned focus on work and affordability, if not funded. Furthermore, recognition of education acquired in the country of origin is lengthy, expensive and requires very good German knowledge, because additional exams, for example, are necessary. Scheiber (2007) adds that the recognition is also hampered by the fact that refugees often have to take up employment to be able to acquire housing or to finance family reunification with their spouse and children. Thus, they often do not have time to attend the required courses (Scheiber 2007:158).

Finally, as Hofmann and Reichel (2012) outline, existing gaps in data collection can be seen in the field of education. Although the newly built educational background registry by Statistics Austria has significantly improved the data situation, the general measurement of the education of migrants is difficult, especially if education certificates have been acquired abroad. This fact results from the general difficulty of comparability of different education systems and the deficit in formal recognition or recognition/validation of educational degrees acquired abroad. This shortcoming is generally understood and a set of initiatives have been undertaken to facilitate the recognition of educational qualifications, albeit the lack of data on education levels and certificates cannot be recovered quickly and the process of recognition cannot be altered without problems. For instance, Hoffmann and Reichel (2012) argue further that the Public Employment Office (Labour Market Service – *Arbeitsmarktservice, AMS*) cannot simply record qualifications acquired abroad by its staff and accept them as education, because the AMS lacks the competency for recognition.

## ↳ Gaps in the literature on refugees and education

There should be further research into the educational background of refugees, deskilling due to inactivity during the asylum procedure and social networks and their impact on education.

## Social integration

Little research looks into social integration of refugees in Austria. Volf (2001:101) points to missing social contacts in the receiving society as an integration barrier for refugees.

A few researchers examined specific communities and how they were integrated. Kucera (2001) outlines that many refugees suffer from loneliness, due to the loss of their social networks. Social isolation is felt the strongest by persons who flee alone. Feelings of loneliness also occur, however, for persons who come with their families and in particular for older persons. Building contacts with the local population is often difficult due to language barriers and disinterest of locals with little understanding of refugees. Locals in contrast often have a mostly functioning social network with a full-time schedule and obligations. Stubnig and Lackner (2007) point to sport (football association, weight training), cultural events, employment and social networks as positive influencing factors. Neuwirth emphasizes the asylum procedure, language, negative attitude of receiving society, stereotypes, prejudices, social discrimination, different cultures and social counselling as well as contact to other refugees as influences on social integration. Frick outlines how trauma experiences and related symptoms lead to changes affecting social skills and hence influencing contact behaviour of persons concerned (Frick 2009: 31).

Jobstmann (2002) points out that only good mastery of the language enables to orient oneself in a country and is an essential precondition for communication with the population. Related to this is a better understanding by and for the receiving society. Lack of language knowledge results in reduced contact with the outside world and limits the communication to members of the country of origin. This leads to the inability to articulate needs and concerns towards representatives of authorities and members of the receiving society. In extreme cases, this can lead to isolation.

Kraler et al. (2013) also state that former asylum-seekers in particular felt negatively affected by the criminalizing and stigmatizing reports on refugees.

## ↳ Gaps in the literature on refugees and social integration

There should be further studies focusing on refugees' relationships with their national or religious communities, with school parents and with neighbours, friends and family members and the impacts they have on integration.

Considering the importance placed on social networks for labour market and other integration, more research should address barriers for refugees building social networks both within migrant and receiving communities.

## Health

The capacity to orient oneself in a new environment depends on physical and psychological health (Volf 2001:114). Two master theses from 2009 and 2011 dedicate themselves specifically to health of refugees, including a group of Chechen refugees in Austria (Schilcher 2009), and more generally on the psycho-therapeutical care for refugees (Fabrick 2011). A master thesis from 2001 (Kucera 2001) looks at psycho-traumatic issues and the general psychosocial situation of Bosnian refugees. The research outlines that, as an impact of war, flight and life in exile, the majority of Bosnian men and women experienced an increase of physical and psychological health issues as well as stress and pressure in Austria. Those of 50 years or above experienced these problems significantly more. A majority mentioned that they were no longer able to determine how to live their lives. Possible causes were financial issues, psychological and physical problems, barriers by authorities, family difficulties and difficulties with Austrians due to cultural differences. In addition, dequalification and loss of status may lead to severe depression. For men, the loss of income and status is difficult to accept, if they were the main breadwinner of the family in the home country. In the receiving country also women and children earn money while these men feel as if they have become without any function and useless, which can lead to interfamilial conflicts, a return to national traditions or even addiction by the husband/father as self-affirmation. Generally, fulfilling work is found to be important for psychological health.

A study on the integration of migrants and refugees in the Province of Styria also describes how migration and flight build the basis for massive health impairment. In all life areas, stress has impacts on individual, family, socio-economic and socio-cultural levels. Stress, which may lead to health problems, typically arises by following factors, such as leaving the home country, change of life perspective, disorientation, uprooting, helplessness, massive crises within the family, loss of role, generational conflicts, legal uncertainty due to unclear residence title, insecure employment conditions, problematic housing situation (also in Volf 2001; Hoyer 2011) and financial crises, discrimination and xenophobia (also in Frick 2009), communication problems including language barriers, lack of information and culture-related problems.

Particularly concerned are, amongst others, psychologically and physically traumatized migrants and refugees, displaced by war and survivors of diverse camps, separated families, minors and orphans. Besides a number of psychosomatic physical issues, serious psychological issues are prevalent (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:72).

Influencing factors for refugees are trauma as well as social, medical and psychological counselling (Volf 2001; Frick 2009; Manzana-Marin 2009; Fabrick 2011). Flight reasons, circumstances and experiences during the flight, longer stays in camps and regions with poor medical care but also the general living situation in the country of origin as well as untreated illnesses have direct impacts on the health situation of refugees (Volf 2001:114). Indeed, refugee-specific issues impacting their health are described in the literature as related to the hardships they have been through: the violence experienced in their country of origin or during flight, complications due to war and torture injuries, disappearance of relatives, trauma and dealing with the situation in the receiving country, such as loss of identity and/or gender roles (Volf 2001:114; Manzana-Marin 2009:30-37; Schilcher 2009:46-50; Frick 2009:31). The torture and violence experienced by refugees are difficult to process among others because of lack of social networks, the worry over family members left behind in the home country, feelings of guilt, unemployment, exclusion and experiences with racism; therefore, the situation can cause a post-traumatic stress disorder (including perseverative memories and avoidance behaviour) or contribute to other psychological disorders such like depression and anxiety (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:84; Manzana-Marin 2009:37-39; Schilcher 2009:51; Frick 2009:30). All these symptoms can come along with reduced power of concentration, reduced motivation and difficulties to absorb new impressions. These limitations are particularly serious, if one considers how many new aspects refugees are confronted with upon entry into the receiving society and how much adjustment efforts are required by them during the integration process. (Frick 2009:30) Whether persecution, prison, torture, family separation or war experiences, refugees are facing situations, which are very difficult to process and can still have long effects on the psyche (Volf 2001:115). Finally, trauma experiences often lead to basic changes of personal attitudes and world view (Frick 2009:31). Manzana-Marin (2009) outlines as further health effects physical



conditions such as sleeping disorders, fatigue, headache, back pain and rheumatism years after arrival, also for the children of refugees (Manzana-Marin 2009:37).

Stress factors and additional impairments of the health situation such as the asylum procedure and its length, long stays in reception camps and long-lasting inactivity are also mentioned in the reviewed literature (Volf 2001:114; Fabrik 2011). In addition, Fabrick (2011) points out that the asylum procedure can lead repeatedly to crises, as traumatized persons are confronted with the acute risk of re-traumatization. The waiting for residence and work permits, and difficulties of integration in a foreign country, constitute unstable, unsettling components that, for traumatized persons, may have a re-traumatizing effect. The real therapy can therefore only start after receiving a protection status (Fabrik 2011:93). With regard to competent psychotherapy, there is a lack of a nationwide network and financing (Fabrik 2011).

Housing in this context, especially quality of accommodation, is addressed by one study. There is a higher risk for infectious diseases for those in bad housing situations (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:72).

Access to information on Austrian society, physical group activities such as sport and leisure activities and employment are also addressed by literature. Moreover, cultural events and culturally shaped health and illness conceptions can hamper health care (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:72; Fabrick 2011). Communication with other members of the same ethnic group as well as social networks and relations plays another significant role to health (Schilcher 2009: 83).

Language related to access to health is another obstacle faced by refugees (Schilcher 2009:67; Kapeller and Sprung 2002:72; Fabrick 2011), as they often have difficulty communicating with healthcare practitioners and require an interpreter. This may result in the potential for false diagnoses and a mere treatment of symptoms rather than the underlying problem and, on occasion, misunderstandings around medication. Doctors also note the use of children as interpreters (Schilcher 2009:67; Kapeller and Sprung 2002:73). According to Kapeller and Sprung (2002:72), the language barrier is also responsible for a bad state of health, lack of information, inadequate care and insufficient prevention.

## ➤ Gaps in the literature on refugees and health

More studies are needed to analyse the impact of separation from the family and the process of family reunification on refugees' mental health, including potential improvements upon completion of the family reunification process. Further research looking into the impact of health, including disabilities, on access to housing is also needed.

## Active citizenship

Civic citizenship or active citizenship in relation to refugees has received little detailed attention from researchers. The participation in political processes is however an indicator for integration in a society as a whole. It signifies in many ways the articulation of individual concerns and hence the realization of one's situation as part of the surrounding society. Often, political persecution is the ground for flight. In addition, the situation of refugees is shaped by flight from countries with unstable political systems, which differ from the Austrian system. Other forms of formal and informal decision-making and exercise of power build the underlying experience of some refugees. These experiences may influence political participation of refugees.

In a small survey on Styria, refugee respondents showed a relatively high political interest (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:77-78), despite having no right to vote before they acquire Austrian citizenship. The same study showed no membership in a political party – also understandable due to the flight experience, experience with other political systems and the lack of information – and only a small number of refugees who were relatively new to Austria engaged in associations or institutions

(Sprung 2002:78). One thesis analyses how the second generation of refugees from Chile – all respondents had Austrian citizenship - participates politically, in the sense of engagement in a political organisation, and how this participation is motivated, that is if there is a connection to the flight of the parents due to political grounds and related trauma (Mazana-Marín 2009): this research concludes that this particular group has a strong political consciousness due to their parents and that their voter turnout is very high. She also observed a certain trend that the second generation is not politically active, if the parents are not anymore involved in political activity in the receiving country, due to trauma and little processing of the past. There are a number of studies on migrant associations that mostly limit their analyses to the empirical descriptions of migrant associations and their activities. A report by Reinprecht and Gap (2006) on third-country nationals in Austria, which includes refugees and asylum-seekers, identified volunteering and migrant “self” organisations as an indicator of integration and a major instrument for integration – and one which contributes to several other indicators of integration. The report states that volunteering and migrant organizations also contribute to the empowerment of third-country nationals and activate the capacity for self-help. The report outlines as reason that, as a result, individuals become better acquainted with the local community and build social networks among themselves as well as with key people in local communities. The authors add that individuals who do not have good knowledge of German can counter isolation by becoming involved in volunteer activities. However, their reports also highlighted some barriers to volunteering encountered by third-country nationals in Austria: too little or no targeted core funding for migrant organizations, lack of social security and insurances for volunteers, lack of awareness of volunteering opportunities and lack of public recognition of good practice in migrant volunteering, lack of access to mainstream volunteering organizations, discrimination, as well as time and money, since “[y]have to be able to afford volunteering”.

When asked about voluntary engagement, migrants tend to report neighbourhood help as the main activity, which contributes to the fact that migrant volunteering might be under-reported since an “organi[z]ed setting” is deemed to be an element of a volunteer activity, which generally excludes spontaneous neighbourly assistance.

Stolzlechner (2007) refers to the state concept of Austrian citizenship as privilege and not an instrument of integration, but rather seen as completion of a successful integration process (Stolzlechner 2007: 27). Kraler et al. (2013) outline the access to nationality and its high financial threshold (income requirements as well as costs involved for the procedure), subject to criticism for being socially selective. The difficulty in accessing citizenship was a topic raised by many individuals in their recent research on family reunification. Most individuals from third countries interviewed stated their aim for naturalization, though some feared not being able to afford it. In particular, refugees interviewed by Kraler et al. were very concerned about potential or experienced difficulties to obtain Austrian nationality. The reasons given were mostly financial.

## ➤ Gaps in the literature on refugees and active citizenship

There are few studies on refugees’ voting patterns once they acquire citizenship, political participation as well as access to nationality and its impact.

## Family reunification

Hardly any specific research on family reunification of refugees exists, with some general reports touching only briefly on the issue and its legal basis (Tretter 2000). Frick (2009) mentions in her thesis to the importance of contact with the family for refugees and how during the time of separation, family reunification becomes the life goal for refugees. Constant worry about the family, who stayed behind in the country of origin accompanies them in their everyday life. (Frick 2009:36-37) Very recently, in February 2013 the Austrian report of an EU funded project on family reunification as a barrier or facilitator to integration was published (Kraler et al. 2013). The impact of family reunification on employment, however, is primarily analysed with regard to family members that reunify under the Residence and Settlement Act which only applies to migrants.

Frick also refers briefly to the challenges, once family reunification is achieved: over the years of separation, some family members have changed, partly even new family members have been added and arriving family members are now suddenly confronted with these changes. Such changes become more likely the longer the family is separated. (Frick 2009:37)

Of note is that persons interviewed for the report stated that self-employment in terms of setting up small businesses was chosen as a strategy to involve family members in the generation of the household income (Kraler et al. 2013:94). The business set-up in Austria did not necessarily correspond with previous education or professional experience; though interviewees in Kraler's et al. research reported they had gradually grown into the business. Self-employment in a family business represents a viable strategy to take up work in Austria for asylum-seekers who are otherwise prevented from working until their asylum process is complete. And added benefit is that self-employment assists later integration. The necessary investments to set up the commerce such as license and rent deposit were however, reported to be economically burdensome (Kraler et al. 2013:94).

Interviews undertaken for their report on family reunification underline that employment plays an existential role for refugee families. One interview specifically strikes out the economic burdens emerging from the process of family reunification in itself and the necessity to maintain a family income now that the children live in the household of the sponsor.

Moreover, the fact that continuous employment is required to access citizenship was repeatedly viewed by refugee interviewees to be a discriminatory and problematic practice. One interview revealed the case of an experienced plumber, who rather than leaving work aside in order to prepare for the necessary examination that would enable him to set up a business on his own, chose to continue working until he obtains Austrian citizenship.

Another interview clearly depicted problems arising from long-term unemployment. Whereas the family migrant was on maternity leave by that time, the sponsor had been searching for a job as a computer engineer in vain for more than six years. The young woman uttered great dissatisfaction with her life, fearing her family had 'no future' in Austria (Kraler et al. 2013: 95).

Furthermore, the report discusses the issue of upright family life not representing a guarantee to reside in Austria. This is depicted in the account of a Ukrainian refugee, whose husband's asylum claim was rejected. Since they were married, they further pursued their life together in Austria. When the new migration and asylum legislation entered into force in 2006, he was obliged to leave the country and apply for reunification from Nigeria. Since he refused to return on a voluntary base, he was forcibly deported 'overnight' despite considerable health problems. He was granted entrance to Austria only after a year, since he had entered the country on an irregular basis. Another couple interviewed in the report was threatened by similar circumstances, but they had made their cause public in the media. In the end, the family member managed to circumvent the obligation to apply for reunification from abroad on grounds of a humanitarian clause that allows for inland lodging in exceptional cases (Kraler et al. 2013: 106).

Generally, discussions about care for elderly parents living abroad or the organization of childcare in Austria with and without parental aid underline the complexity and variety of family arrangements (Kraler et al. 2013: 108).

## ➤ Gaps in the literature on refugees and family reunification

More research about the possibly detrimental impact of lengthy family reunification on refugee integration would be necessary to gain more detailed insight on the general claim that refugees have difficulties thinking of their future and focus on the necessary steps to settle as long as they have not been able to reunify with their family.

The impact of family reunification once the family has joined the refugee, for instance on feeling more settled, on employment, on possible changes in family structure is still under-researched.

A study on the integration of migrants and refugees in the Province of Styria also analyses the general impact of the asylum procedure and reception conditions on later integration. Reception conditions that lead to dependency and lack of privacy of persons concerned are problematic for any subsequent integration, in particular if the “situation” in these conditions lasts for years. Health, psychological stability as well as resources and skills of asylum-seekers, which are essential to the integration process, are affected by the lack of available occupation and employment opportunities, a missing daily routine and structure. (Kapeller and Sprung 2002:84). Similarly also Kucera (2001) looked into reception conditions for Bosnian refugees and their impact on integration — for instance of isolated location, ghettoization and marginalization. Volf (2001) formulates a desirable goal of integration for refugees: to ensure that asylum-seekers as potential refugees are prepared for potential later integration in Austria by addressing the issue already during the reception phase and thus the asylum procedure (Volf 2001:99).

## Conclusion

Several caveats on the existing literature need to be noted.

First, access to research on refugee integration itself is challenging. A number of studies are unpublished and thus difficult to access by researchers as well as the wider public. In addition, not all government-funded research is immediately or at all made available to the public. While there is a good number of excellent, although unpublished, master theses on refugee integration only few of their authors have disseminated their studies more widely through articles in established journals, and even fewer remain in research after the completion of their studies. In addition to accessibility of research on refugees and integration, there are several further limitations, including the relative absence of systematic empirical analysis, the lack of quantitative research and the descriptive nature of much of the literature as also noted by Kraler and Reichel 2012). The existing literature on refugees often does not elaborate on detailed measuring indicators within one major indicator, but only on influencing factors.

Secondly, the majority of studies on integration indicators and influencing factors relate to migrants generally, not specifically to refugees. Even those studies explicitly focusing on refugees, are almost exclusively qualitative in their research and often remain on a descriptive level.

Furthermore, more recent research has not exclusively focused on the national level, but rather pays more attention to the municipal or provincial levels. Many studies concentrate on the situation in Vienna, while studies, apart from master theses, concerning other municipalities or Provinces are few.

In general, more nuanced and more detailed analyses of the indicator of housing, social integration, family reunification and, moreover, how refugees feel about integrating in Austria are needed.

Finally, there are hardly any studies on persons with subsidiary protection, although their limited rights and status, which has to be prolonged every year, access to services and its consequences differ considerably from the situation of recognized refugees and possibly impact integration.

This report, by consulting refugees and stakeholders, aims to provide a first step to address the above-mentioned gaps.



# Available national statistical data on analysis of refugee integration

The availability of data is the major challenge of integration evaluation and monitoring and indeed one of the major issues in refugee integration evaluation is lack of refugee-specific data. It should be noted, however, that statistical data on the population with migration background has considerably increased since the late 1990s.

The main sources for core demographic data and migration control are maintained by Statistics Austria and the Ministry of the Interior, and include data on the total population, migration movements, naturalizations, asylum, the legal status of immigrants and irregular migration. Until the new millennium, the population census, which was last conducted in 2001, was a core element of population and social statistics in Austria. Since the establishment of a Central Register of Residence in 2001, however, the main data source for the size and structure of the population is the population register, in turn based on the Central Register of Residence. The register holds information on the population stocks, migration flows and naturalizations, including information on gender, age, citizenship and country of birth of the person included in the database.

Citizenship is still the main variable for the identification of persons with a migrant background in migration and integration statistics, although country of birth has become increasingly available in a number of key datasets. This includes the micro census which has the country of birth category as of the mid-1990s and the population register where this category has been available since 2007). In addition, information on country of birth was collected in the 2001 census. Nevertheless, a variety of administrative datasets still use citizenship as the sole criterion for the identification of persons with a migration background. Except in the case of indigenous ethnic minorities, ethnicity is not used as a statistical concept, although with the concept of “person with a migration background” that was introduced with the introduction of the variable parents’ country of birth in the 2008 micro census, a closely related concept has been adopted (Kraler et al. 2009: 8-9). In terms of the monitoring and measurement of the migrant population, Statistics Austria now uses three basic concepts:

- 1 Foreign citizens;
- 2 Persons with a foreign background (non-citizens born in Austria + foreign-born); and
- 3 Persons with a migration background (defined as persons with both parents born abroad).

The first two concepts are available from both surveys and the population registers, while the latter is only available from the micro census.

Most analyses on migrant integration in Austria are based on data from administrative registries, sampling surveys and qualitative interviews. The most important sources are hereby by the population registries maintained by Statistics Austria,<sup>21</sup> data from the Main Association of the

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<sup>21</sup> Statistics Austria is an independent and non-profit-making federal institution under public law which is responsible for performing scientific services in the area of federal statistics.

Austrian Social Insurance Institutions (*Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger*) and from the Public Employment Office (Labour Market Service, AMS) as well as larger sample surveys. The main problem is the very limited possibility to identify the defined target group in existing data. Some information, such as the country of birth of all persons or of the parents, is often not or insufficiently recorded in the data sets (Hofmann and Reichel 2012:125).

Data from existing samples are, due to the small size of samples, in fact not useable for smaller sub-groups of persons with migrant background, such as refugees. Registries' data have gaps, although it may potentially be used for longitudinal analyses. Longitudinal data is of special importance for the analysis of integration processes. The lack of longitudinal data in relation to evaluation of integration is a main challenge, as it is in the nature of measures and policies in this field that they unfold their effects and impact over time. Experts therefore recommend the need for panel studies and surveys as well as other specific sample surveys which also attempt to collect longitudinal data e.g. by including retrospective questions. In view of the current data situation, exact analyses of causes and impact are only possible to a limited extent (Hofmann and Reichel 2012:126).

Monthly and annual asylum statistics have been published as hard copies and online since 2002 by the Federal Ministry of Interior. Statistical reports were available only as hardcopies before 2002. Those statistics provide information on yearly applications, procedures, decisions, deportations declared inadmissible and granted subsidiary protection. There is, however, no reliable data on how many of those refugees and persons with subsidiary protection are currently still in Austria. There are only estimations. Similarly, there are no records over applications for renewal of subsidiary protection status or how many persons have changed from this status to other residence titles. Therefore, it is difficult to state how long persons with subsidiary protection stay under this status in Austria. However, experiences by experts, stakeholders, including on revocation of status, as well information provided in the refugee meetings for this report lead to the assumption that most of these persons stay for many years. In the asylum statistics, family reunification is not recorded separately and is included amongst the positive decisions.

Statistics Austria does not have data relating to refugees beyond the asylum statistics of the Federal Ministry of Interior, although they collect and add several years of statistics, in particular positive decisions and pending procedures, for their migration statistics.

It is relatively recent that regular and systematic data collection and reporting on migration and integration is being undertaken. The very format of the NAP and the definition of specific aims (though not yet necessarily measurable targets) as well the related definition of integration indicators suggest that the role of data will increase in the future. The launch of the aforementioned statistical yearbook on migration and integration by Statistics Austria, financed by the European Integration Fund and the Federal Ministry of Interior from 2008 on, is one of the most major developments in this regard, although again on migrants generally. The yearbook provides current figures and data

relevant to migration and integration in Austria and has already conducted its third data collection according to the NAP indicators. The selection of these indicators was also geared to availability of data sources, the pragmatic approach being that it would not make sense to choose indicators, which one cannot implement, in order to guarantee continuous implementation of integration monitoring. Sources for the indicators rely on official data, although for many indicators, one had to draw on sample surveys, for instance, statistics on unemployment are based on data from the AMS and the micro census by Statistics Austria.<sup>22</sup> Data from the general income report, migration statistics, settlement, residence and asylum statistics, population statistics, naturalizations statistics, marriage statistics and school statistics have also been included. In addition, data from European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) is used as well as a special survey on subjective attitudes towards the “integration climate” (Hofmann and Reichel 2012:122). However, breaking these data down to refugee-specific integration data is hardly possible due to the limitations outlined above.

Integration-related statistics relating to employment, income, housing, health, education and family characteristics are mainly collected and disseminated by Statistics Austria and/or relevant ministries. The register on social insurance cases that is maintained by the Main Association of the Austrian Social Insurance Institutions (*Hauptverband der österreichischen Sozialversicherungsträger*) is the main source register for employment and incomes, while the Austrian Public Employment Service (Labour Market Service - *Arbeitsmarktservice*, AMS) maintains registers on unemployed persons and on non-nationals whose employment in Austria is subject to approval. As mentioned above, the Austrian Public Employment Service is an important actor in regard to labour market integration. Its record of persons with migrant background is based on its own definition which is different from Statistics Austria. This is for practical reasons and the limited availability of data (Hofmann and Reichel 2012:116). The Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, together with the State Secretariat for Integration, also decided in 2011 to register the migrant backgrounds of job seekers. The registers on social insurance cases and the unemployment register form the basis for the so-called Labour Market Database, which contains information on the employment status, annual income and employer/company of all persons in receipt of social security in Austria (Kraler et al. 2009: 17-18).

Indeed, some unemployment data on refugees and persons with subsidiary protection (i.e. those who register as searching for employment) does exist with the Labour Market Services and the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. Thus, as of end of November 2012, there were in total 4,100 (2,864 men and 1,236 women) recognized refugees and 1,202 (919 men and 283 women) persons with subsidiary protection registered as unemployed persons in Austria. The predominance of Vienna is also illustrated by the Vienna specific figures at the same time: 2,225 registered recognized refugees and 757 persons with subsidiary protection.

Yet, one knows little about other factors, such as how many refugees, as compared to the rest of the population, register with the labour market service, and how many cases remain unknown.

Other interesting registers are kept by the Ministry of Health (on child allowance, hospital statistics), while the Federal Provinces (*Bundesländer*) collect statistics on social security benefits (Kraler et al. 2009). While the tax register is already used for national income statistics, it is currently underexploited with regards to information on the incomes of immigrants.

While administrative records have many advantages, including their comprehensive coverage and regular updating, the administrative purpose they serve also implies a number of limitations. In particular, the reliability of information that is not essential for the purpose of a particular register is often limited. This applies particularly to country of birth but also to citizenship. Information on citizenship in the register of social insurance cases, for example, appears not to be updated upon naturalization and subsequently leads to an overrepresentation of non-citizens in the register and the Labour Market Database that is derived from it (Reichel 2010). A second limitation of registries is

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<sup>22</sup> The survey is conducted quarterly and the sample includes some 22,500 households per quarter. The survey contains information on labour market performance, housing and education. Apart from citizenship, country of birth and year of immigration, since 2008 the survey has also provided information on parents' country of birth. A particularly source of information on migration and integration is provided by the 2008 ad hoc module on migrants on the labour market.



the relatively limited range of variables included. In principle, this limitation can, to some extent, be overcome by systematic linkage among different registers. In the Austrian context, however, register linkage is subject to major legal constraints and is only permitted for census purposes.

Against this background, surveys like the micro census provide an important alternative to register-based information. However, they also have limitations, such as low sample sizes and, thus, low numbers of immigrants and hardly any refugees within the samples. Furthermore, the non-response rates among immigrants are regularly higher compared to the local population (Kraler and Reichel 2010: 11-13).

The service office responsible for social housing in the city of Vienna has figures about social housing allocated to recognized refugees:

**Table:** Number of social housing apartments allocated to persons with refugee status since 1997

| Year | 2012 | 2011 | 2010 | 2009 | 2008 | 2007 | 2006 | 2005 | 2004 | 2003 | 2002 | 2001 | 2000 | 1999 | 1998 | 1997 | Total |
|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|-------|
| No.  | 514  | 444  | 337  | 406  | 325  | 288  | 202  | 178  | 134  | 132  | 132  | 120  | 122  | 118  | 103  | 6    | 3.561 |

Other interesting surveys for migration and integration-related statistics include the Austrian Health Survey (which forms part of the European Health Interview Survey) and PISA. In addition, several special surveys targeting only immigrants or certain groups of immigrants and their descendants have been conducted in Austria.

Information on attitudes of the general population and xenophobia is available from the European Social Survey and the Euro barometer (Kraler and Reichel 2010) as well as, albeit more infrequently, from national surveys. For instance, a quantitative study that surveyed attitudes of nationals towards immigration and migration policy, which indicated, there is a growing portion of respondents who overtly consent to xenophobic statements proposed in the opinion poll (Friesl et al. 2009). The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) repeatedly recommended that the Austrian authorities introduce a comprehensive data collection system that would make it possible to assess the situation with regard to the different minority groups in Austria and to discrimination, i.e. to determine the scale of any manifestations of racism and direct and indirect racial discrimination (ECRI 2010:10,43). The exact extent of the problem is not known due to the lack of systematic monitoring and data collection systems for instance in housing, particularly on the private rented market.

Finally, as mentioned before a major gap to date, however, is the lack of longitudinal datasets, and more particularly longitudinal surveys. In addition, the scope and quality of statistical information on certain topics such as incomes and social security benefits is currently rather limited and unsatisfactory (Kraler et al. 2009).

There is no data on refugees' participation in political activities, voting patterns or participation in associations. Statistics Austria produces naturalization statistics based on the data collected by the provincial governments. In addition to the legal grounds of acquisition, individual records transmitted to Statistics Austria quarterly in anonymous and electronic form contain the following variables: convention refugee, previous citizenship, country of birth, marital status, place of residence, age and sex.

The Information System on Federal Care and Maintenance (*Bundesbetreuung*) of Asylum Seekers provides information on asylum-seekers, persons with subsidiary protection and refugees in federal care. The register also enumerates the variables of religious affiliation and ethnicity of the applicant; however, those variables may not be used for public statistics due to data protection laws.

There is almost no representative data about the extent and the background of migrants volunteering.

<sup>23</sup> Numbers refer to persons registered with the Public Employment Service. Not included are persons who did not register, who are unfit for work (for example persons who reached the pension age or are not able to work due to health reasons) and those unemployed who are currently engaged in courses.

# Stakeholder and refugee consultations

This chapter presents findings based on stakeholder and refugee meetings and on a meeting of representatives of the receiving societies.

This chapter presents important identified areas of integration and their impact on the refugees' integration, arranged thematically under education, employment, housing and social engagement in the sense of institutional activities. The impact of the asylum procedure and reception conditions as well as family separation and reunification, health and language was part of the focus for all consultations and are presented as crosscutting factors of influence at the end of this chapter. In view of a holistic integration approach in Austria, the experiences of members of the receiving society supplemented the findings of the research.

Each thematic sub-section contains non-exhaustive examples of gaps and interesting or effective practices of projects, programmes and initiatives in the field of refugee integration.

## Adult education

In addition to measuring the number of foreign university students and young adults without a school-leaving certificate, the NAP indicators also focus on the level of education. The latter is also an indicator of the Viennese integration monitoring, which, among others, measures equal access to education and analyses indicators of participation in education after compulsory schooling including vocational training and educational success. There is a lack of significant data available mentioned earlier when it comes to assessing education for refugees and persons holding subsidiary protection.

Through the consultations eight major factors influencing refugees' education were highlighted: language acquisition and recognition of first language; costs for language learning; insufficient information about education opportunities; missing documents from country of origin; recognition and validation of qualification; lack of social networks; poor housing situation and discrimination.

These influencing factors raised by stakeholders and refugees are discussed below. For each of these influencing factors the challenges experienced by refugees are set out and practices raised to overcome them, are described.

## Language acquisition and recognition of first language

The language acquisition process is best considered in relation to previous studying experiences and the duration and quality of the educational career, according to stakeholders. The impact of education systems with deficits in the countries of origin can represent an integration barrier, as it may lead to refugees having difficulties in learning German because they never attended a “completely functioning school system”. Especially women who did not go to school or never participated in any kind of education often have major difficulties learning another language because they have not acquired the formal learning skills and because for many they are not literate in their own language. As example stakeholders mentioned experiences where some Afghan women needed to overcome basic illiteracy and some Chechen women needed to learn how to write a foreign alphabet. An education stakeholder stated that some refugee women who have lived in Austria for several years are often still illiterate and do not leave their homes very often. Other stakeholders focusing on women report that refugee women often are underrepresented in higher language courses, due to the same reasons. Therefore, training and further education is often out of question for these refugee women without acquisition of language at a higher level.

In addition, many refugees have not been part of the labour market for a long time. Therefore, their immediate desire and need to work is often stronger than the desire to learn German. Counselling stakeholders believe that occupation-specific German courses and adult qualification programmes would be helpful if offered, which include socio-pedagogical support and a strong link to the respective vocational field, to learn the requirements of the labour market and specific codes.

### Practice example

Habibi, House of Education and Professional Integration of the AIF, offers specific language training on nursing and health care, to assist in later positioning during training and on the job market and including an internship to gain better insight. Habibi generally offers persons granted asylum or subsidiary protection and migrants training in the areas of literacy, language, education and labour market as well as supports further education, vocational training, and the search for employment and job applications.

Refugees assessed the quality of offered language courses as very diverse. Some had made good experiences with excellent courses and teachers, while others complained about the quality of teaching and usefulness of courses. They particularly pointed out the non-homogeneity of participants, as regards age and different needs resulting in slow progress and not enough attention

paid to the learning pace. Moreover, waiting periods of a few months between availability of next courses were pointed out as specifically detrimental for language acquisition, as the gained knowledge would considerably diminish due to these breaks.

Refugees also mentioned dialect as an issue in various ways. Indeed, some language courses are considered as not useful, as they do not address dialect and refugees cannot use in real life what they learn in courses. On the other hand, dialect is sometimes a challenge in education and training, where not much consideration is shown towards participants, who have difficulties understanding dialect, including refugees.

Furthermore, several education stakeholders noted that Austria had a monolingual habitus, in particular the Austrian school system, while according to a study by the Chamber of Labour (*Arbeiterkammer* – AK) migrants in Austria speak an average of 2.9 languages. Several refugees referred to this monolingualism in Austria as a barrier and referred to the lack of English knowledge of Austrians. One stakeholder criticized that in basic education, referring to basic competences like literacy and general knowledge, too little attention was paid to the resource of native languages. Refugees' first language was a competence, which Austria ought to value in an adequate manner. In the Austrian system, however, foreign languages such as Persian or Arabic were not given much attention. He furthermore stated: "By not recognizing the language of a person, one also does not recognize the person's identity." Furthermore, another stakeholder mentioned the importance of a good command of the mother tongue in order to learn a second language. As a strategy to cope with this challenge, the "Integration House" (*Integrationshaus*) suggests first-language tandems.

### Practice example

Interface offered language-tandems on a voluntary basis with students from Slavic studies and refugees from Chechnya, while first-language tandems by the "Integration House" aims to also sensitize the receiving society, based on the concept that the use and promotion of the first language of migrants takes an important role in the learning process and should, therefore, also be mastered and offered by the supporting tandem partner from the majority society.

A few stakeholders pointed out that the need for support in learning the language and the impact on the educational career rather stems from socio-economic conditions than from a migrant background. One counselling stakeholder reports that some refugee women suffer from diverse consequences of experienced **trauma** such as stress, disorientation and manifold physical symptoms like headache, permanent tiredness, lack of drive, gynaecological problems, back pain etc. It is a huge challenge for these refugee women to find, nevertheless, the power and will to continuously attend a German course despite these difficulties. Furthermore, within the family the mother often has the role of the "link to the country of origin" and is responsible for preserving cultural values and communication in the mother tongue. It is a balancing act for women to represent the "old values" within the family and open themselves up to the new situation.

## Financial difficulties, the subsidy system and insufficient information about opportunities

Funding opportunities in the field of education in Austria have been described as "diverse, complex and non-transparent" by stakeholders during the consultation on education on 4 December 2012. Insufficient information on funding as well as educational opportunities for refugees, including German courses, was pointed out. Hence it is of crucial importance to keep service providers and their counsellors updated about funding opportunities and changes in the existing funding system.

Also refugees and persons with subsidiary protection confirmed the general lack of appropriate information as a hurdle. Several stakeholders denounced in this context the general lack of compiled essential information, which could be handed out already to newly arrived asylum-seekers and furthermore required to better adapt information quality and accuracy to the needs of those concerned.

Several stakeholders, who offer support, legal and social advice in regard to career and education, also emphasized the difficult financial situation of refugees, the economic pressure, refugees' dependence on subsidies and the precarious situation on the education market. "In order to work on education, one must be able to afford it." Compulsory schooling represents an exception in this regard, although it also incurs costs.<sup>24</sup> Funding and education-related measures were said to be often offered to specific groups and persons with a certain legal or residence status only. Funding in education is mostly provided for children, e.g. for educational support and coaching in the afternoon. One counselling stakeholder in Upper Austria pointed to housing and family situations in cases of financial difficulties. Due to the lack of funds, many refugees are forced to quickly enter the labour market, often in low-skilled jobs. Possible recognition/validation of qualifications or further education and training, that is a conversion of a foreign university degree into a corresponding Austrian one by a university and a stabilisation, are pushed back for years and earning money becomes the immediate aim. Education stakeholders felt in certain cases pressure by AMS on recipients of the needs-based Minimum Welfare Support to be available for the labour market and the educational career, improving qualification or recognition can therefore not be the focus.

This was also confirmed by various refugee respondents, in particular by those with higher education who, at least initially, had ambitions to aim for specific education or training, but later altered or dropped them due to the considerable costs involved. For instance, a Chechen woman and mother of two, in her early 30s, recognized as refugee for 3 years after previously 4 years of subsidiary protection, who had started to study in her home country and wanted to continue in Austria or attend a tourism school, complained about the lack of funding. Respondents were mostly of the opinion that it was very much up to the AMS counsellor you were assigned to, whether you were granted a course. There were differences in experiences, in particular regarding courses granted (or not):

“AMS never funded any German courses for me.”

52-years-old Chechen woman with subsidiary protection for almost 5 years

“The counsellors at AMS vary, some are good, and some are bad. For instance I made a request for an education end of 2011, whereupon I received an education as software engineer, which I accomplished. On another occasion the AMS supported my application for an aliens pass with a letter to the aliens police in order to be able to travel to Germany for a required training for a new job I found.”

Iraqi male with subsidiary protection for 3 years

### Practice example

The Liese-Prokop-scholarship by the Austrian Integration Fund is a student scholarship for Austrian universities for persons granted asylum, holders of subsidiary protection and third-country nationals in a non-degree or degree programme. However, only a limited number of persons (about 30) per semester can benefit.

Several refugee respondents reported that when they approached the Employment Service Office (AMS) to inquire for funding for German language courses, they were told to rather seek a job than to learn German. An Iranian male refugee, who was granted a status one year prior to this research stated that after his first funded German course (level A1), he paid for a follow-up German course himself even though this was, difficult as he only receives needs-based Minimum Welfare Support. A female refugee, whilst acknowledging that experiences differ, described similar experiences when she approached her AMS counsellor about education in order to improve her chances to find better employment and was told to look for a job.

<sup>24</sup> Compulsory schooling in Austria is free-of-charge, costs mentioned here do not refer to school fees but rather to other costs such as school materials, necessary private lessons or school excursions.

## 📌 How does the validation (“*Nostrifizierung*“) procedure in Austria work?

*An administrative procedure with a university or university of applied sciences, respectively, which is a necessary prerequisite for the professional activity in the public sector or a legally regulated profession such as (medical) care.*

**Documents to be submitted:** amongst others

- Detailed documents on the foreign studies, such as curriculum, transcript, study guide, examination certificates, scientific research papers, leaving certificates...
- A document evidencing that the studies have been completed and the academic degree has been awarded;

Documents in languages other than German must be accompanied by certified German translations. Foreign documents must be usually legalized,

### **What does the validation procedure involve?**

The criteria of the validation procedure are the content, scope and requirements of comparable Austrian studies. If individual requirements are not met, validation can be made dependent upon certain conditions: applicants may be required to attend as auditing students certain classes and take certain examinations prescribed by the respective Austrian curriculum. There are courses providing preparation for exams in view of validation.

## Missing documents, recognition and validation of qualifications

Lack of documents or formal education which cannot be proven, difficulties in assessing and approving qualifications, that is recognition/validation, and the importance of traditional, gap-free CVs on the Austrian labour market were mentioned by stakeholders as major barriers for refugees, as formal qualifications and certificates are extremely important in the Austrian system. The classic system is not geared towards untypical paths and older age groups than usually encountered in training.

Missing documents present a major problem for many refugees, as numerous documents they would require from their home country cannot be claimed due to persecution, are destroyed or do not exist anymore.

As to adult refugees, many education-related challenges concern the recognition of qualifications. Several stakeholders stated that the legal framework and the recognition possibilities are limited, cost-intensive and entail long waiting periods in Austria, although recognitions should be facilitated and refugees encouraged working in their original field of occupation. A professor for education and migration pointed out that the difficulty of recognition of qualifications in Austria depended on the country of origin in question. An education stakeholder explained further that the concepts of education sometimes differ between countries and that therefore specific education-related difficulties arise, as education acknowledged in the country of origin is not recognized in Austria. This leads to demotivation and discouragement. The lack of possibilities for recognition, limitations and difficulties of validations such as exams taken long ago, which have to be repeated, cause a lack of interest of refugees to acquire education/qualifications, which they have already gained earlier or lead to exams which are not taken or passed, not succeeded or even passed. Paradoxically, as an education stakeholder pointed out, the recognition of academic titles was easier and faster in Austria than the recognition of academic qualifications. This means that one may use a foreign academic degree on letterheads, business cards etc. However, the right to use an academic degree is in no way connected to professional activities or rights. This was confirmed by several refugees and persons with subsidiary protection.

In particular predominantly refugees with higher education mentioned the difficulty of validation and recognition of qualifications in Austria:

“ An Iranian refugee, motorcar technician, with a status for 5 years, who recently achieved the recognition of his qualification after trying for 3 years, described the following difficulties: He could not provide evidence of this qualification as he could not travel to his country of origin to get the required certificates for recognition and did not have anybody there who could obtain the necessary proof for him. He was unable to provide all the evidence required for Austrian qualification by the Chamber of Labour and the Chamber of Commerce, such as grades, theory and practice hours, number of years of education etc. Thus, for many years, each time he was searching for a job, he had no chance to convince the employers of his qualification because of this lack of documentation. Eventually, however, he found a good post as a motorcar technician and departmental manager in a company, where he got the chance to prove himself, his knowledge/expertise and to climb up the career ladder. This company has recognized him as motorcar technician with a company certificate, which is, however, not an official certificate as it is only valid for this specific company. Other employers would, therefore, only hire him as a normal or temporary worker. Finally, after 3 years he had the chance to pass a re-examination at the Chamber of Commerce to get the equivalence of the Austrian qualification as a motorcar mechanic.”

### Practice examples

**ENIC-NARIC** (European Network of Information Centres – National Academic Recognition Information Centre) at the Federal Ministry of Science and Research: If a formal validation of qualification is not required ENIC-NARIC AUSTRIA can, on demand, provide in an unbureaucratic way (by email) a letter of assessment on foreign academic training or diploma equivalent to Austrian standards, within 2-3 weeks, free of charge. This can be used for a potential employer to hire the person in accordance with his/her qualifications.

**Pilot project “Du kannst was!” / “You can!”** by the Chamber of Commerce in cooperation with the Chamber of Labour and the Provinces of Upper Austria, Burgenland and Salzburg for migrants and locals: Purpose and innovative approach: Training offered for persons having no Austrian educational qualifications or completed apprenticeship, for example with qualifications from abroad which are not recognized in Austria, having already acquired vocational experiences and knowledge in this profession. For recognition/validation of qualifications, which are not verifiable, non-formal knowledge is also recognized. Competences gained through voluntary work also count, such as with the fire brigade, Red Cross or other associations. The project has a success rate of almost 84 per cent and 74 per cent of participants with migrant background.

For some respondents, not managing to receive the recognition of their qualifications to be able to work in their field was very difficult to handle and visibly caused extreme distress. Numerous examples were given through the refugee consultations, – like the case of women in the medical and care field from different countries of origin who had practised their profession for many years in their respective home countries, or an academic who can only use his title, not his qualification and ended up as warehouse worker.

“ For four years I am now trying to get my medical education recognized. They send you from office to office. I went even two times to the Ministry of Science, but even just as a caretaker, before being able to work I have to learn again and complete 6 months practical training. I could not find such training. Now I started an education as medical masseuse because it is easier. Imagine a person like me who is a medic and completed an education as a physical therapist, now has to go for so much under my education level, which is paid much less, and even for that I have to learn for 1,5 years and pass exams! I need to work as well. In addition, I had received an education loan, which I have to pay back now. There is a lot of pressure in Austria. Without an Austrian education I can only work in cleaning or as a kitchen help. They should give persons with qualification a chance and utilize them here.”

Afghan female refugee with medical education background

Another example is one graduate engineer, who explained his experience as having worked in his profession in his country of origin for 18 years in a high position supervising 25 employees but had struggled to get his qualifications recognized while his academic title was recognized. Receiving little help regarding the recognition of his academic qualifications, apart from seeing an NGO counsellor, this engineer claimed that the only work he could get was in the cleaning service sector. He claimed further that he was told that he could throw away the attestation from ENIC-NARIC and go for unskilled work. This respondent believes that with adequate support for one to two years he could work as an engineer in Austria. Having worked for two weeks for a subcontractor firm in the last year, he has since been unemployed after submitting 150 applications:

“ I have the best diploma in the world. I have worked and learned for many years: 20 years are long. I have earned money, went to University. I worked 20 years very hard. To say “you can throw away those 20 years” is extremely difficult to bear and my heart it is hurting. I would like to give back my (refugee) passport, delete my fingerprints and go to another country. I will go to another country. Any country.”

Iranian male refugee

He continued, claiming that if he had had the opportunity to do German courses and an apprenticeship for a technical occupation, he would be able to work by now:

“ But the AMS does not give me any courses and I have to sit at home and the state pays. This is wrong. This money gets lost, is being thrown away. I have lost this time. I am very sad because of this”.

The list of similar examples provided by respondents is considerable.

## Lack of social networks

An Austrian Integration Fund stakeholder pointed out as major difference between migrants and refugees that the former had the advantage of social networks while refugees were forced to start from scratch and faced various challenges at the same time concerning housing, family reunification etc. Another stakeholder added that the reason many refugees do not have sufficient German skills was their lack of social networks and access to the Austrian society which provide forums for practicing language.



## Housing

Stakeholders also emphasized the strong correlation between education and housing, which is stability. If a person does not live in stable conditions, it is difficult to develop plans and perspectives. Housing needs differ. As long as a person's housing situation is not secure and they move from one lodging to another, he or she cannot focus on anything else. Securing appropriate housing is also related to the feeling of "having finally arrived".

Several refugee families also mentioned overcrowded accommodation as detrimental for a favourable learning environment, for instance children and youth of different ages without adequate space to learn or do homework in peace and quiet, without a desk or having to learn where the family also eats and sleeps.

““ We are 9 persons, 2 adults and 7 children, of which 5 go to school, who have to live in 42 sqm.”

Somali couple, recognized refugees for 3 years, with 7 children in Vienna

““ We are 6 persons in 3 rooms with all together 61 sqm. We are 2 adults and a 20 year old and 16 year old and 2 smaller children. The apartment is a major problem. As said, I have 3 other siblings. How are you supposed to learn in such an environment? My sister is even doing an evening school.”

17-year-old son of an Afghan family, recognized refugees for 8 years in Linz

## Discrimination

According to education stakeholders refugees also have additional challenges of experiences of discrimination. Muslim women wearing a headscarf are visibly different and are according to stakeholders one of the most discriminated group experiencing open hostility and direct harassment through unpleasant experiences of everyday racism in public places. Several women respondents who wear the headscarf, also described having experiences of discrimination in all areas. Members of the receiving society are also confronted with experiences of discrimination, low educational opportunities and/or double burden of family and job. However, according to several stakeholders refugees are additionally confronted with racism, prejudice and resentments which are compounded by their traumatic experiences and the loss of access to their home country.

One stakeholder noted that problems do not necessarily occur because of factual cultural differences but are rather due to the feeling of foreignness conveyed by teachers or other interlocutors.

## Other factors

Time is also a challenge for older refugees according to a counselling stakeholder. Due to their age, some persons cannot or do not want to invest any more time in education.

How education is perceived by parents plays an important role according to education stakeholders who stated it was crucial to see if and how the family acknowledges education as an economic resource. However, there were also situations where adults, no matter what value they put on education, are not able to elaborate on knowledge taught in school which consequently limits the support the parent is able to provide to their child. According to counselling stakeholders, some refugee women feel helpless and lack orientation when being confronted with their children's school education and have to trust their children to manage their educational path fully on their own. Being able to help their children with their homework and future was generally the main motivation for adults to educate themselves. Several stakeholders pointed out that refugee parents often consider education important for their children, as they wish for their children to have a better life than they have, while adult education has a lower value.

An education stakeholder further reported in his experience, the failure of the Austrian educational system, sometimes not allowing persons granted subsidiary protection access to the first education system, due to the uncertainty whether they may be able to finish the degree in Austria. Several stakeholder in a Province mentioned that, due to funding, education and employments projects were predominantly offered in metropolitan areas, although there would be also need in other regions.

Stakeholders emphasized the impact of the general framework conditions in Austria, in particular when a change of status occurs, which comes with bureaucratic hurdles, financial issues, trying to secure one's livelihood, housing, family reunification etc., thus lowering the importance of adult education. Even counsellors faced difficulties addressing such interlinked issues and determining crucial legal bases for different target groups. A framework allowing refugees to lead self-determined lives and strengthening basic trust in shaping one's own life, which may also be accompanied by counselling, is an important precondition according to stakeholders and needs clear and transparent rules to give refugees the chance to get a realistic assessment of their options.

A phenomenon similar to long-time unemployed persons, which many refugees face when receiving their status after a lengthy asylum procedure, necessitates strengthening of trust and a search for existing resources. One stakeholder described that they often bring hardly any visions with them since they have to struggle for existence on a daily basis and in precarious situations. These are occasionally persons between 40 and 60 years, whose biography was interrupted for up to 10 years due to flight and who previously held at the most an intermediate education degree. One can offer these persons many German courses, however they would also need job training to integrate language into daily life, outside counselling situations. The group, where this education counselling and orientation works well, are young adults, who are not under pressure to finance families in their home country.

Speaking of refugee women in particular, a few stakeholders outlined that education processes which are experienced as meaningful and satisfying are very likely to have a stabilising effect on self-perceptions and their lives. Women who at the beginning of their courses felt very insecure and disoriented, experienced an enormous growth of self-confidence and self-organisation after a while. Education opens up previously inaccessible areas of social, cultural and political life and is a crucial condition for accessing the labour market. Insofar education processes which are personally experienced as meaningful support overall participation in society.

Education stakeholders suggested offering information on Austrian law, constitution and rights. Awareness and understanding of democracy and human rights and intercultural issues of the society as a whole could be increased by appropriate means early in educational paths. Several refugees also emphasized the lack of educational information for asylum-seekers about courses, life and rights in Austria at the beginning when they live in asylum-seeker reception facilities. They suggested the establishment of courses about laws and rights in Austria and on how to orientate oneself in Austria, as well as what one can do after status is granted, in view of better integration.. They hinted at the need to include information about job-search, housing, authorities and institutions in Austria, like employment and social welfare as well as registration offices. One refugee described that at the beginning he did not even know how and where to get tickets for public transport. With the time he found out and learned it all himself. He experienced it as difficult to get information even after status was granted.

“ I am still learning what one can do and what there is! When one finds out on his/her own, then one first makes mistakes and from the mistakes one learns.

Iranian male refugee who was granted a status 5 years ago after an almost 4-year long asylum procedure.

Several stakeholders noted that refugee women show great interest in health-related topics and inquire about access to the Austrian health system.

Generally, education stakeholders refer to available and affordable, and also timely adequate, childcare as essential for the education of refugee women. Another representative added that it was crucial to offer different measures for different groups of people.

## Examples of existing support and interesting practices

There are a number of existing education-related initiatives and support programmes with regard for refugees and other migrants. Their focus is on language learning, orienting information, recognition of skills and mentoring programmes. Offers which have a comprehensive approach, that is low-priced measures, cost-effective or free educational training, with the possibility of childcare during the courses and counselling structure have been assessed as effective. Mentoring programmes and “buddy” projects of various organisations have generally proved to be successful.

### Practice examples

**Diakonia** is offering German courses which have had positive feedback for persons with special needs, suffering from trauma and health problems as well as for those with learning deficiencies and mental issues. Nonetheless, the situation of an examination is often difficult to handle for participants, which is why many of them end up not taking the exam, as reported by language trainers.

“**Menschen.leben**” is offering German classes with (free of charge) childcare for women as some refugee women hardly leave their home and only want to participate in language training if they are able to join courses for women. Thus, **Menschen.leben**” aims to create a framework enabling them to “step outside”.

“**Integration House Vienna**” provides accommodation and supports the integration of asylum-seekers, recognized refugees and persons with subsidiary protection, specializing on those in need of a higher level of care: traumatised and mentally ill persons, single parents and families with social problems. Its instruments are integral intercultural work, multilingualism and a multicultural team (including refugees), active use of the migrants’ languages, intensive psychosocial care, empowerment, guidance to self-help and strengthening self-confidence. Throughout recent years it has offered support, counselling and education projects focusing on language acquisition and literacy, adapted to the specific needs of the refugees, orientation and vocational training, health and housing. “Integration House” offers various integration projects, led by volunteers: one of which is refugee “Buddies”, offered in collaboration with “Habibi” with the objective to help women gain language skills, especially those who are not able to attend usual German courses due to their children. Buddies voluntarily support individuals or families with homework, learning, leisure activities etc. Training for “Buddies” is provided in the form of lectures, seminars and discussion groups, primarily dealing with legal, psychological and cultural aspects and information about the different countries of origin, including by refugees.

**BFI** provides **Meso** in Linz, Upper Austria: an education and qualification offer, free of charge, for recognized refugees and holders of subsidiary protection, to prepare themselves specifically for their path into professional life. The project includes a language course, the advancement of social and intercultural competences, learning support and coaching, computer skills, First Aid course, career guidance and job training, labour and education in cultural comparison, competence-based counselling, excursions and payment of childcare.

The **MA 17** is offering a project “Start Wien/Start Vienna” for immigrants on eight different topics. Interested persons first receive an hour-long consultation after which they can participate in any of the modules. The information modules, visited by a total of 22,000 people, are basics in order to be low-threshold, “open to all” and are also free to be attended by recognized refugees and asylum-seekers. They focus on Austrian health care, the education system, and the labour market or residence rights. 90 per cent of the instructors of these programmes have a migration background themselves and are native speakers in 24 languages.

**LEFÖ** provides empowerment of refugee women as well as language and educational support, amongst others with integrated internet and communication technology based learning and optional childcare, accompanied by educational counselling which includes information about further education and the labour market. Importance is put on individual support in a secure and confidential environment, stable basis of trust, openness and respect.

## 📌 Practice examples

**Project “Ich will erzählen”/“I want to tell”** by Peregrina, 2007 - 2009 for female refugees and women granted subsidiary protection: a language course with psychological support and biographical work. Their educational counselling had a holistic, multilingual and low-threshold approach. Therapy was provided in several languages.

**“Mom learns German”/“Mama lernt Deutsch”** courses supported by the Municipal Department MA 17: Special low-threshold German courses about everyday issues such as schooling, education, training, work, health, authorities or housing and basic skills education courses for migrant mothers together with their children in school or kindergarten. Objectives include learning how to help one’s child how to learn, get to know the child’s institutional environment and to enhance contacts and communication between parents and schools/ kindergartens. The project also includes excursions to Viennese authorities and institutions and provides free childcare.

**Austrian initiative for adult education:** a cooperation of the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture, the nine Austrian Provinces and experts of adult education with the objective to enable adults, who lack basic skills or never graduated from a lower secondary school, to continue and finish their education. It also includes providing child-care services during course times as well as accessible literacy and basic education offers in rural areas. All courses are free of charge, however in order to reduce the drop-out rate the total costs are only refunded to the institutions if participants graduate successfully.

## 📌 Examples of suggestions from different stakeholders

Gaps in the area of education after the granting of a status primarily concern quality and accuracy of educational information and offers, awareness-raising of institutional discrimination and existing skills of refugees.

More subsidies, funding and scholarships for the target group were suggested. This includes subject-specific German language courses tailored for the entry into a profession, extra-occupational German courses and information on Austrian law and rights, with respect to labour etc. Stakeholders suggested that contents on rights should be specific like consumer law or women’s rights and illustrated with case studies to facilitate participation.

In addition the potential of refugees should be made visible and supported and existing formal and, especially informal, skills and qualifications, as well as multilingualism, i.e. refugees’ first language, appreciated and validated.

Furthermore, with support through interpreters parents should be included into schools and the employment of teachers with migration background enhanced.

During the asylum procedure stakeholders noted gaps in language acquisition and access to information. This includes the possibility of literacy and learning the language of the receiving society via free of charge courses, adapted to the needs of the newly arrived, right from the start in asylum-seeker reception facilities. This would also facilitate gaining a daily structure during this time. In general, access to information about the receiving society and in particular about education and training opportunities were emphasized.

With regard to therapeutic and medical aid, intensive language courses with a holistic approach and specific psychosocial offers as well as therapy possibilities were noted as important. Furthermore, physical and mental conditions should be considered in terms of learning processes. Finally, stakeholders recommended avoiding inappropriate measures and initiatives, such as German courses that do not consider individual learning requirements, traumatic biographical experiences or the current life situation and are therefore not beneficial for refugees.

# Employment

The importance of employment for integration as reflected in integration literature and the Expert Council's proposals followed in the State Secretariat for Integration's policy, was echoed by the stakeholders and refugees consulted in this study.

As mentioned, there is little data available when it comes to assessing levels of labour market integration for refugees and those with subsidiary protection. The data available suggests that of the estimated almost 52,000 beneficiaries of international protection in Austria at the end of 2012 (47,000 at the end of 2011), some 4,100 were registered as unemployed at the end of November 2012. In addition to measuring employment and unemployment rates, the NAP indicators also focus on net annual income and risk of poverty and manifest poverty. There is no data however available for refugees in these areas. In the view of stakeholders, refugees are particularly at risk and generally have low income. Of those interviewed in the project, most expressed concern. Labour market integration and employment was, alongside housing, a central concern expressed by refugees and stakeholders.

Many refugees and persons with subsidiary protection felt the unease of having to rely on social welfare. A few stated that they would really like to give back all the money they had ever received from friends or NGOs. Others again complained about the treatment at social welfare offices, conveying the feeling of degradation: *"I am not a beggar! I am a human being! I am not a second class human being!"* They also do not understand why they are compared with others who have already been in Austria for a longer period of time.

Through the consultations seven factors influencing refugees' labour market integration were highlighted: the impact of time spent in the asylum procedure; the support provided upon recognition as well as lack of information for refugees and employers; German language skills; living conditions and housing situation; discrimination and reluctance to hire certain profiles; social and professional networks; and the ability of refugees to provide documentation of skills as well as recognition of their qualifications.

In addition, individual stakeholders also pointed to the refugee-specific challenge of incapacity for work due to trauma or health limitations.

While finding work was raised by most refugees as a challenge, additional obstacles were found by stakeholders for women, in particular women wearing headscarf, and elderly refugees. This is evident for instance from the demographic seeking council at Interface. 40 per cent of refugees availing of their services are over 45 years old. However, as noted by a stakeholder counselling refugees, at that age it is also considered difficult for Austrians to enter the labour market. For refugees, the loss of hope is very high for this age group.

The influencing factors raised by stakeholders and refugees are discussed below. For each of these factors the challenges experienced by refugees are set out and practices raised in consultations, which have been deployed to overcome them, are described.

## The impact of the time spent in the asylum procedure

During the stakeholder consultations on employment, which took place on 8 January 2013, many stakeholders stated that one of the main challenges for employment is overcoming the experiences of the asylum procedure. The difficulties are linked, according to many stakeholders, to the limited access to the labour market during the asylum procedure, which, in addition, often takes a long time.

Stakeholders who give advice and support to refugees stated that many refugees lose confidence and knowledge in their original field of work if they are unable to work for years. Upon recognition, when the other challenges of settling in society begin, the fear of failure and of the unknown can become overwhelming. This was echoed by a job coach, who experienced that persons with (lengthy) asylum procedures and persons whose qualifications were not recognized, often have difficulties in appearing confident at a job interview. Refugees interviewed also emphasized years of inactivity due to the asylum procedure.

While early effective access to the labour market during the asylum process was stressed as one solution, it was remarked by an employment stakeholder, that this approach would hold other challenges. One is related to the absence of long-term solution in Austria for many asylum-seekers. While some will be allowed to stay others would not. He also noted that asylum-seekers have the possibility to work as seasonal workers and that many may not want full time work as the earnings would not be significantly higher than under the Basic Welfare Scheme. The stakeholder suggested that this could be made more attractive. One challenge seen with this option is that it would require AMS to register them as jobseekers, as pointed out by another stakeholder, and this would give access to the full range of unemployment measures, which are not currently available for asylum-seekers. However, if not registered, the AMS cannot contact them when it gets a job offer by employers for seasonal work; therefore these seasonal jobs are in fact hardly “accessible” for asylum-seekers, stated this stakeholder. This is compounded by seasonal work often being offered in Provinces other than where the asylum-seeker resides and where they receive Basic Welfare Support. When they take up work for the season they fall out of the welfare system as well as the system for accommodation support. Once the job ends, they have to re-apply to receive assistance.

In reality therefore, many asylum-seekers work irregularly and continue irregular employment after their recognition. The transition from irregular to regular employment was mentioned by an employment stakeholder as difficult to handle and requires structural and individual refugee support according to a NGO stakeholder. A few refugees reported about having to resort to irregular employment for some time such as low paid cleaning jobs.

## Access to information and support upon recognition

Refugee respondents stated the lack of information about society, rights and how to approach the labour market as a hurdle to finding work. The need for information was also raised by several stakeholders, who added that the information need is not only for refugees, on the labour market, but also for potential employers and society at large.

In the experience of a stakeholder, providing counselling to refugees, asylum-seekers were often demotivated and weary, but once recognized they were getting highly motivated again. They noted that many had renewed energy and want to work in Austria, but they lacked information about how to access the labour market and when unsuccessful in finding work, depression sometimes followed. Most refugee respondents reported of strong motivation to work as soon as status was granted and they finally had the full right to work. Some described that they did not know at first how to access employment, in particular if they moved to a bigger city, mostly Vienna, after being granted status and therefore did not know anybody or the city well. Others experienced unsuccessful job searches after numerous applications, even with recognition and other education courses, and expressed frustration and depressiveness:

“ After the recognition, I sent over 150 applications and received only negative answers. Then I made a computer course and an accounting education and still did not find any job. I also applied as unskilled worker without a positive answer. I really tried but it did not work out.”

Afghan male refugee in Linz, over 10 years in Austria and already naturalized

“ I am allowed to work but I cannot find any job although I tried everything. I am sending an application every day without success. Although I have back problems I even applied for supermarkets and in restaurants. I want to get out of my problems, out of assistance and constant police controls and get better housing.

Woman with subsidiary protection granted since 2010 after 7 years in Austria

“ I am strong enough and healthy but have no work. That hurts me really a lot.

Somali man with subsidiary protection since 2006

Women, in particular with children, who did not succeed in finding stable employment, also described how this resulted in depression:

“ Once in a while the Public Employment Office sends me to do 2-3 months jobs. I had to stop a German course to take this job. Always this 2-3 months jobs with periods of doing nothing in between, it is depressing. They destroy you like this and we are in fact just at the beginning of our lives. We do not have much hope left.

Afghan female refugee in Linz, recognized since 2005

“ When you have children, they do not take you for employment. They ask you would take care in case of illness. I am a doctor and I worked short-term in a few places, including McDonalds, but it is difficult to find long-term employment. I have depressions because of all the difficulties.

Afghan female refugee with medical education

For those who had spent relatively short time in the asylum procedure the issue of demotivation was less pronounced according to a stakeholder providing support and specific integration counselling for refugees in their first language. They would often have very high hopes and aspirations for accessing the labour market. Having spent little time in Austria however, they had an even greater need for information. This stakeholder also pointed to Syrian refugees, as an example where there was a relatively high recognition rate after only short procedures. Further analysis of this caseload would be important, as they also generally have high level of qualification.

Several stakeholders mentioned a need for more information for employers. In particular the legal aspects and rights of different holders of residence permit linked to international protection were identified as problematic. Lack of knowledge of employers about the free access to the labour market of refugees and holders of subsidiary protection was named as a challenge by a Public Employment Office stakeholder. Furthermore, as mentioned by a job coach, the expiry date on the residence card of persons granted subsidiary protection<sup>25</sup> leads to frequent rejections of job applications. There is also confusion about the difference between the residence entitlement card for subsidiary protected persons and the asylum-seekers' procedural card and the rights attached. The Austrian Chamber of Commerce provides information about the Austrian Aliens and Asylum Law to small companies. However, during the consultations they noted that the law is nevertheless very complicated and difficult to understand for the companies. Those giving advice and counselling also need continual updating about among others, changes concerning funding opportunities and legal aspects, which is a complex task. Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection also confirmed that during their job search they were confronted with employers often not knowing about the rights attached to their status or did not consider them or at least hesitated to consider them for the vacant post, due to the time limitation on their residence card.

Lack of information of the receiving society broadly was mentioned by stakeholders. Generally, receiving society members are not well informed about the rights of asylum-seekers and refugees. More information about their rights and situation could reduce prejudice and create a more open labour market with more receptive employers.

The fact that the group of recognized refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection is comparatively small may explain why the rights and special needs of this group are not well-known, was suggested by one counselling stakeholder.

Finally, a Public Employment Office stakeholder also included as a challenge in her experience regarding refugees in the area of employment too high expectations and misconceptions of ranges of services.

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<sup>25</sup> Currently issued for one year, after an amendment entering into force on 1 January 2014 it will be valid for two years.

## Practice example

**The Interface Vienna** „Starting Aid for persons entitled to asylum or holding a subsidiary protection status in Vienna“ was mentioned as a successful way of providing information and support including by refugees counselled by them. Interface offers individual specific integration counselling with a focus is on initial stabilization and subsistence support, as well as on issues such as employment, health and obtaining housing, access to childcare and (further) education. In addition to information, Interface offers German language courses. So far more than 6000 refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have received support and the two largest groups origin from Afghanistan and the Russian Federation (Interface 2012). Refugees can benefit from this support up to 2 years.

In 2009 one year after its start, an evaluation report found a very good target group outreach and that for about 30% of its clients, the project contributed to the increase of employment compared to the year before counselling. Men had better results (19% with a strong increase) as women (7%). The best developments were achieved for persons between 30 and 39 years, while in the small group of above 50 years old in no case an improvement was achieved. The generally positive development in employment is partly thwarted by the high degree of de-qualified employment, leading also to financial difficulties covering living costs, in particular for families with children. The evaluation further showed significant results regarding the level of information of clients, childcare and social contacts/networks. Counselling by the project established fundamentals for labour market integration, such as debt settlement, but in particular the procurement of German courses and childcare. The evaluation showed the added value, in particular of a the combination of comprehensive counselling and low-threshold access through counselling in first languages. In addition a 2011 thesis (Hoyer 2011) on the work of the starting aid of Interface outlined that due to the fact that most employees have a migration background themselves they can function as “role models”.

A number of organisations such as Caritas, Diakonia and the Red Cross offer similar programmes. They give oral information and counselling, in first languages, but also help with basic steps such as calling authorities and filling forms.

## Language

A clear link between employment and language skills became apparent throughout consultations. On the one hand good language skills facilitate likelihood of finding employment; on the other hand many refugees identified work as the place for improving language skills.

All stakeholders agree that good knowledge of the German language is important for finding employment. This was also particularly emphasized by refugees and persons with subsidiary protection consulted.

The issue of which level of language knowledge is required to influence job opportunities was discussed. A stakeholder advising refugees outlined that language level B1 was not enough to gain a good foothold in the Austrian labour market.

Language challenges were highlighted as a particular problem for women, by a migrant women organisation, which supports refugees. They noted that due to a low level of language acquisition many women could often only work in un- and low-skilled areas such as gastronomy and cleaning service, and even these jobs frequently require a significant language level. Having often bad conditions and low-paid terms, the organisation suggested that it is not surprising that women are not motivated to work. This is particularly as many of them also have young children. Another aspect hampering women’s language learning is their traditional role of taking care of the household and the children. It was explained that women often feel mainly responsible for their children and therefore their language acquisition is focussed narrowly to be able to cope with everyday life and child support.



Apart from the level of courses funded, evaluation done by AMS in 2002 had pointed to other challenges with achieving good results from the language courses. Correct placement at the outset is a challenge due to the lack of time AMS counsellors have to assess the needs and most suitable courses. Another challenge stated is the lack of possibilities for participants to practise their German skills and the evaluation found that drop-out rates are high with one third of participants not completing. Among the reasons were issues of illness and debts (AMS).

The lack of possibilities to practice and thus improve or maintain the German language was also raised by other stakeholders and confirmed by refugees consulted. Experiences of refugees' contacts with the receiving population are limited and many are isolated. Traineeships and projects focusing on offering internships were therefore mentioned by stakeholders as specifically efficient for persons who have problems with the acquisition of the German language, in order to create self-confidence and practice more.

Language acquisition and its importance on the job market was raised as an issue in the interviews for this study.

“ German is important for work. Everybody says your German must be perfect. Otherwise you only find jobs in cleaning or as unskilled worker.

Afghan male refugees in Linz

“ I really searched a long time for a job, but never found anything. Only once for snow removal for the city and once part-time as night clerk for Caritas. The problem was my bad German knowledge.

Somali man with subsidiary protection since 2006

Some respondents also complained about the lack of support provided to attain the language level required on the job market. They reported that they found themselves higher level language courses.

“ I had a 6 months German course first, but it was not enough. I paid for the following myself.

Afghan male refugee in Linz, over 10 years in Austria and already naturalized

Several respondents reported being faced with the situation that when enquiring about language training at the Public Employment Office, they were rather told to look for low-skilled employment. A few had not attended any courses or had dropped out to take up employment. However, to apply for better posts or even stable employment, they would require to improve their German by attending courses. The language barrier has a very strong impact on qualified refugees. Difficulties in mastering the language delay or even prevent some refugees from pursuing the career they had in their own country of origin. Medical staff, journalists, economists or university professors are for instance positions requiring high level of German. Such highly qualified refugees become rather quickly aware that their hopes of working in their former professions are very difficult to achieve, take a very long time or are even unrealistic.

“ It took me 3 years in Austria before I managed to start a German course. German is very difficult. I am an academic, I know how important courses are. I learned until A1, had to take a break, and now finally reached B2 language level.

Afghan female refugee with medical education

“ I already gave up the expectation to continue working in my profession. That is a fairy tale, I have no chance to work in my qualification. That is why I took the chance to work for a temporary employment agency. I already learned a bit of German in school and at university. When I complained about the level of my first German course, which was together with total beginners, and I wanted to change course and pointing out what kind of employment I would find with this language level, the head of the institute told me: “We have enough Austrians with high qualifications without jobs, we do not need your high education.” On that day I understood that nobody here needs my qualifications.

Female single mother from Chechnya with subsidiary protection since 2009, who studied economics and worked 15 years in trade

Refugees pointed out that employment had helped their language acquisition, improved their German skills and widened their vocabulary, in particular through the interaction with colleagues and having to understand and follow instructions. However, they added that issues of dialect and difference from class room learning to everyday use can be problematic. A Chechen academic with subsidiary protection, who works in a warehouse felt under pressure as he has difficulties in understanding certain instructions because of the dialect spoken and does not dare to mention any of his recurring back problems for fear of losing the job.

While work can be a vehicle for learning, refugees mentioned that working in some low-skilled jobs can be a disadvantage and even lead to a deterioration of the language level if exchanges are mainly with other foreigners with poor language skills.

“ I worked one year at McDonalds, many foreigners work and their grammar is not very good. My German, which I had learned before, deteriorated there. I have not much contact with Austrians although I would like to, also to improve my German.

31-year-old Syrian computer scientist, with subsidiary protection since 2006

## Housing

Stakeholders consulted agreed that housing and employment are linked in different ways and one stakeholder mentioned that before integration, basic needs like housing must be met.

One challenge mentioned was that lack of, or poor, housing influences the ability to learn language and find employment. As one stakeholder put it “As long as refugees do not have adequate housing, it is difficult to focus on employment”. A counselling stakeholder in Upper Austria pointed out that it is difficult to find a secure job without a secured housing situation. Refugee respondents also emphasized the preoccupation which finding housing represents. Many respondents pointed to overcrowded accommodations being obstacles for a good learning environment, in particular for their children. Finally, the short time upon recognition to find housing and employment was pointed out by several stakeholders.

The prospect of better being able to find employment in urban centres attracts refugees and those with subsidiary protection to larger cities where adequate housing may be hard to acquire. This can lead to a spiral of struggle for existence and risk of homelessness, which makes it impossible to focus on language courses. Together with long-term unemployment and the asylum procedure, one stakeholder mentioned that this can cause an increase of trauma. The struggle for existence after moving can be compounded by processing times regarding social welfare services. Indeed, another stakeholder providing counselling noted that refugees who move from a Province to the city of Vienna and apply for means-tested Minimum Welfare Support, have to face in their experience usually about two months for their claim to be examined.

Refugee experienced that employment is often required to find a landlord who will rent. In order to fulfil this requirement, refugees may have to work well below their skills to get into the housing market as a stakeholder pointed out. This was also confirmed by refugees and persons with subsidiary protection who articulated the need to find any job, because without work one cannot rent an apartment.

“ Once I received the status, I immediately started to work, in a company for tyre assembly. I did not wait one day although it was not my “favourite job”. It was a temporary job through a temporary employment agency. I needed to find this job, because without work I could not rent an apartment. No landlord would like to make a lease contract with someone receiving only social welfare.

Iranian refugee in Salzburg, with status granted 5 years ago, after 4-year asylum procedure

## Discrimination or prejudice in the labour market

Stakeholder agreed that discrimination and prejudice both from Austrian society and among different migrant groups are prevalent on the job market. While impossible to measure the exact impact of discrimination on labour market performance, there are indications that it is an important barrier for refugees to find work. While this may be true for many refugees and migrants, both a job coach as well as an academic researcher stated that discrimination mainly affects refugees from Africa (especially from Somalia) and that this is mainly due to the colour of their skin. A few respondents from this region also reported that they felt discriminated. They pointed for instance to experiences where the vacant positions were still available when inquiring by phone while they were told the job was not available when they showed up shortly after for the application. The respondents attributed these rejections to racism.

“ You call for a job and they say yes on the phone. When you come there and they see that you are black, they suddenly tell another story like for instance, we need a man for this position. This happened many times and because of it I was really discouraged, but I had to go out and try again. At the end I found a job to clean in a fitness centre. Now it is not like before, it is getting better and Austrians are slowly getting used to blacks.

Female refugee in Vienna since 2003 after 5 years of asylum procedure

“ I have an education as a medical technical assistant for x-ray labs but I received many rejections on application, due to my skin colour I believe. That is how I experience it. This is why I work now as a masseuse. I have been unemployed for quite a while. My previous job I also lost because of my skin colour. Patient often think because of my skin colour that I do not know what I am doing and allow themselves a behaviour they would not have with other therapists.

Female beneficiary of subsidiary protection in Vienna

Others, however, stated that although they faced considerable racism on the street, they had no such experience at work where they would be assessed by their performance. This was echoed by a counselling stakeholder who observed that for certain ethnicities the situation in Austria was particularly challenging, as they looked foreign to the Austrian society and are isolated.

Another group highlighted by stakeholders as more affected are Muslim women wearing a headscarf. According to a stakeholder focusing on women Muslim women who wear a headscarf experience far more discrimination and open hostility than those who do not, because of their visible difference. In addition, direct harassment against visibly Muslim women was mentioned as occurring on the labour market and many Muslim women make the experience that job applications with a headscarf are often futile even in the sector of cleaning services, as outlined by stakeholders and partly refugees.

The experience of discrimination was also mentioned by several refugee women who wear the headscarf. They described this as a major difficulty when trying to find a job:

“ Women wearing a headscarf have difficulties in all areas, as they are often being discriminated against. This is particularly a major difficulty with regards to the search for employment.

Female participants of a refugee group meeting in Linz

“ One hotel I applied to for cleaning, wanted to me to take off the headscarf. I said I will wear just a small headscarf, they said no small or big headscarf. Without you can work, with headscarf not.

Somali female refugee, recognized since 2011, previously with subsidiary protection

Another stakeholder also confirmed that discrimination on the labour market occurs because of names that sound foreign or the headscarf of Muslim women.

Links between knowledge of a country and prejudice against individual refugees were mentioned by stakeholders. The job-coach pointed out the practice that the first question in job interviews usually concerns the origin of refugee applicants. This indicates that country of origin is seen as particularly important aspect for assessing suitability for a job. Considering that, the way in which the political scene in refugees' countries of origin was represented in Austrian media impacts impression about a person. One stakeholder made the clear link and stated: "The less countries of origin of refugees are known to Austrian employers, the more there is a hesitation barrier".

Discrimination against visible ethnic minorities was also mentioned in relation to the type of job offered. Academic researchers confirmed that refugees with headscarves for instance can mostly be found in back-office functions and in the cleaning sector and emphasized that women wearing the headscarf rather work in the kitchen or storage. The job coach also stated that in gastronomy one could hardly find them working in the service sector while a large number was employed in the food sector, that is in the kitchen. In the experience of the coach, discrimination regarding women, for instance during job interviews, depends on the occupational area.

Another type of discrimination is that among different migrant groups. The job coach observed that asylum-seekers had frequently been discriminated by more well-established migrants. This mainly happens in construction industry. However, the prejudice exists on both sides and some of the persons coached stated that they do not want to work for companies owned by other foreigners of certain nationalities or ethnicities but rather for Austrian companies. A researcher added that according to interviews undertaken in the course of a project on discrimination he had carried out, refugees rather apply for jobs in Austrian than in foreign companies.

Perceptions of discrimination can play a role. While individual refugees may have felt discriminated against, difficult experiences may not in fact be discrimination. Feedback from mentors in the Chamber of Commerce's mentoring programme confirms many of the difficulty raised for the mentees, but attribute some of them to other issues as well such as language. Lack of information about the labour market and rights can play a role. An academic researcher suggested that persons with subsidiary protection are often taken advantage of because of their situation of dependency and lack of knowledge about labour rights.

## Lack of networks and support

According to the Public Employment Office (AMS) the majority of job-seekers use their own network for job search. This was confirmed by a researcher who indicated that recruitment mainly happens through networks and therefore suggested to reinforce social networks. Also some refugee respondents mentioned lack of contacts, in particular to receive advice or to be introduced to a potential employer, as barrier to access the labour market. They all sooner or later were in contact with the Public Employment Office and respondents' opinion of its possibility to help them find a job were mixed with some rather negative.

The lack of social networks and support may affect men and women differently. A researcher mentioned that in the course of a labour market policy project he could observe that women who live in rural areas often do not have access to networks making it more difficult to find work. The lack of networks and support also affects women's ability to succeed in the labour market in urban areas and may be compounded by traditional gender roles.

Lack of childcare support makes it particularly difficult for women to find employment, as was highlighted by stakeholders in different regions of Austria. In Vienna, for instance, it was also described, by refugee women consulted, that city-owned free of charge childcare places are almost impossible to get for unemployed women, while on the other hand potential employers regularly inquire about childcare. Stakeholders noted that the situation is especially difficult for single mothers. Similarly, women cannot get a place for childcare without attending a German course. However, without having a place in childcare they are not able to take German classes. Refugee women interviewed confirmed these difficulties. They said that they had difficulties to work or find work when they have children and cannot find childcare.

“ It is very difficult to find employment when one has a child. The first question of employers is always: “Do you have a child?” If you have, they say sorry... They always inquire about childcare. And for the potential case that my child gets ill, who would bring her to the doctor? If I would answer, that I would be the one, I would subsequently receive rejections. Of course if you have children, they will at one point get ill.”

Female divorced refugee from Afghanistan with 7-year-old child

A women organisation supporting refugees stated that the main reason for gender-related differences in the labour market is the traditional expectation of the women's role as the one taking care of the household and children. This is compounded by recognized female refugees having to deal with uprooting, existential insecurity, stress and lack of perspectives, they explain. Husbands do not always handle their asylum situation easily which can lead among other to depression, alcoholism, violence and disability. The experience is that there is a tendency in these situations to transfer all family responsibilities to their wives. Another stakeholder also claimed that there is some research showing that migrant girls rather drop out of school early amongst others in order to take care of household and children.

Another aspect influencing labour market integration, as pointed out by a stakeholder, is cultural differences. Different cultural background can considerably influence job interviews. As example the stakeholder gave that of a female mentee from the Arabic region who was asked during a mock job interview to tell about her hobbies. She responded that she did not want to talk about this. Such a reaction was generally not well received in an Austrian context giving the impression of being reserved or not forthcoming. Stakeholders agreed that small issues like this can be an important barrier for finding a job.

## Lack of documents, recognition/validation of qualifications and deskilling/under-employment

Besides the lack of education, perhaps the most important obstacle identified by stakeholders to finding work for refugees is the inability to build on previous work experiences and qualifications obtained. There are several important reasons for this, including the lack of documentation; a difficult procedure for validation of qualifications; and differences in value placed on experiences and qualifications between the receiving country and the countries where these were obtained. These difficulties are often made worse by a job market in Austria which is highly focused on academic qualifications and proof of previous experience. Another factor influencing the qualification of refugees is deskilling due to refugees' history of uprooting, flight experience and time spend in the asylum procedure. The consequences include a high likelihood of refugees working below their qualifications.

As a refugee woman in Upper Austria stated: *“even when applying for cleaning jobs, they ask for experience!”*

Stakeholders, refugees and persons with subsidiary protection agreed that missing documents frequently pose a major challenge to find employment. Refugees for instance do not have documents because when they had to flee quickly, could not take documents along or they were lost or destroyed in the country of origin or during the flight. In some countries of origin where formal systems collapsed due to years of conflict, documents are not being issued. The lack of documentation from previous work or education makes recognition of qualification particularly difficult for this group.

Even with documentation, a stakeholder counselling refugees noted difficulties with recognition of qualifications. The processes connected to the recognition of refugees' qualifications take very long and the Austrian recognitions system is very difficult.<sup>26</sup> Respondents voiced frustration about long and also failed attempts to get their qualification recognized and subsequent possibilities to work in the field of experience.

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<sup>26</sup> See validation system in Austria outlined in the education section above.

“ Austria has lost a good nurse!

Female unemployed beneficiary of subsidiary protection since 2007 from Georgia

Furthermore there is reluctance by the Austrian labour market to acceptant foreign qualifications.

The Chamber of Commerce’s experience from their mentor programme is that qualifications from foreign countries are often undervalued in Austria. For instance a university degree is often put on one level with a degree from a technical high school (HTL) in Austria. This tally with the concerns raised at the stakeholder meeting on education where it was mentioned that even once recognition is achieved, refugees are still not able to work in their initial occupation or a higher qualified occupation are not fulfilled. Therefore there is no real improvement of chances on the job market through the recognition, which leads to disappointment.

The loss of “standing in society” linked to this also came up in refugee meetings and most of the refugees and persons with subsidiary protection interviewed for this research worked below their qualification. One computer scientist from Iraq with subsidiary protection for 6 years already, for instance, explained that despite numerous applications, he worked finally one year at McDonald’s and later at a warehouse. This was the experience of other refugees and persons with subsidiary protection, who seem mainly to go through temporary employment agencies and subcontractors to find work. As such, the majority of those interviewed have a job below their qualification and criticize the work conditions. One refugee, who had received his status one year ago and who is an experienced engineer, described his two-weeks of work for such a subcontractor firm in very negative terms and added that until now he had not yet been paid.

“ There (in the country of origin) I am somebody, here I am nobody!

Chechen participant of a refugee group meeting in Linz

A counselling stakeholder in Upper Austria outlined that employment requirements are increasing even for low-skilled jobs, such as for instance computer skills. Therefore next to the aforementioned hampering lack of German skills, illiteracy or missing knowledge of the Latin alphabet, often driving licences and fork-lift truck licences are lacking in this field.

Several refugees mentioned that formal education was an important factor required for finding employment and many refugees interviewed for this research said it was difficult to find employment due to the requirement of education in Austria or relevant work experience, preferably also from Austria.<sup>27</sup> This was also confirmed by a Public Employment Office stakeholder, who named lack of work experience in Austria as one of the challenges refugees have to face in the area of employment.

While refugees clearly bring different experiences and a will to work, many find the hurdles too large to overcome. This was the view of some of the elderly women interviewed. Although they had worked for many years they had to accept that they presumably can never go back to their learned and practised profession. The hurdles of learning German and to integrate in the labour market just seem insurmountable as expressed by one woman:

“ It is hard to think about a future when you are 52 and working as a as a cleaning lady”.

Chechen widow granted subsidiary protection for almost 5 years

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, Chechen woman and mother of two, in her early 30s, recognized refugee for 3 years (previously 4 years with subsidiary protection), with university background in home country, who had tried to find an employment in various fields such as sales or office administration without avail because of lack of experience, interviewed on 9 November 2012, in Vienna. Interview in Vienna on 11 January 2013 with Iraqi computer scientist with subsidiary protection; or several participants of refugee group meeting in Linz on 21 February 2013.

## Examples of existing support and interesting practices

There are a number of existing services and support programmes aimed at ensure better labour market integration for refugees and other migrants. Their focus is on language learning, information about AMS, outreach to inform about recognition of qualifications and mentoring programmes.

### Practice examples

The “**Integration House**” offers training for asylum-seekers where they learn about functions and features of processes at AMS.

In addition, since January 2013 with “**BBE German**”, “**Integration House**”, in cooperation with FAB, has offered counselling for participants of AMS-German courses, taking place directly at the course institutes’ venues. The main tasks of the counsellors include to decrease and overcome learning and job placement barriers of course participants through qualified counselling services or referrals to counselling centres. Participants are provided assistance in regard to family related, social, legal and other questions or qualification and further education. The offer further includes special learning and motivational support, the elaboration of a placement and qualification plan and also constitutes a platform for counselling and support offers. <http://www.integrationshaus.at/cgi-bin/page.pl?id=714;lang=de>

The **Counselling Centre for Migrants** works closely with **Caritas** and **People’s Aid Austria** which have developed a strategic programme assisting participants to access the labour market at a higher qualified point by supporting acquisition of higher level language skills, an Austrian certificate preferably related to previous skills, leading to participation in internships.

Since January 2013, **AST contact points**, with outreach to all Provinces, for counselling in first languages on information about recognition and assessment of qualifications acquired abroad, also assist refugees (and migrants) to facilitate a qualification-adequate integration into the labour market by offering counselling through the entire procedure, information about available and suitable courses related to previous qualifications and liaising with other offices, providing required documents and covering costs for translations and notarizations.

Interface in collaboration with the association “Grenzenlos” (“boundary-less”) provides a mentoring project “**Zusammen Leben**” (living together mentoring for migrants and refugees) which facilitates integration of third country nationals also into the Austrian labour market as well as social integration more broadly. Focus includes building networks, language learning and creating motivation.

Online platform [www.berufsanerkennung.at](http://www.berufsanerkennung.at) provides a comprehensive range of services and information about recognition/validation procedures of qualifications on school, vocational and higher education level; language courses; and how to enter the labour market is provided.

**Caritas project “Armin plus”** assists recognized refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection in Vienna with integration into the labour market. Offers a package of support through modules covering application training, internship, acquisition of profession-specific language skills and active job searches. Focus on those who fled without formal qualifications and on skilled manual and social work. Its factors of success are based on the employer’s knowledge that an organization like Caritas stands behind and that there is a contact person to liaise with.

**People’s Aid** in Upper Austria offers a project on labour market integration for refugees (AMI), which supports and provides counselling regarding measures in the area of education and qualification as well as employment. The latter also consists of support with applications and job interviews as well as help regarding issues at the workplace and labour law.

## ➤ Chamber of Commerce, AMS, AIF Mentoring for Migrants

Project, which matches mentors, who are experienced managers and well-connected members of the business community, for six months with qualified migrants including recognized refugees and persons with subsidiary protection, to support in their efforts to participate in the Austrian labour market by identifying talents and skills, providing realistic insight into the Austrian business world opening new opportunities on the job market, supporting job applications and to establish networks. While considered an effective practice, it only reaches a small number of migrants due to lack of resources.

Eligible migrants must have completed an apprenticeship or have undergone higher-level training and have a sufficient command of German. They are selected based on an application procedure. Over 900 mentoring pairs have been formed since the start of the project and both sides report benefitting from the partnerships.

## ➤ Examples of suggestions from different stakeholders and refugees

Anti-discrimination efforts aimed at providing better information to society and employers should be undertaken.

Empowering refugees as early as possible after arrival in Austria was highlighted by some stakeholders. This may include more effective access to the labour market and financial support for German language courses for asylum-seekers. This was also a primary suggestions by refugee respondents.

Furthermore, offering individual initial support after recognition as refugee or beneficiary of subsidiary protection was a further emphasized suggestion. This should focus on housing, language and labour market integration, and be tailored to the individual needs.

Increased psychological support for refugees in order to assist them overcome trauma and facilitate their integration in the labour market should be provided.

Better targeted and adapted German language courses also for those who have suffered trauma and are unable to work. This should include funding of language learning at advanced level.

Moreover, simplification of recognitions of refugees' qualifications and capabilities and innovation in assessing and validating refugee know-how and experience should be adopted and promoted. Increased focus on building social and professional networks and other social bridges into the receiving society should be supported. Additionally, improved information about the situation of refugees for receiving society and particular employers has to be provided. This could include explanation of gaps in CVs, legal rights and status, as well as validation of qualifications and skills. It was further suggested to establish a stronger focus on providing practical experience in the labour market, for instance by projects offering internships for refugees, which could be done in collaboration with companies. Finally, some stakeholders recommended to improve support for women's access to the labour market, including through networks, targeted language courses and provision of childcare.

Refugees suggested to offer more centralised clustered information, in mother tongues, to orientate oneself in Austria already to asylum-seekers at the beginning when they are in asylum-seekers accommodations, about rights and about what they can do upon receiving a positive decision on recognition of refugee status. This should include information about job-seeking, about authorities and institutions in Austria such as employment and social welfare offices. Such an office could also inquire about qualifications and talents, and refer to competent authorities for further support. Austria should make full use of qualifications refugees bring with them.

*“ If the State gives us the right, sufficient and adequate support such as correct information, to acquire the language and to help finding a job at the beginning, for a couple of years, we will work for 30 years.*

Afghan female refugee, who is a student



# Housing

Experts and stakeholders identified housing as an important area for refugee integration, influencing other areas of integration. They describe secure housing as the basic condition to enable integration in Austria: „Safe, affordable, human and decent housing is an essential condition for education, employment and participation in society in general.“ Location or quality of housing has an impact on integration more broadly.

The indicators developed action field “housing and the regional dimension of integration” for the NAP cover in addition to per capita living space and the housing cost quotient, i.e. the percentage of household income that is spent on accommodation, also the rate of home ownership, type of housing and population in districts with an immigrant proportion of more than 25 per cent. However, there is no available significant data assessing refugees in regard to these indicators.

Through the consultations eight factors influencing refugees’ housing were highlighted: rural to urban migration, financial issues, lack of access to private housing as well as assistance and accompanied accommodation, social stigma and discrimination, lack of information and network, social housing and segregation.

When asked about the main problems they faced post recognition of status, difficulties in finding adequate housing was overwhelmingly mentioned as one, if not the, major issue by refugees and persons with subsidiary protection in the consultations: “The biggest problem is housing”, was stated by the majority of respondents. This research showed several issues for limited opportunities to find housing as a result of both a difficult access to private housing and shortage of social housing, the relative urgency refugees are confronted with post-recognition of status, and their lack of secure income. This causes particular instability for all refugees unable to secure adequate housing.

For instance, a recognized refugee from Iran living in Salzburg confirmed that finding a flat was very difficult although he had a job because negotiations with landlords were difficult. In this context an additional aggravating element constitute language barriers, which make it difficult to negotiate and convey one’s personality:

“*Language was an issue: my German was not yet very good at the time. One has to search in newspapers to find apartments and landlords are very difficult to negotiate with. In the end they choose persons they like and where personality fits.*”

The following section outlines barriers and facilitators to get access to housing on a par with the receiving society, raised by stakeholders and refugees influencing refugee integration. For each of these factors the challenges experienced by refugees are set out and practices raised in consultations, which have been deployed to overcome them, are described.

## Rural to urban migration

All stakeholders confirmed, as mentioned before, that many refugees move from the Provinces to larger urban areas, in particular Vienna, because of existing social networks, better mobility and more access to support and better access to the labour market. Refugees confirmed this, adding as further examples of incentives to move better schooling opportunities for children, German courses, access to specific health facilities and the remote locations of asylum-seekers accommodations.

“*We were at the beginning in a small place in the south of Austria. We moved to Vienna because of school: my 14,5-years-old-son only had a technical school as possibility there and he is talented and I wanted to him to go to a normal school. My daughters did not speak a word of German and they felt not good in school there. For me the most important was a good school and education for my children.*”

Female refugee

“ My son was 8-year-old and was ill without possibility of treatment in my home country. We were the first year in a small village in Burgenland. Two times a month I had to come to Vienna with my son for his treatment in AKH hospital. And in Burgenland there is no work, they all go to Vienna to work. That is why I moved to Vienna, although the apartment was very small, seven persons in 50 sqm.

Male holder of subsidiary protection

Stakeholders further hinted at communities being able to help to find accommodation, while on the other side strong communities might make it difficult for refugees to get in contact with locals.

Refugees who move to Vienna and apply for means-tested Minimum Welfare Support have to handle that the examination of their application can take up to two months. During this time they have an increased risk of homelessness and have to stay for instance with friends and often in very cramped conditions. Also the counselling centre for asylum-seekers and refugees receiving Basic Welfare Support<sup>28</sup> by the NGO “Integration House” outlined in its latest annual report that among the persons entitled to subsidiary protection a relatively high number moved from the Provinces to Vienna, which further aggravated the housing problem for this group. (“Integration House”, 2012) It should be noted in this context that refugees and holders of subsidiary protection have differing accesses to social housing in the different Provinces.

A housing stakeholder reported that there was a shortage of flats in urban areas, which also led to high housing prices, whereas many left the rural areas. Policy concepts are being developed to keep refugees in the countryside but missing mobility makes it often hard and unattractive for them to live there. Refugees, like anybody, do not want to live in the middle of nowhere with the next city being far away, if there is no possibility of mobility. It should however be noted again that the bias of the sample of refugees interviewed for this research, which did not include persons living deep in the country-side, cannot conclude on refugees who might actually want to live in the country-side.

## Financial difficulties

The majority of stakeholders, in the consultation on housing, which took place on 15 January 2013, addressed the issues of high costs in housing and limited financial resources of refugees. Although not all refugees have financial problems, several stakeholders stated that generally there is a great discrepancy between the costs of housing and how much refugees can afford. Like other persons experiencing poverty, however in addition to the other integration barriers, in many cases refugees can only pay a minimum for the rent and the rest must be covered from financial support. One housing stakeholder observed that although there were many private initiatives, refugees were still nevertheless in fact on their own in this regard.

Refugees and even more subsidiary protected persons almost commonly claimed that housing was too expensive, and in particular that the high commissions (usually two months of rent) and the security deposit were not affordable. Furthermore, many of the respondents reported that if the landlords found out about their reliance on social welfare, they would not rent out any flat to them. Indeed, a regular job was very important in order to have chances on the residential market, as was noted by an academic from the Institute for Urban and Regional Research and Planning.

Consultations showed the aforementioned close connection between housing and employment, and consequently refugees being confronted with a vicious circle: the urgency to find housing experienced by refugees forces refugees to accept any position providing a regular income, notwithstanding their own qualifications or experience, so as to accelerate the process of being able

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<sup>28</sup> Founded in 2005 after the introduction of the Basic Welfare Support scheme for asylum-seekers and uncovered aliens in Austria: under a contract with the Vienna Social Fund, it provides counselling for residents of the “Integration House” (see interesting practice) a refugee home of the Austrian Workers’ Samaritan Federation as well as to asylum-seekers and persons entitled to subsidiary protection who live in private lodgings (the large majority of clients). The team is made up of counsellors offering multilingual advice.

to find and afford housing. Access to employment, on the other hand, may be difficult for persons in either sub-standard housing or in areas with little employment opportunities.

“ I had to find a job quickly, through a temporary employment agency, because without work no housing.

Iranian male refugee

## Lack of access to adequate housing on the private rental market

A few NGO stakeholders, who counsel and support refugees, outlined that recognized refugees and persons holding subsidiary protection were also in danger of homelessness, due to the lack of accommodation and the factual incapability of finding housing on the private market. Refugees described finding housing as very difficult, even with employment. Similarly, even stakeholders supporting refugees with housing projects reported that they also had lengthy searches and great difficulties often without success to find adequate flats for refugees, up to the verge of giving up. One organisation acting as mediator between landlords and refugees offered landlords the opportunity to leave their project (see good practice “Flatworks”) after two years should any problems occur with the tenants, in which case the organisation would look after alternative housing.

### Practice example

Project “Flatworks”, *People’s Aid Austria Vienna* targets recognized refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection to live in cooperative flats (*Genossenschaftswohnungen*). People’s Aid Austria acts as “door-opener” and provides the necessary co-financing which the tenant repays within two years. Provides personal social counselling, guidance and assistance in the homes, acts as mediator and helps understanding Austrian society, systems and people. Disadvantage: small project and too few of such flats are available.

Several stakeholders pointed to the even more precarious situation on the public residential market for persons with subsidiary protected persons there was no chance. This group can only secure housing on the private market and with the usual three years rental contract, the one-year<sup>29</sup> residence entitlement of holders of subsidiary protection represents a major handicap with landlords. This was confirmed by holders of subsidiary protection and even by experiences of recognized refugees who were previously holders of subsidiary protection.

A real estate agent explained that landlords did not want to take a risk and prefer “good tenants” and similarly also the property management would like to avoid any problems. In this context, it is difficult for him to argue why he would choose a refugee if there are 50 other applicants with good jobs and parents who guarantee for them. He considers it taking risks because he only has a promise that the refugee would pay the rent. In case he or she does not, there is no “back-up” as there would be for other tenants.

A housing stakeholder mentioned that the share of immigrants on the private housing market was higher than on the cooperative one. “But in which quality segment?” Indeed, a few stakeholders described that refugees often lived in low-quality apartments, such as with mould and equipped with no functioning heating.

<sup>29</sup> This entitlement will be extended to two years with a legal amendment entering into force on 1 January 2014.

“ Finding apartments with functioning windows, a working boiler, and enough space according to the family size and maybe not in the cellar or directly under the roof, is already a great achievement.

Counsellor of Interface, supporting refugees and holders of subsidiary protection to find housing

There are landlords who take advantage of the refugees' situation and try to maximise profits. The lack of adequate housing was also raised in relation to large families. Outside refugee accommodation or lodging by NGOs there are very few homes on the private market, which can accommodate a large family. This was also confirmed by many refugees, who complained about the poor state of housing, including mould and no functioning heating in small, overpriced AND substandard places.

“ In my first apartment I shared the electricity. When they moved, electricity was gone too. The heating system was very old and often did not work, the apartment was therefore cold. Defects in the apartment had to be paid from the deposit. My current flat is also very old and has one room with one window. The deposit is 2,000 Euros.

Male holder of subsidiary protection

During the research, the majority of interviewed refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection were living in extremely overcrowded housing, e.g. numerous large families with many children in small flats.

## Lack of assistance and accompanied accommodation

Despite strong demand, there is also lack of assisted and accompanied accommodation for refugees, once status is granted. All organisations with assisted housing integration projects for refugees report about very long waiting lists.

A few stakeholders, who counsel and support refugees, including with housing projects, outlined in this context, due to the lack of resources of for instance NGOs, refugees only have limited access to comprehensive counselling, which, however, is especially important in the situation after status is granted, in order to build the basis for a realistic integration plan. Hence, valuable time is lost. Subsequent disorientation creates low motivation and a mental burden as well as dependencies – such as on social welfare – which have far-ranging consequences and are later difficult to overcome. One main problem in the areas and settlements like for instance “Zinnergasse” (part of “Macondo”), which are home to a big refugee community, is the lack of comprehensive accompanied accommodation support, i.e. social counselling as was pointed out by a stakeholder. One stakeholder suggested that there should be mobile local assistance provided by experts (planner, architect, sociologist, social worker and property specialist), who take care of the area and its inhabitants. Effective practice is shown by NGOs who offer flats combined with psychological support.

## Lack of information and network

Recognized refugees and persons with subsidiary protection reported generally, as mentioned before, that once they were granted status nobody explained them their rights or provided other information so that they also did not know how and where to look for an apartment and which support from authorities one could get to find one.

“ I did not know then which support from authorities one can draw on to get an apartment.

Iranian male refugee living in Salzburg was granted status five years ago after almost four-years-long asylum procedure recognized refugee for 5 years.

Some declared that they did not know anyone in Vienna and finally relied on persons from their community, on hear-say or on real estate agents from the same community or who spoke their language, although this dependency was often abused but they had no other alternatives. Some

reported that they helped other refugees who did not even know how to register for an apartment or sign a lease contract in Austria. They added that some persons who got a positive asylum decision and thus had to leave their asylum-seekers accommodation within four months did not know where to go. The person would not speak German or know the city. Other recognized refugees spoke of other examples of practical consequences the lack of information had in this regard:

“ When I received the status, no one explained me my rights. There is a lack of information. For instance, once you have the status you have to move out of the asylum-seekers accommodation after four months. For that you need to find an apartment. To be able to rent an apartment employment is needed and for that it is important to have the refugee Convention passport. In case a birth certificate is needed for this, complications can arise often in the case of refugees and all this turns out to be very time-consuming. It is, therefore, difficult to meet the four-month period if one does not have all the information required beforehand. Female participant in refugee group meeting in Linz.

## Social stigma and discrimination

Housing is also often strongly linked to socio-economic classifications in society.

An integration expert and research consultant outlined that the stigmatization of certain social groups occurred independently of their size. The social stigma ascribed to refugees has remained relatively stable over the last 15 years, according to this expert. There are some fears of strangers within parts of the majority society. In everyday life it does not play any role what passport you have. The immediate experience of foreignness, closely linked to feelings of belonging, is strongly made from appearance and visibility (such as skin colour) as well as language. Such stigma also has influence on access to and quality of housing.

Discrimination was also reported by stakeholders to be well-established in their view; they observed that landlords or real estate agents claimed that apartments were rented once they realized the applicant was of migrant background. This was particularly the case for those with visible differences. A counsellor stated that it was for instance more difficult finding an apartment for a black African than for an Afghan, while for Chechens it had also become more complicated and difficult. One legal expert stakeholder reported that, in his experience, refugees were treated differently according to their language skills, legal status and race.

Stakeholders and refugees' experience has also shown that there are besides racism also many fears, such as the inability to be able to pay the rent, which refugees face when looking for flats.

## Social housing/“Gemeindewohnungen” (municipal flats)

Allocation and assignment of not-for-profit and municipal flats or apartment complexes represents a social integrative instrument for ethnic intermixing according to the Expert Council on Integration. Since the private housing sector steadily offers less affordable lodgings, the focus is thus put more on communities and not-for-profit housing developers.

Recognized refugees are considered equal to Austrians or EU citizens in terms of allocation of municipality housing in Vienna. They gain access normally via a “Vormerkschein” (registration pass) after 2 years of legal residence in Vienna.<sup>30</sup> In contrast access is highly restricted for persons granted subsidiary protection. They do not belong to the group of beneficiaries with requirements such as long-term residency rights. Due to the possibility of access of “Daueraufenthalt-EG” (EU permanent residence after a 5-year period of permanent settlement) holders to municipal flats and the consequent rise of demands for flats, the number of emergency flats was reduced significantly. There are still requests from subsidiary protected persons for such emergency flats, according

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<sup>30</sup> It is a registration pass, confirming the claim on a municipality flat, for a waiting list when a fitting municipality flat becomes available. Waiting times can be years.

to a Viennese stakeholder, which can, however, only be considered in exceptional cases like homelessness combined with other socially relevant reasons (e.g. illness). Just a very small number of such flats are being allocated by now. Thus the housing and integration facilitator of municipality flats is not available in fact for holders of subsidiary protection in Vienna. It should be noted that regulations regarding access to social housing vary between Provinces.

A stakeholder on the municipal level in Vienna reported that missing documents were partly an administrative problem because certain documents had to be shown to housing authorities. Especially missing evidence regarding a divorce was a problem, when wanting to apply for a municipal flat and not fitting in one of the precise bureaucratic categories of the system. Further problems arose by the distinction between valid marriages and those, which were not, although nowadays, even ritual marriages can be accepted by housing authorities.

Stakeholders highlighted family separations, for instance if a husband and wife are separated during flight and therefore will arrive in Austria later, the wife cannot yet be considered in the application for and allocation of municipal housing in Vienna. A further factor influencing housing for those who have succeeded in family reunification is that whilst a refugee established in Austria for years and has the right to apply for a city-owned municipality flat in Vienna, still has to wait nevertheless for two more years after the arrival of these family members to be able to apply for a flat corresponding to the size of the family. Indeed, several refugees who reunited with their families made such experiences, and had to wait that time in overcrowded difficult housing situations until the entire family was eligible for social housing in Vienna. The argument on municipal level in this regard is that there could not be different treatment of refugees in such situations from other Austrians only because of the special circumstances.

In addition, “Wohnpartner” (housing partnerships), a service institution of “Wiener Wohnen” (Viennese housing administration) for strengthening the solidarity of the community in municipality flats, reported that work with refugees was hard due to their traumas and health impairments. Issues that should be addressed include insufficient access to and use of interpreters in the work with refugees in municipality flats as well as the challenge to bring the different families in city-owned flats together. There are often problems within the family (children, labour market, etc.) and neighbours live very separated from one another. Due to this, there are numerous complaints. Mediation has not been successful so other ways to overcome this challenge have to be found.

Finally, some refugees also stated that as a person with migration background it is not easy to get equal access to cooperative housing (Genossenschaftswohnungen):

““ *My experience is that they make differences between us and the majority population.*

Female participant in refugee group meeting

Stakeholders pointed out that in order to prevent refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection from having to rely only on social or subsidized housing, it is very important that they get better access to the private housing market.

## Segregation, homogeneity and heterogeneity in residential buildings

Segregation in cities and districts as well the issue of homogeneity vs. heterogeneity in housing complexes emerged as further influencing factors through consultations.

Indeed, ghetto building and city planning were related issues in this research. Settlement of refugees in particular neighbourhoods may define their access to single segments of society and thereby influence their socio-economic integration. Access to community activities may also be limited depending on the location. Several respondents also confirmed housing in certain districts as hampering their access to the receiving society.

““ We live in ghetto flats, in multi-storey buildings, where everywhere foreigners live because it is cheap to live there. How am I supposed to learn from the locals like this? This has to be changed.

Male participant in refugee group meeting in Linz

Sudden perceived heterogeneity in housing complexes, which were previously rather homogenous, are influential factors in housing situations and potential source of conflict between refugees and majority population, which need innovative resolution approaches. An integration expert and research consultant remarked in this context that the number of immigrants in social housing increased sharply. Among long-established residents this leads to reactions like, “All the newcomers do not belong to us! What about us and our privileges?” There is an overlay of conflicts in regard to space and ethno-cultural issues. There are established immigrants who have lived here for 30 to 40 years and there are non-established ones (like refugees and holders of subsidiary protection) who lack perspectives and language. He referred as well to the aging of long-term residents in municipality housing. The elderly are confronted suddenly with large (refugee) families and this leads to conflicts as well. A loud Austrian child received more tolerance than a foreign one. A few stakeholders reported that many persons complain: “all these newcomers do not belong to us”. An academic of the Institute for Urban and Regional Research and Planning argued that living together was difficult for marginalized groups in general. Conflicts can often occur among people with economic problems because of their poverty and the fear of getting even poorer. This problem is however often attributed to migration background.

Mediation as an instrument of conflict resolution is as mentioned above reported as unsuccessful in this context: The concept of mediation, its preconditions and codes, is unknown to many refugees and migrants as is the understanding of someone getting involved in a conflict or problem who is “neither friend nor enemy”. A stakeholder providing housing assistance and counselling to refugees added that from his experience another reason can be grounded in the reluctant attitude of the long-established residents, who have been living in municipal flats for more than 20 years and do not see why they should engage in mediation. “Wiener Wohnen”, the Viennese housing administration, reported from “Wohnpartners”<sup>31</sup> (housing partnerships) observation that it was a challenge to establish mutual trust between social workers and refugees, thus, an obstacle to support them. Stakeholders suggested generally reducing any concentration and problematic constellation of socio-economically weak sections of the local and immigrant population as well as any specific conflictual situation and tendency towards isolation and segregation. The quality of building management was also emphasized.

Underlying reasons leading to homogeneity or heterogeneity in residential buildings were also raised by stakeholders as influencing integration. In the opinion of a few housing stakeholders the reason for housing actors to aim for homogenisation in residential buildings was to avoid problems. From a real estate agent's and property manager's point of view, it was reported to be important to avoid any majority from one origin or nationality in a residential building. An aim is to ensure an

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<sup>31</sup> Service institution of “Wiener Wohnen“ for strengthening the solidarity of the community in municipal flats.

essential balanced mixture of different nations among tenants, which influences their integration in a positive way. The fear is that otherwise such majorities then believe that they have more rights compared to others, leading to the idea “this is my house”. The consulted agent had made mixed personal experiences with refugees of different origins, assessing them as extremely ambitious, trying really hard to get a job and being quiet tenants: “You do not hear them all day”. Finally, he pointed out effects of prejudices such as the difficulty to rent half of all apartments in a building to persons of African origins because in his experience other persons would then not like to live there. An integration expert noted that tenants would not like the concept of social mixture in buildings but in general rather have a tendency for homogenisation, thus they are looking for like-minded people. The general idea of how a standard tenant in a residential area should look like is usually someone with white skin, an Austrian with medium-income. However, migrants also tend to homogenize and regarding social levels one can observe the same behaviour among migrants and locals: Migrants of the middle class, like Austrians, tend to leave the districts with a high share of people with migration background. A stakeholder from the Austrian Federation of Limited-Profit Housing Associations, furthermore, doubted the sense of homogenization in certain cases, such as for persons with mental stress, psychological burden and financial difficulties. Instead of placing only such cases together, they should get into a middle-class milieu with fewer problems.

Stakeholders indicate that in newly-built flats it is easier to achieve integration with adequate tenant policies. However, the rents were very expensive so support from the state would be needed. A state stakeholder from Lower Austria reported that 25 per cent of newly-built flats were allocated according to different criteria like marital status (single household, family, etc.), size and furniture, etc. Families with migration background are considered as well in order to achieve a better social mixture. An integration stakeholder in Upper Austria also pointed to cooperative flats as possibility to bridge the gap in the housing area for refugees and the opportunity for improved distribution of refugees and diversity in houses. A housing stakeholder noted that in newly built housing in Vienna the share of (young) migrants amongst the residents was now generally higher. Indeed, it would, in principle, make no difference to investors of these projects if the tenants were refugees or not. Another stakeholder, supporting refugees with a housing project, emphasized that this depended on municipal support.

### Practice example

The housing and integration project “Kosmopolis” in Vienna by “Integration House”, Diakonia and People’s Aid is an example on how housing funding policies can influence the housing structure and integration efforts by housing corporations. It emerged out of the requirement to allocate 30 apartments in a 120-apartment building to the target group of singles and families of employed recognized refugees, persons granted subsidiary protection and certain migrants. The target group of the project is indirectly also the receiving population through the mixed composition of the housing community. Provides housing and integration support and guidance, including accompanied moving into a subsidized newly constructed building in Vienna assisted by social workers. Offered comprehensive counselling including financial advice, tenancy law and administrative procedures with authorities, organisation of childcare, social and family law, education and employment issues as well as support with job search, psychosocial assistance in the new social environment, and support with coping with everyday life. It furthermore provides assistance with the integration in the housing community and offers conflict management. Finally, it also entails support through “buddies” to create a sustainable assistance structure for persons with special needs like single parents, persons suffering from mental illnesses or young adults. The project aims at promoting independence in order to enable a long-term retention of the apartment.



## Examples of existing support and interesting practices

There are a number of existing support programmes aimed at ensuring better housing for refugees, often embedded in more comprehensive integration counselling. Generally projects where refugees are supported by a non-profit organisation in order to act as a backup in case of difficulties to pay the rent, were pointed out: Landlords give rental contracts more easily to those who have an organisation behind them.

### Practice examples

Diakonia Refugee Service Vienna has two housing-related projects in Vienna:

Project "Zukunftsraum" ("future space") supports and accompanies recognized refugees over 18 on their first steps into a new, self-determined life in Austria with the goal to lay the foundation for integration in Austria. The offer includes accommodation in integration-oriented starter flats, social counselling and planning of perspectives, vocational orientation and job placements as well as support in all life areas. Its disadvantage is the long waiting list.

*“Only the very individual assistance in coping with the crises of yesterday and the difficulties of today can release energies for a tomorrow worth living”.*

INTO Vienna is a comprehensive integration project only for recognized refugees, including integration counselling, psychological support, language and learning support as well as housing.

The disadvantage of both projects is the very long waiting list.

Similar projects exist on the part of other organisations such as Caritas, People's Aid Austria and Red Cross. The social workers in all these projects offer advice and support in several native languages. Interface also provides assistance in the communication between landlords and tenants in nine different languages. Guidance in the native language is essential in order to avoid misunderstanding, especially for refugees and subsidiary protected persons. Some processes that are even complicated for locals are obviously much harder to understand for a person who is not fluent in German.

### Examples of suggestions from different stakeholders and refugees

Expansion of support and counselling structures was a primary demand. Furthermore, some stakeholders suggested the increase of integration housing projects with social counselling, as current NGO projects have only very limited capacity with long waiting lists compared to the existing demand. There should be contact persons who can help at all times in case of problems, for instance already small issues with the housing community, and to convey them in the mother tongue of the tenant. Moreover, there should be an institution, which covers the risk for arrears in payments, i.e. an organisation standing behind the refugees guaranteeing for their rental payment to the landlord. Understanding and support in cases where rent cannot be paid due to psychological impairments was called for.

In addition, NGOs should get increased access to cooperative flats as collaboration in such existing housing project works well.

Knowledge of all relevant private and state stakeholders in the area of housing in relation to refugees and persons with subsidiary protection has to be enhanced. Support and initiatives targeting real estate agents, property management, landlords and housing investors should be established: providing information about refugees and their circumstances as well as reducing insecurity; raising awareness among and sensitizing about the special importance of housing for refugees and the prohibition of discrimination in this field, in particular with regard to the rent.

## ➤ Examples of suggestions from different stakeholders and refugees

Generally, the property management and its employees, caretakers and staff of caretaker service firms should be offered enhanced training. Strengthening the role and competences of the caretaker in order to improve the building management and a better cohabitation between the tenants, is aimed at. The quality of property management is deemed very important for daily co-existence and many everyday conflicts may in this way be minimised or solved in advance. The caretaker should be the first contact person for tenants who have problems. Caretakers should also be trained on intercultural competence and a mastering a second language would be helpful.

Consultations with refugees about their needs and preferences concerning housing should be intensified. Besides, information should be provided to refugees about Austrian “housing customs”, for instance that Austrians like it when they introduce themselves to their new neighbours. This has a positive impact on the housing community and, therefore, on the integration in society.

A few stakeholders suggested the possibility to leave the asylum-seekers accommodation after 1-2 years to live independently on their own, in order for the integration process to be able to begin much earlier. There is a need for structural solutions and strategies after asylum is granted. Refugees only have four months to leave the asylum-seekers accommodation and find an apartment (and therefore employment). In this short period persons do not receive any structural integration service was emphasized. One state integration stakeholder at Province level expressed the wish to be more involved in funding decisions in the sense of strategic orientation.

Refugee respondents called for the establishment of affordable and quality housing as well as an increased control of housing conditions, looking at the housing quality.

## Social engagement

This section focuses on social engagement through institutional structures, associations and organisations facilitating common activities for refugees, migrants and the local population. This may ideally also exert a positive influence on the overall integration climate according to the Expert Council on Integration.

Generally, consultations with stakeholders on institutional social engagement, which took place on 26 February 2013, highlighted that “traditional” Austrian mainstream associations, such as the (Voluntary) Fire Brigades, the Association of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, Alpine Associations and others either do hardly have any members with migration background, let alone refugees, or are not aware of such possible members, do not record it or refugees are simply not a target group. The issue of integration and engagement of persons with migration background is clearly still a recent subject for internal discussion and strategies. When addressed, the target group of activities or policies is mostly migrants in general and not refugees in particular.

There are, for instance, no official figures or information about how many members have migration background at the Voluntary Fire Brigades<sup>32</sup> as it is not a criterion recorded for membership. The fire brigades do not really advertise themselves as their members get to know about them by word of mouth and friendship. Similarly, there are no figures available of the background of members of the Alpine Associations. Stakeholders from the Association of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides stated that diversity had been an issue under consideration. They have many members with non-Catholic background but for instance no Muslim scout leader. In their Youth Council there are also people with migration background. The Federation of Alpine Associations also just recently started to deal with the issue of integration and besides one project (see below), there are no measures to actively

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<sup>32</sup> Just recently in 2012 there were statutory changes enabling non-Austrian citizens to join Voluntary Fire Brigades in Styria and Carinthia.

address persons with migration background. Furthermore, in organisations like the Viennese Red Cross there are some volunteers with migration background (mainly second generation migrants) who are mostly engaged in educational support or as “buddies”. However, ethnicity or nationality of volunteers is not documented. In the field of integration and migration often students, retirees and also people working in the area of research, as balance to their daily work, apply as volunteers.

It was also mentioned that some of these persons with migration background, for instance, police officers, do not want to stand out and are not interested to be presented as “good examples” in public. They want to be left alone, do not want to stand out and do not want to talk about integration in public. Therefore, such volunteers might exist without the associations and organisations being even aware.

Sport associations are clearly more engaged and experienced as well as more advanced regarding the recognition of facilitators and barriers of integration and development of strategies and initiatives and also have refugees as target group.

The following section outlines influencing factors such as refugees’ motivation for social engagement, or not, and contact with majority population; cooperation between ethnic communities and mainstream organisations; challenges and barriers for the associations in this integration area; key social engagement barriers experienced by migrants and refugees, raised by stakeholders and refugees influencing refugee integration; gaps as well as strategies and practices raised in consultations, which have been deployed to overcome them, are described.

## Refugees’ motivation for social engagement (or not) and contact with majority population

Hardly any respondents reported that they were engaged in any Austrian mainstream institutions. An unemployed recognized refugee from Iran joined the fire fighters a few months ago. He had read an announcement for volunteers and decided to go there explaining: “I want to help the State“. Seldom reasons were given why such engagement would not occur; a few hinted at lack of time in their everyday lives focused on working to earn the livelihood while the little spare time left would be spent with family or resting. A few indicated lack of knowledge of existing structures in this regard. Several refugees stated to be active in community, ethnic, refugee, cultural or faith-based organisations, associations, centres or just loose groups either for recreation and sport activities, to maintain contact with the culture of origin and/or exchange and mutual support. A few refugee respondents reported that they helped other refugees from the same community, provided voluntary social help and information, acted as interpreters or taught German. However, some also described that at some moment in time this engagement became too much: one even stated that due to all the voluntary social help he provided (without psychological coaching for himself) to other refugees, he got a burnout and had to be treated two months in a hospital psychiatric department.

““ *My fellow countrymen were dissatisfied when things did not go the way they wanted or did not fulfil expectations. This also why after my burnout I took a distance and drew the line and now have more contact to Austrians than persons from my country of origin.*

Male refugee

Several interviewed refugees received support from various religious communities and associations when they came to Austria, already during the asylum procedure. That is how they got to know Austrians and even found friends. They described it “as giving their life a sense”, they showed them how things work in Austria and how Austrians live. Refugees mentioned as trigger for contact with Austrians besides the work place also school and teachers. A few also referred to some contact with their neighbours. As mentioned before, several respondents emphasized their wish for more contact with Austrians also to improve or practice their language skills.

As some institutions do not have any volunteers who are refugees or persons with subsidiary protection, their stakeholders can only guess motivation for engagement. Presumed reasons included to prove their level of integration in order to get a long-term residence permit (for persons with subsidiary protection), to improve their language skills, to have better chances on the labour market. Further reasons could be gratitude and appreciation for the received protection. In the case of the Red Cross, refugees might have worked at the Red Cross before fleeing their country and in this way procure the feeling of being closer to home. Refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection often have financial difficulties and are vulnerable in this regard, thus their motivation for social engagement is not very high, simply due to practical reasons. In cases where they marry rather early and have many children, they have to take care of small children (often without childcare until the age of four, if one or both of the parents are not working) and also the elderly. Hence it is self-evident that in these cases they rather choose earning money than spending time volunteering.

Ethnic communities usually work on a voluntary basis but not in the same structured way as it is done in Austrian aid organisations. In ethnic communities voluntary work is considered as an added value for the cultural survival of their ethnic group. A stakeholder pointed out that religious migrant organisations and associations may influence the motivation of their members on voluntary work, especially as in almost all religions altruism and charity in form of donations (voluntary help) are praised.

## Ethnic communities and cooperation with mainstream organisations

Of institutions, organizations and associations consulted, only those for sport and integration, actively reached out and worked together with several ethnic-based associations. However other traditional mainstream associations like the fire brigades, the Association of Boy Scouts and Girl Brigades and the Alpine Association, only to a limited extent. Some stakeholders were not aware of any such co-operations within their organisations, although maybe individual initiatives exist. Association of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides' stakeholders mentioned that social engagement is a cornerstone, thus, they cooperate with many other social organisations and also organise events in ethnic-based associations. Further, they work together with international scout groups of other nationalities.

In fact, interest depends on the particular offer of Austrian associations.

““ Ethnic communities and cultural associations approach us and come to us as there is also a benefit for them.

“Wiener Hilfswerk” Neighbourhood Centre representative in one Viennese district

The Association for Sports and Physical Culture (ASKÖ) for instance has contact with several ethnic communities and associations, has actively approached them and has held lectures about what kind of sports associations are available in Austria. Their experience shows that some ethnic community associations are rather closed whereas others are very open. The Ministry of Sports grants funds also with a view to get networking between different associations and institutions.

## Challenges for the associations

Consultations raised the following barriers mainstream institutions and associations are confronted with in regard to social engagement of refugees: language, insecurity and lack of knowledge regarding different cultures, access to the target group of refugees. The main factor negatively influencing integration mentioned by refugee/ethnic/integration associations were financial difficulties.

The language issue is dual: it concerns the language skills level of refugees to be able to engage and the challenge when there are many different nationalities and languages within one association.

Insecurity and lack of knowledge regarding different cultures lead to fears by associations of “doing something wrong concerning migrants’ habits”. Furthermore stakeholders from the association of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Austria outlined as another exemplary consequence that the training of scout leaders would need to be adapted to different cultural backgrounds, thus, intercultural conflict management would have to be provided. However, the training should not overstrain these young persons, as they are volunteers.

Access to the target group of refugees but also to reach institutional structures in regard to the topic of integration was mentioned by some stakeholders as challenge. A stakeholder from the Association of Austrian Alpine Club for instance explained that they did not have any access to certain target groups as hiking was not known or practised in some cultures. The only link could sometimes be climbing because young people of diverse social classes are interested in this sport. A stakeholder from ASKÖ also described that it was difficult to reach the wide range of association members on the topic of integration. In the sports management training only one half-day is planned for intercultural topics. On the other hand, ethnic-based associations are not always an easy topic leading sometimes to questioning whether some initiatives really enhance integration, such as women sport association providing exercise programmes only for women who cannot practise sports in a public space.

With regard to financial difficulties of refugee, ethnic and integration associations, NAFA Integrative Sports Association’s stakeholder outlined that they were faced, like many others, with significant financial difficulties as their club did not receive any government funds and depended entirely on donations. Due to financial reasons it was for instance not possible for them to establish a women’s football team or provide a good education for trainers.

## Social engagement challenges for refugees

Consultations also showed social engagement challenges for migrants and refugees especially language skills, lack of information, age and existential issues.

Language skills are essential as mentioned above. However, only a low language level needs to be acquired, thus low-threshold communication has to be possible. Yet, a lack of language skills and self-confidence can prevent individuals from applying at voluntary organisations. Indeed, available offers often do not reach refugees due to linguistic barriers.

Lack of information is another factor influencing social engagement of refugees. Refugees, but also migrants generally, have insufficient knowledge enough about existing offers and possibilities of social engagement in Austria. It is important to consider how refugees gather information, through which channels.

Furthermore, for adults it is more difficult to integrate into associations, in particular in those kinds of associations where the members already get engaged from their youth up. The fire brigades for instance have a strong demand among young people in the countryside. Generally, there is a higher chance for adolescents with migration background to become a member than for adults. Adults are faced with barriers regarding time, family structures and language issues. Moreover, another stakeholder stated that generally their volunteers were mostly senior citizens over 50 years old, or students, while the assessment is that the age structure of refugees more between 18 and 50 years with other more existential issues, is not entirely the one where one engages in voluntary work or the one which the stakeholder’s centre addresses of Austrians in this regard, However, opportunities of participation are being taken by refugees.

At the society level, there is no “we-feeling” as a whole society but rather the tendency to form small closed groups, whose habits are familiar.

The representative of a federation of African organisations pointed out the fear of not being welcome, also due to discrimination experiences in particular during the previous time as asylum-seekers, which also leads to social self-exclusion.

Cultural differences were amongst others raised by stakeholders from the Association of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Austria. It was generally difficult for outsiders to integrate into an existing group regardless of the country of origin. Besides, migrant parents were afraid that their children would be raised differently from their own education. Often parents do not want that boys and girls are together in a group.

One of the major challenges is that refugees have existential issues (see above), like employment and earning one's living, dealing with housing problems or legal concerns, school for the children and, thus, have neither time nor free mind to engage in voluntary activities.

## Examples of existing support and interesting practices

There are a number of existing support programmes aimed at ensuring increased social engagement of refugees.

### Practice example

Since autumn 2011 the Federation of the Austrian Alpine Associations (VAVÖ) has been providing training as hiking guides for migrants, first as a pilot project in Upper Austria and then in other Provinces.

Institutionalised treatment of the integration topic by the "Sport and Integration" expert working group in the Federal Ministry of Sports and the Promotion of Integration through Federal Sports Funding, targeting to promote participation of persons with migrant background in sport, to support integrative sport projects and to develop measures on inclusion and sport. The working group undertakes assessments of the relevant situation in organized sports and developed support recommendations. Apart from experts from the Field of Action Sport and Leisure, the expert working group includes representatives of the Federal Ministry of Defence and Sports, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the three leisure sports associations ASKÖ (Association for Sports and Physical Culture), ASVÖ and SPORTUNION, the Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Co-operation (VIDC), the AIF and the Institute for Children's Rights (IKEB). A system of criteria was developed for project applications and evaluations, as well as funding and support made available for these projects. Issues like "obstacles and barriers to migrants in organized sports", "Introduction of intercultural competence in training and advanced training in sports" and "promotion of health through sport and exercise in target groups with a migrant background" were addressed in meetings of experts and stakeholders and conclusions developed on measures to be taken. Insights gained were influential in specifically including the promotion of integration into the supported measures of the leisure sport associations.

ASKÖ workshops on intercultural co-operation in the sports club for representatives of sport institutions, in cooperation with experts in the field of integration from organizations such as SIQ project from Caritas (Graz), migrare (Linz) and the Intercultural Centre/*Interkulturelles Zentrum* (Vienna): to enhance awareness, the workshops are advertised via specific sports associated media and by electronic means via website, newsletters and social media. Lessons learned include that ASKÖ takes advice from migration experts like the organisation migrare and now their regional workshops are fully booked.

The topic of integration is included in training of sports officials within the framework of the Federal Sports Organization's sports manager training.

ASKÖ provided an integration project for young girls in secondary school with the aim to support them in practising more sports. The project coordinator had a migrant migration background and tried to involve parents as well. Indeed, access to the older generation is difficult and one success

factor is bringing people with migration background into higher positions in order to communicate with refugees. Integration sports award are also examples of interesting practice.

NAFA Integrative Sports Association<sup>33</sup> noted that one of their challenges were the many different languages. Therefore, they introduced German as the official language in their club. They also provide language courses before the football training, thus, 80% of their members speak German.

Frauentreff (women meeting point) association Piramidops for migrant women offered biking courses, which included information on traffic regulations and safety on the street and city orientation. Target group were women, who were until now not able to learn how to bike or women, who know how to bike can explore the city. The aim is to do something for health and the environment. Two thirds of participants were beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. Piramidops made the experience, that participants afterwards started projects and engaged themselves.

Fair & sensible is a pilot project aiming to bring the police and Africans together, thus reducing existing prejudice, and offers xenophobia workshops to sensitize majority population.

The “Wiener Hilfswerk” Neighbourhood Centre reported that the Viennese culture pass<sup>34</sup> was frequently used by refugees to participate socially and shows their interest for arts and culture. Refugees also have the possibility to attend courses or to discuss medical findings with a nurse in the neighbourhood centre. It is also possible to rent rooms for their own activities.

Project “Together: Austria”/“Zusammen: Österreich by the Austrian Integration Fund (AIF) consists of voluntary integration ambassadors, with migration background, who have achieved success in Austria, tell their success stories in schools and give students the possibility to ask questions. The aim is to increase awareness among the Austrian public, in particular youth; to create motivation in classes with high share of migration background; and to reduce prejudices. Approximately one fifth of the integration ambassadors are refugees. Participants are from 18 to 85 years, of diverse religions, origins, including Africa and Afghanistan, and different social backgrounds. The next step represents an extension through co-operation with voluntary associations and organizations to encourage migrants to engage in volunteering.

### ↳ Examples of suggestions from different stakeholders

Parents with migration background should be involved in associations by offering them for instance literacy or language courses was one suggestion.

Some stakeholders outlined that there was a high potential among persons with migration background who have much sports experience. In Austria structures are rather entrenched, however some initiatives try to use the existing potential. Many sports practiced by this group are unusual and still not well developed in Austria, therefore it is difficult to establish such structures. Consequently, the topic of integration should be discussed more, in particular in the long-established structures and club officials should be made more and more aware of this.

Social engagement already exists within ethnic communities and one strategy is to extend it to other organisations. Generally cooperation with ethnic and refugee organisations should be extended. The information exchange between communities and organisations needs to be improved in order to gain a better understanding about cultural characteristics and existing possibilities of social engagement in Austria.

<sup>33</sup> NAFA was founded in 2005 with the aim to support migrants and refugees, to give them the possibility to practise sports and to become a member of the Vienna Football Association. There are refugees amongst their members and volunteers. The club members count 11 different nationalities, religions and cultures.

<sup>34</sup> Grants free admission to cultural institutions.

## Subjective perspective of members of receiving society on the process of integration

In addition to the consultations with refugees and stakeholders, it was considered useful to consult members of receiving society to reflect the two-way process of integration and that integration does not only concern refugees and persons with subsidiary protection but everybody in the receiving country. Consultations were therefore conducted to actively involve members of the receiving society in the research. The aim was to include their perceptions and experiences on important factors influencing integration, as well as their own barriers and challenges encountered.

Persons contacted for this consultation all had some kind of contact with refugees and/or persons with subsidiary protection, although form and intensity varied: volunteers, privately involved or in various NGO projects supporting refugees and subsidiary protected persons (as tandems, buddies etc.), spiritual support of diverse communities and different religions, teachers and employers/recruiters/instructors. However, it should be noted that due to the limited range of persons attending, the following findings cannot be seen as representative but should rather be considered as an “interpretation support” for other findings in this research.

The consultation, as will be outlined in the following section, highlighted concepts of integration of members of receiving society and numerous factors influencing refugees’ integration were raised: language, mutual knowledge, educational training, a welcoming atmosphere, the feeling of safety, and contact with members of the receiving society and support. Factors representing challenges for integration noted included cultural issues and language, experiences of flight and loss of status, refugees’ expectations and experiences of the asylum procedure. The consultation emphasized the integration area of education, employment, housing, health as well as social interaction and institutional participation, including access to clubs and voluntary activities. The following section ends with the findings of challenges members of the receiving society face in this context.

### Concept of integration of some members of receiving society

Integration has a different meaning for everyone, a fact which was also exemplified in this consultation, which took place on 27 February 2013. The definitions of integration by persons consulted focused on an ongoing two-way process, peaceful living together without abandoning the culture of origin, the ability to live a self-determined independent life and participation in all areas of life.

Integration was defined as an ongoing process, which takes a long time. A volunteer referred to his personal experience of living in Austria for 30 years and “not yet having arrived” entirely; and in his opinion this was also not necessary. Moreover, integration should always address both sides, the migrants and refugees as well as the receiving society. The refugees should not have to forget one’s background, while the receiving society should get to know it. Integration has a lot to do with the inner state of mind, with which one comes to Austria and how one is accepted: thus, the attitude on both sides.

““ *Integration is mutual acceptance and understanding.*

Protestant pastor

Furthermore it was emphasized that integration does not mean assimilation or acculturation, although one should follow the common rules. One can be integrated in the Austrian society but still identify with the country of origin. The foreign culture should also be considered an enrichment of society as a whole.

““ *It is not a sign of successful integration that one agrees with everything.*

Volunteer



“ Integration is not that you like to eat roast pork just as much as Austrian. Integration should not be to forget everything before and to adopt everything here.

Volunteer

Furthermore it was deemed important to find ways of peaceful co-existence of all persons in a country. Successful integration means also to feel comfortable and welcome in Austria. Persons should become independent and able to organize their lives, also economically.

Finally, integration as incorporation into society was a concept described, when persons concerned are able to participate in “normal” everyday life, in social and political life and have employment. One opinion was also that one should use the concept of inclusion instead of the term integration, which is used by everyone and all sides.

The following integration influencing factors were mentioned by consulted members of receiving society as their subjective perspectives and opinions, due to their experiences through contact with refugees and observations made trying to support refugees or information from what these refugees report them.

## Factors facilitating integration

Numerous factors influencing refugees’ integration were raised: language and mutual knowledge, educational background and training, a welcoming atmosphere towards refugees, the feeling of safety, contact with members of the receiving society and support.

Language skills are considered a key requirement for integration. Without knowledge of the national language an independent life is not possible. Nowadays the society regards cultural diversity and multilingualism as enrichment but this awareness is a very slow process, was the opinion expressed. Mutual knowledge and respect was highlighted as well. Integration needs to take place among refugees and the receiving society, thus, refugees have to abide by the rules and sensitivities of a country, e.g. learn the language, and get in contact with locals. It is important to explain them some specific local behaviour, while it is also a significant step towards integration to know and accept foreign religious rules.

Refugees are as diverse regarding their educational background as other members of society. Adolescents have “arrived” in Austria, if they receive a place to start vocational training, which means an “anchor of hope” for them. It was also mentioned that refugees were ambitious and wanted good education.

The first step in the process of integration is that refugees gain confidence and lose their fear of getting hurt in any way: It is important to give refugees the feeling of safety. A teacher mentioned the importance of giving refugee children a friendly welcome. In her experience, they are often traumatized and do not speak German, thus they need time to “arrive” in Austria. After a while she teaches them in German and everything else follows automatically through contact and communication. Furthermore, building up contacts between foreigners and locals is also an important factor for the integration process.

It was emphasized that refugees need support from locals, e.g. when looking for a flat or a new job, in order to be easier for them to overcome their problems. It is also important to organize social events like “cooking together” for foreigners and locals; so they can meet, talk to each other and reduce existing prejudices. Employment is definitively the way to have contact with Austrian is the assessment: it functions the best in such normal everyday life.

## Key challenges of integration

Factors representing challenges for integration mentioned included cultural issues and language, experiences of flight and loss of status, simultaneous issues confronted with once status is granted, discrimination, refugees' expectations and experiences of the asylum procedure. The consultation emphasized the important integration areas of education, employment, housing, health as well as social interaction and institutional participation, including access to clubs and voluntary activities.

One opinion expressed was that some families are rather sceptical towards locals, and thus, sometimes especially youth do not know which cultural elements of the receiving society they should integrate in their lives. Mothers are described as very important in the integration process; they are the "key to integration". Furthermore, learning German is particularly difficult for persons speaking languages of totally different linguistic families and with different alphabets or who are illiterate. Sometimes the younger ones, who speak the language and for instance have an apprenticeship, have to take care of the whole family and all matters with authorities or doctors and hospitals.

Furthermore, experiences of flight were also emphasized: Refugees have to handle their past, such as the often terrible experiences during the flight, and process the difficult experiences they lived through. In addition, sometimes they have to deal with loss of social status and to have to start here "from the bottom".

The situation refugees are confronted with once status is granted and that they then have to face simultaneous issues, was pointed out. The first step for persons granted asylum is to get back into daily life as regards work, housing, handling money, etc. For some this time is very difficult with many challenges to overcome, thus, they need coaching and support in practical things of life like meeting deadlines, learning certain processes, attending school regularly, etc.; and in dealing with authorities and getting knowledge of their rights. They have to deal considerably with bureaucracy.

The receiving society is also responsible for integration difficulties, e.g. xenophobia was pointed out by volunteers. The majority society should recognize that integration does not mean assimilation. There are also negative attitudes towards foreigners at public authorities and the Public Employment Service (AMS), was a claim in this consultation. Some participants have the impression that at times refugees are intentionally mistreated in order to force them going back home voluntarily.

Solidarity within refugee groups is often low as well in the observation of the group consulted. There are frequently problems of intercultural interaction among refugees, but also with other foreigners. Examples given included a Russian woman who was not accepted by the Russian community because of her Chechen name or Afghans of different ethnicities who have often rivalries among themselves.

Experiences during the asylum procedure were emphasized. The duration of asylum procedure was seen as too long. Asylum-seekers suffer from physical and psychological diseases during this time was pointed out and authorities do not always come across as wanting to do anything. Difficulties in asylum-seekers reception facilities include that asylum-seekers have to live in rundown pensions and inns<sup>35</sup> in the middle of nowhere with long distances to public transport, food, etc., was the opinion expressed. Asylum-seekers accommodations are sometimes almost like prisons, and these living conditions make them revive their trauma. There is also a risk of injury for children and many refugees would need psychological support, especially the mothers.

Especially young refugees have very high expectations about their future in Austria. Sometimes it is difficult for volunteers to tell them that they cannot become for instance a doctor without documents and education. It is helpful to explain that the same conditions also apply for young Austrians. That this is not a case of discrimination, rather only rules for everyone.

With regards to the influential integration area of education, it was mentioned that over a long period, asylum-seekers children were not allowed to do any vocational training, which is now

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<sup>35</sup> In Austria a considerable part of asylum-seekers are accommodated in former pensions and guest houses.

permitted by law with an age restriction – you have to be younger than 18 years.<sup>36</sup> Under the old legislation, young refugees often being traumatized and not able to start vocational training at the age of 14 or 15, and when they then feel ready and found an apprenticeship, they were too old for it. This was assessed as surely preventing integration.

A teacher mentioned that young refugees are often very ambitious and want to go to grammar school but have many learning difficulties there, which led to disappointment and aggressiveness. However, the importance attributed to education varies, although one should avoid generalisations, among different cultures. Some parents want a better future for their children, thus they are sometimes too ambitious, e.g. exercise pressure that children should only get very good marks. A trainer also pointed to issues hindering success of young refugees in vocational schools, such as learning difficulties and issues to sit down and focus, also hindered by health and mental issues such as anxiety disorders, heart palpitations etc.

The contact to migrant parents also varies. The aforementioned teacher had rarely any contact with the fathers. They tried to start an “Elterncafé” (parents café)<sup>37</sup> at school but only a few actually came, thus the frustration of the organizers was considerable. Due to language barriers among migrant parents it is hard to establish contact. However, official events like the parents-teacher meetings (“Elternsprechtag”) are already attended by immigrant parents because their children tell them that these gatherings are important. Holidays often meant disaster for refugee children as school was a “piece of home”.

Finally due to the lack of documents recognition of qualifications is a problem as well. For example, in Afghanistan or Moscow it is hardly possible to get a new university diploma issued and the costs are high.

With regards to employment, it was pointed out that asylum-seekers lose their Basic Welfare Support even if they work only seasonally. Furthermore, they get depressed and lose the sense of time as asylum-seekers want to start a new life in Austria but have in fact no access to the labour market. Long waiting times hinder integration. Other experiences reported include that refugees who had a job did not go on sick leave as they were afraid of losing it.

Moreover, high-qualified refugees have problems to find a job due to language barriers and lack of knowledge about Austrian society. If an employer has the choice, he/she hires an Austrian. Fear is probably the largest problem among employers. Instead of being happy to have an employee speaking for instance Russian, the potential is not acknowledged.

It was emphasized that locals can help refugees find a job. In her municipality they found for instance work for a Kurdish family, the wife of a pastor reported. This works rather in the countryside than in the city was the opinion expressed. Volunteer projects supporting refugees in their everyday life need to be expanded as this can play a facilitating role to find employment.

Bad advice at the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS) was also an issue mentioned. As such an example experienced, after being granted asylum a woman wanted to attend a German course but at the AMS she was told: “You work as a cleaning lady so you will not need German anyhow.” Finally, she searched for a German course on her own and now finished the C1-level.

Means-tested Minimum Welfare Support does not provide sufficient money for instance for a young single mother with an apartment in Wiener Neustadt. Financial difficulties could be solved with state support, was the opinion expressed by the volunteer assisting the person concerned.

Muslim women wearing a headscarf are often discriminated on the labour market as they do not get certain jobs or often do not have the possibility of praying at the workplace.

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<sup>36</sup> It should be noted, as mentioned before, that there has been a recent change of policy in this regard: Now asylum-seekers under 25 years are allowed to do vocational training in those occupations where there is a proven lack of apprentices. The Public Employment Office (AMS) decides regionally where such lack exists.

<sup>37</sup> Provides opportunity of contact and communication between parents, as well as parents and teachers.

It should be noted that employers and trainers consulted, confirmed that they first had to familiarize themselves with rights related to status, in particular subsidiary protection.

With regard to the area of housing, permanent change of residence has a negative impact on integration.

“*My protégé lives now in her third place of residence in Lower Austria and every time she moves her social network breaks down.*

a volunteer

Organizations often only have the ability to accommodate persons for one year, which also leads to permanent changes of residence. A pastor pointed out as an example that housing goes through social networks, how due to the social network in his municipality they found a place to stay for a Kurdish family as mentioned above. Similarly to the consultations with housing stakeholders, experiences confirmed that not every estate agent is willing to offer apartments to foreigners and that it is very difficult for refugees to get an apartment on the private market.

With regard to health, financial difficulties lead to many challenges including for instance unhealthy diet or insufficient resources for thoroughly needed dental work.

There are effects of all the pressure and family separations on the mind: one can observe depressions and anxiety disorders. One trainer of apprentices gave an example of a refugee apprentice who was very long on sick leave, had a severe depression and finally dropped out of the vocational education, driven by the wish to see again the only family member he had left, in another country.

With regards to social interaction and institutional participation, it was reported that large refugee families rather remain within their family unit. The only social contact is visits to other families or relatives. Refugees and subsidiary protected persons usually stay in contact with relatives in their country of origin. They send them money and, as a consequence, their own financial difficulties increase. Frequency of contacts to locals differs between several cultures and nationalities, but it is also a question of personality. There is a sort of ranking of cultures. However, black people have the most difficulties to get in contact with Austrians. It is important to maintain one's own culture and to have contact with Austrians as well, some cultural centres try to support this.

There is also a gender aspect as girls have more difficulties in establishing new social contacts through clubs. Male refugees often preserve their cultural elements in a strong way and it is important in the view of some volunteers to show them that in Austria some things are different to their home countries, e.g. let male Afghan dry dishes.

Football brings people together regardless of their ethnicity and dancing projects can improve contacts between foreigners and locals. Making music and playing an instrument is hardly possible for refugees as it is too expensive for them.

As example for voluntary activities, many Afghan refugees teach German and the Persian language for free. Regarding access to clubs and voluntary activities, sports clubs are usually open-minded for diversity (e.g. soccer clubs), but one participant mentioned that girls from Afghanistan could often not benefit from sports activities due to their cultural background, e.g. they are not allowed to learn to swim. Some young male refugees often go to the gym and they are really interested in supporting other people but it is difficult for them to enter social organizations as they do not have enough information about them.

Many persons granted asylum as well as asylum-seekers participate in art projects at the “Brunnenpassage”.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Brunnenpassage is situated in Vienna's 16th district on a busy street market called Brunnenmarkt. Its goal is to encourage people from different nationalities, of all ages and with varying socio-cultural backgrounds to engage in community arts projects together. In order to foster mutual understanding and learning from each other a wide range of activities for active participation as well as numerous performances and events are offered. Events are open to everyone who is interested and participation is free of charge.

## Challenges for members of the majority society

Persons often start working on a voluntary basis once retired and volunteers and buddies often have personal experiences with foreignness or immigration and the feeling of being a stranger. A primary teacher will retire in three years and would like to engage further afterwards. The work with refugee children has changed her mind. Now she relies more on her intuition at work as she often has to guess her children's feelings due to language issues. She believes that due to her "Grandmother bonus" she is a respected person for the children and also gives them a feeling of safety. A few persons consulted have contact to refugees or persons with subsidiary protection in their private lives, e.g. son-in-law who is a refugee or partner who was granted subsidiary protection. Buddies and volunteers mentioned that they would like at the same time to give something back to society and that they benefitted very much from this work. One female buddy mentioned that she would like to give young refugees the feeling of being at home in Austria and that they regain a bit of normality in their lives.

Main points reflected on by members of the majority society who were consulted included the observation that their preconceptions about refugees have changed after meeting them personally. At the beginning some had a few preconceptions about refugees (e.g. poor people without enough to eat, etc.). "When you meet a refugee personally your preconceptions will change." Also a trainer of apprentices in a work place described how this contact and knowledge of experiences and problems of refugees had changed him and his perspectives. Working with refugees was generally seen as a personal enrichment. One volunteer outlined that she found it very interesting to follow several life stories.

A person from a religious congregation described how refugees were very grateful and that he did not only begin to respect but also appreciate their culture. A real exchange between foreigners and locals was important to "build bridges" in his view. A Protestant pastor and his wife explained how this experience had opened their eyes to many problems concerning asylum. There is a slow process of rethinking in their parish as locals realize that refugees are not doing so well and their work gives great personal enrichment. They like to motivate other people to become active.

Another volunteer described that at the beginning of his work as volunteer he was uncertain about how things would turn out, even financially (i.e. challenge if one should also provide financial support). He has slowly grown into the situation but, unfortunately, he lost some friends because they did not understand his engagement. This was experienced by a few of the consulted members of the majority society, but on the other hand one would gain also new contacts. The challenge as a volunteer was described as meeting someone and within a few weeks being confronted with many problems to solve, which they are highly motivated to do.

Some volunteers suffer from mental stress and feel psychologically overstrained when they do not have previous training and support in coping with the issues coming up through their contact with refugees. In one case even a psychological breakdown was the consequence, which led to a slight reduction of social engagement.

Employers have interest to hire refugees or persons with subsidiary protection if there are among their clients increasingly persons from these regions or in low-skilled work because they appreciate the flexibility (for instance in regard of working time) of these persons as workforce.

An artist emphasized that one challenge is to establish equal rights for refugees in Austria. Finally a trainer and employer pointed out the experience of having an insight by refugees one one's country and city from an "outside perspective", which also showed him how closed off some people in Austria are, i.e. that they are not very open to groups such as refugees.

## Recommendations and suggestions to facilitate refugee integration

Integration of asylum-seekers shall start from the beginning and not only once they are granted asylum in Austria. Asylum-seekers should not be isolated in a village without contact to locals. Their time could be better used, for instance by learning German, therefore free German courses should be provided. They can use their language skills even if they are to return to their country of origin. Another advantage for asylum-seekers is that they have something to do. Effective access to the labour market was assessed extremely important for asylum-seekers.

There should be more reference persons or central contact persons for refugees at authorities and NGOs. Indeed, authorities are responsible for certain areas and NGOs provide advice in different areas but there should be a central contact person and a better network of all consulting institutions. Additionally, it needs support by the state in order for refugees to get a contact person from the majority society. There is a need for persons who support refugees and asylum-seekers over a long period. This would help refugees to integrate well into society.

Moreover, family reunification has to be facilitated.

The economic situation of refugees needs to be improved, e.g. regarding housing, labour situation etc. Some of them currently live at or below the poverty level. As long as recognized refugees and persons granted subsidiary protection struggle with financial survival, they will not have time to establish social contacts.

It needs (public) places and space where locals and foreigners can meet, get together and communicate with one another. Austrians need to get better informed about the whole asylum procedure and the life of refugees in Austria, e.g. how much financial assistance an asylum-seeker really gets. Provided information should be factual. Furthermore, the benefit of refugees for and their enrichment of society should be shown. One should aim at changing the attitude of Austrians, i.e. the majority society, towards asylum-seekers. Nobody leaves her/his country easily just to earn some extra money elsewhere. As long as locals have the feeling that refugees are a burden for everyone, their attitude towards them will not improve.

There is a policy suggestion to put children without enough German skills into pre-schools. A consulted teacher in the group disagreed with this approach and instead suggested additional language support in primary school.

The “culture pass” enables free entry to many cultural institutions for disadvantaged people. A volunteer described using this offer and often visits museums with refugee children.

## Cross-cutting factors influencing refugee integration

In addition, the findings of this research comprehend that family separations and reunification, experience of flight as well as related health issues, duration and experience during the asylum procedure as well as reception conditions, and language constitute cross-cutting issues whose impact is to be felt in every area. The following section will also outline gaps and suggestions to be addressed on these issues after status is granted, during the asylum procedure as well as regarding therapeutic and medical aid.

## Impact of family separations and reunification, experience of flight as well as related health issues

Several stakeholders have observed that trauma is often linked to family separations. The issue of family separation and reunification was very complex and also part of the stabilisation phase of refugees in Austria: as long as refugees are separated from their family, their mental focus lies on that matter and the related worries are a huge burden. This effect was also confirmed by many refugee respondents. With little information on their family's safety, respondents reported a high stress rate and resulting difficulties to integrate. Respondents felt they could not concentrate properly on their own integration, whether handicapped in learning, seeking employment or concentrating at work, as long as they could not be sure that their family is safe or that they would be joined by their family. Stakeholders and respondents highlighted the financial costs relating to family separation. All the energy goes into securing the livelihood of the family, who should be here in the future. A few respondents also aimed to send some of their income back home to support their family while awaiting the family reunification process to complete. Refugees try to work out a way to have the money needed for family reunification, which is very difficult as family reunifications are expensive and not funded. In addition, according to stakeholders, another impact of the experience of fleeing one's home was that the large amount of money paid to alien smugglers often resulted in considerable debts, which have to be overcome by refugees during the integration process. Whereas further debt problems which negatively influences the integration process, could arise at the beginning after granting of the status, because refugees would borrow the amount of money needed for a family reunification. They have no perspective yet, but already debts, which again leads to mental pressure. Moreover, family reunifications are very time-consuming. Many refugees seeking to reunite with their family lose their jobs because they have many obligations to meet and are exposed to considerable stress. On the positive side, stakeholders noted that it is admirable what refugees manage to achieve, the kind of strength and resources they are able to generate.

Furthermore, stakeholders, who counsel and support refugees, describe that the person's own well-being was put aside in these cases. Only once everything is completed, can these persons call on help for themselves. Many refugees have difficulties in concentrating due to trauma and the experience of having to flee their home country, as stakeholders report. In fact, family separations mostly cause mental effects, in particular when they are related to the non-existing perspective of meeting family members again. This has, together with several transit stops and being shoved back and forth between several countries (for instance related to the Dublin regulation) and (traumatic) experiences of reception, a strong impact on education and language acquisition. Thus, numerous different forced new beginnings of life to that effect make a long-term educational career and the decision for long-term education goals difficult to realise. In addition the feeling of loss of time is intensified as well as the increased mental stress. Memory difficulties increase. Particularly mental, such as concentration difficulties, but also physical problems are reasons why the educational path is perceived as very difficult by refugees, compared to other members of society. This is reflected in courses since in these cases there is only little or no learning progress in a long period of time. Permanently not knowing about the well-being of one's family leads to many setbacks of performance and achievements in courses. Knowledge is being repressed like the recurring unpleasant thoughts. This is similar regarding often long, terrible, excessively strenuous flight and trauma. Actually, in the experience of an education stakeholder from the "Integration House" health issues is often the main factor of many education-related challenges:

“ Health is thus the reason why a recognized refugee or person with subsidiary protection, compared to an Austrian who is also having education deficits, cannot manage in the same time.”

He criticized that in the media, trauma is being presented as a frequent "excuse" or "reason against deportation" which can be very distressing for affected persons. Therefore, many young people, especially unaccompanied minors, are afraid to talk about their mental problems.

Education and employment stakeholders as well as refugees referred also to the impact of family separation in times of new acute crisis or negative event happening in the region of origin and the

negative influence this has on the minds of refugees: the basic safety feeling of refugees here could break off, leading, for instance, to loss of employment, dropping out of courses and withdrawal.

“ It is difficult to live so far apart from family. When something happens in Iraq, when you see something about Iraq in the news, it is difficult. I do not know if I will ever see my family again. That influenced my focus on work. I become pessimistic and lethargic.”

Iraqi man, holding subsidiary protection for 3 years

Another recognized refugee from Somalia described how he had started studying in Austria, but that his mind was always with his family worrying all the time, so that he could not sit down and focus on learning. He made little progress in his studies and passed hardly any exams. Once he finally managed to reunite with his minor siblings, he had to stop studying to work to be able to sustain them, but now after a while, when everybody is settled, he started studying again and already managed more exams than before. In addition, a young Iraqi man with subsidiary protection for already 6 years, reported that even when one knows that the family is in security in another European country, like in his case Sweden, the separation takes its toll.

Most reunifications happen with underage children. In this context, a counselling stakeholder mentioned that this often led to difficult situations, especially when adult children had to stay in the country of origin. In addition, there is a wider concept of family in the refugees' countries of origin, therefore even after family reunifications, pressure could remain or a different kind of pressure begins.

Counselling organisations and stakeholders further described as consequences trauma, depression, psychosomatic disorders and insecurity occurring frequently, which can lead to physical, motor functional, sensorial and language difficulties for children, needing long-term assistance in early skills development, or other health issues for youth such as anorexia, until trauma therapy or other therapeutic support. Indeed, also the counselling centre of “Integration House” describes in its annual report that a considerable part of their clients suffers from serious mental conditions — frequently as a result of severe traumatisation caused by war, torture, flight, loss and discrimination experiences — who often need intensive counselling at very short intervals (“Integration House”, 2012). They that due to their dreadful experiences many refugees suffered from mental or physical impairment caused by either experiences of war and conflict or physically demanding hard work. Interface reported that 45 per cent of the refugees they supported had health issues and received case management-oriented long-term care and these persons often had difficulties learning German. The assignments and related processes with authorities are complex regarding such health issues and the incapacity for work. Several other stakeholders as well mentioned that a considerable part (40 – 50 per cent) of the refugees they counsel and support, are traumatized, often without proper care. The lack of interpreters in Austrian hospitals and lack of therapeutic offers for traumatized refugees was also raised as major issues. On the other hand, therapeutic measures only made sense if refugees themselves believed they need help. A job-coach also held that it was difficult for traumatized persons to act confident in job interviews. Also experiences by mentors in an Austrian-wide mentoring programme initiated by the Chamber of Commerce confirm trauma issues, which are important to be addressed as otherwise the integration into the labour market is difficult. A sensitive handling of traumatized people is very important according to feedback from these mentors. A refugee counselling stakeholder pointed out that it takes sensitive AMS counsellors because refugees are often reluctant to talk about their physical or psychological condition immediately. Counsellors must establish a solid relationship of trust. This is difficult to realize in the recent system, because of the time-limit of few minutes per AMS counselling. Moreover, an academic researcher, emphasized that the experience of flight related traumata have a particular negative effect when persons affected do not have an occupation as they are at greater risk of a mental illness. Employment helps to distract. The longer this inactivity lasts and there is no possibility to distract, the more difficult it is to process the experience of flight, which then can lead to conflicts within the family.



## The duration and experience of the asylum procedure as well as reception conditions

Many stakeholders claimed that one main key challenge for refugees was the long duration of the asylum procedure, during which asylum-seekers are being left in doubt for too long and are basically excluded from effective access to the labour market during the on-going procedure. The “time spent just with waiting” has frequently been mentioned as a key factor for later education- and employment-related problems: Stakeholders called this a “waste of time” and “long dead years” before the status is granted – several years of having to behave passively and to wait with an uncertain status. The period of the asylum procedure has to be considered because in the course of those years a lot happens on the cognitive (trust and self-confidence) level and the prolonged inactivity is described as disastrous. Long duration of the asylum process makes people losing hope. At the beginning they have great visions of their future but the longer they are waiting the more their hopes vanish. Asylum-seekers are often isolated and miss any daily routine. Due to inactivity during the asylum and the consequent dequalification and loss of occupational skill, finding a “good” job after the being granted asylum is very difficult, which again has implications on affordable housing. Several of these problems start with the beginning of the asylum process, whereas integration is only being target of state policy once the refugee or subsidiary protection status has been granted.

About one third of refugees interviewed for this research had gone through asylum procedures, which lasted for several years, i.e. longer than two years. Refugees and persons with subsidiary protection often referred to lengthy procedures and also emphasized this time as lost years: “*When you live quasi on stand-by, this phase where you do nothing*”. These years of stand-by reportedly have a strong influence on the integration later on: persons concerned have a lot of time and nothing to do, nothing useful – it is a “*meaningless life*”, as a Iranian refugee formulated it whose asylum procedure had taken almost four years. Many described that period in asylum-seekers accommodations as difficult, as for instance a refugee in Graz, who received the status about one year ago, stated: “*Every minute, every second here was difficult*”. Also several refugees and persons with subsidiary protection pointed out the fact of not having access to the labour market during the (long) procedures as a difficult factor.

Several stakeholders equally emphasized that currently asylum-seekers were confronted with a very difficult vocational situation and that, due to the lengthy asylum procedure, were in fact often not allowed to work for years. This especially affects young people<sup>39</sup> as they cannot learn a profession and get stuck after the completion of compulsory schooling. Many stakeholders confirmed in this regard that a phenomenon similar to long-time unemployed persons occurs with certain refugees. In this case, strengthening of trust and the search for existing resources is necessary.

Consequently, this also leads to language deficiencies as it also prevents investments in human capital: why should asylum-seekers learn German without knowing whether they will be granted asylum or whether they will be deported tomorrow. And for those who despite this make the effort, a lengthy asylum process also means “years of uncontrolled language acquisition”. Hence, persons after several years in Austria still do not speak the language well enough in order to continue their education here, from where they stopped in their home country. Finally, one counselling stakeholder added that recognition/validation of qualifications, learning German or further education and training were long-term objectives, and that refugees often had the feeling of “wasting time” if they pursued these goals. This is especially relevant if the way to acquire a positive status was long because they feel that even more time gets lost.

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<sup>39</sup> It should be noted, that there has been a recent change of policy in this regard: Now asylum-seekers under 25 years are allowed to do vocational training in those occupations where there is a proven lack of apprentices. The Public Employment Office (AMS) decides regionally where such lack exists.

Furthermore, the long duration and the uncertainty about the asylum process frequently causes health problems, which have an impact on education and ultimately the continuity of work and can even lead to the loss of employment, as pointed out by several stakeholders.

Conditions and quality of accommodation for asylum-seekers vary remarkably in descriptions. Several refugees and holders of subsidiary protection mentioned isolation during the asylum procedure, partly also because of the remote location of the asylum-seekers accommodations. Asylum-seekers could thus not have enough contact with Austrians, only speak their own instead of learning the new language. A traumatized young man from Chechnya with subsidiary protection, who was also in therapeutic treatment and who had been in detention pending deportation in Vienna before he, his mother and 16-year-old sister were sent for six months to a provincial reception facility in the mountains with very scarce public transport possibilities, compared it to „It’s like detention pending deportation, just with a view.“

Several employment stakeholders stated that the fact that there were hardly any integration measures for asylum-seekers was problematic: they stressed the importance of language acquisition during the asylum procedure and described that many refugees lose their qualifications because they did not receive (any funding for) educational measures during the time of their asylum procedure – as asylum-seekers are excluded from all funding opportunities. Only some NGOs offer courses, training and projects. Reports by refugee respondents on availability and quality of German classes in asylum-seeker accommodations vary considerably.

Respondents reported that negative experiences made during the asylum procedure and in reception facilities were of long lasting nature and that their impact generally took time to fade away, and for some still accompanies their subsequent lives.

## Language

It is important to note that the vast majority of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection emphasized the importance of mastering the language when they arrived in Austria and received their status. Respondents often mentioned language acquisition and courses as one of their first steps after being granted status. Most started already to learn German during the asylum procedure, sometimes in self-study due to the lack of available German courses. For example, an Iranian refugee living in Salzburg reported that he asked his family to send him a dictionary and grammar books from his home country so that he could self-study in the pension (accommodation for asylum-seekers) during his almost four years in the asylum process. He now has C1 level German. One refugee mother of two in her early 30s who had started learning language during four years in the asylum procedure and now has B1 language level, put it like this:

“ Without language you cannot do anything!

Chechen woman, recognized refugee for 3 years

Refugees and persons with subsidiary protection also emphasized the importance of a certain level of German knowledge as a factor for finding employment or understand letters from authorities. Language (and lack thereof) was also mentioned regularly as a decisive factor, also in the area of housing as mentioned before. Respondents also referred to incidences with doctors and authorities, where the counterpart would not speak to them in the absence of an interpreter, who the refugees had to arrange.

## ↳ Gaps and suggestions to be addressed to facilitate refugee integration

Stakeholders highlighted gaps to be addressed and provided suggestions, which would improve refugee integration with regard to these cross-cutting factors.

After status is granted, family reunification and housing should be facilitated, whereby a holistic view of the entire family system was pointed out as important. Support of refugees during integration processes for longer periods of time was emphasized as well. Furthermore, courses with integrated therapeutic support are crucial for the group of refugees. Indeed, putting a special emphasis on trauma, social work offering specific help and support for refugees with such special needs, should be considered an important part of education measures.

During the asylum procedure, stakeholders call for ensuring fair and more efficient procedures so as to prevent the demoralisation and uncertainty that affect asylum-seekers and the loss of time, which is missing later in the integration process. Indeed, according to most stakeholders integration should start during the asylum procedure: This means that asylum-seekers should have the possibility to constructively participate in society and not be forced to inactivity and isolation, which does result in no chance to contact and communicate with members of the receiving society. In addition, there should be language acquisition possibilities and a more effective access to the labour market for asylum-seekers. It is being argued that upon arrival asylum-seekers are very motivated to work. If they entered the labour market right away, they would quickly realize that they are not competitive without having acquired the language. Access to the labour market for asylum-seekers would also be effective in terms of countering the black economy, deskilling, prevent long-term unemployment phenomenon etc. Finally, stakeholders call for more service and support, access to independent information but also personal advice in order to provide information about and access to free counselling services, especially concerning legal and psychological counselling and, where necessary, therapeutic support.

With regards to therapeutic and medical aid, easier access to therapeutic and medical aid should be facilitated. A major problem emphasized concerns missing therapeutic treatment places, i.e. insufficient numbers of psychotherapy places and available possibilities in mother tongue. There is for instance a non-profit organisation called “Hemayat” in Vienna which provides interpreter mediated psychotherapy, psychological consulting and medical support. However, stakeholders supporting refugees report that waiting times to get such a therapy place are long and some stated further, that for some of the women participating in their courses the inhibition threshold to search for therapeutic help on their own, independently – although with some support – was too high. Finally, assignments and related processes with authorities are complex for counsellors regarding such health issues and the incapacity for work. It is said to be necessary to facilitate these procedures and make them more efficient.

## Other factors influencing refugee integration

In addition, to the factors influencing identified areas of integration outlined above, consultations with stakeholders and refugees concluded on several other relevant factors. The following section will therefore highlight the need for a reference person in Austria, citizenship, the health system, public awareness and the particular situation of persons with subsidiary protection. Finally, refugees also noted their feelings towards Austria and the positive sides experienced.

### Reference person in Austrian society

Several stakeholders in different contexts mentioned the advantage and necessity of a permanent reference person for refugees in Austria during the process of integration. It would be of great advantage for them to have a person who could explain certain, often complex, issues related to life in Austria but also just to be able to talk about problems. This would be a bridge into Austrian society. The contact to Austrians is missing, although for instance some NGOs aim to tackle this.

Several refugees also pointed out the challenge and complexity of varying bureaucratic rules and entitlements between Provinces but also within a single Province, between one city and its surrounding districts, e.g. regarding the prolongation periods of refugee Convention passports or needs-based Minimum Welfare Support. Generally, a few of them also pointed out the benefits of a potential Austrian contact person for support, orientation in society and practice of language skills.

## Particular situation of persons with subsidiary protection

Findings of all the consultations, in particular with persons granted subsidiary protection, clearly show a particular set of issues relevant for this group and a significantly even more challenging situation as regards life and integration in Austria.

Factors and issues emphasized by holders of subsidiary protection included the lack of freedom of travel outside of Austria as a predominant and recurring theme for all respondents with subsidiary protection. As currently a travel document is only issued for humanitarian reasons,<sup>40</sup> and this being interpreted rather strictly, persons complained of being confined to Austria for many years, without any possibility of visiting family, even if ill but not considered seriously ill by the authorities; and friends in other countries. “It is like a prison.” One Iraqi with subsidiary protection for over six years, reported that after he wanted to visit his sick father a second time in Sweden (the first time he was granted a travel document), his application was denied with the argument that his father had been released from hospital and “your father is still alive”.

Especially older persons expressed how painful this was in their advanced age not knowing if they would still be able to see their family in their lifetime.

Two computer scientists from Iraq also considered it a detriment in finding a job as employers often required “willingness to travel” or to do a training outside Austria. One of them, which was granted subsidiary protection 3 years ago, described how he almost lost the possibility of an excellent job opportunity in his field of expertise due to this factor, but was lucky to have an understanding, engaged employer:

“ After several training sessions and participation at a Caritas project, he managed to find a good job in his field by himself. The job, however, required travelling to Germany for training, which was problematic. At the job interview he did not mention that he did not have a travel document, as he had learned from previous negative experiences. After receiving his employment contract he approached the Aliens Police, who told him to do that training in Austria. He was told that he could apply for a travel document but that it would be denied, as there would be no humanitarian reason. Even the AMS wrote a letter on his behalf to the Aliens Police. When the employment was about to start, he informed his supervisor of the limited freedom of travel due to his status. His supervisor showed understanding and addressed the Aliens Police personally, whereupon he was issued a travel document for seven months, the remaining validity of his subsidiary protection card, and only valid for Germany. He does not know if he will have to travel again for his job after these seven months.”

Generally, lack of knowledge about their status in the general population and the card as such, regarding the rights they have: for instance when applying for jobs, employers sometimes do not know what this status means, that they are entitled to access the labour market etc.; and problems with housing and landlords but also partly authorities, colleges of higher education, amongst other also requiring that they do not need a notarization of documents proving that they had already started to study in their home country in order to be admitted to study. One woman even reported staff of the Chamber of Commerce was not aware of her status when she wanted to take over and run a shop she bought; another man experienced a barrier when he wanted to pass the practical exam for the driving license or register a mobile phone.

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<sup>40</sup> It should, however, be noted, that this restriction is about to change with a legal amendment entering into force on 1 January 2014.

One main barrier to integration emphasized was the limitation of one year for their residence permits.<sup>41</sup> This implicated feelings of permanent insecurity as to whether they will be granted a extension:

““ *They let the person in the air, not in the sky, not on earth. There is no certainty. Either one ultimately receives asylum or one falls sick from this.*

Iraqi computer scientist granted subsidiary protection 3 years ago

Other consequences are that landlords refuse to rent out housing because of this limitation, while many rent contracts run longer, and employers do not hire them because of this time limitation.

Furthermore, persons with subsidiary protection (to the contrary of recognized refugees) are not entitled to state study support and scholarships, as well as in some Provinces to social housing and only limited social welfare.

Due to the difficulties described above, it seems almost impossible to get an adequate flat in Vienna for persons granted subsidiary protection without major support by NGOs. This has led to a precarious situation including the existence of mass lodgings in Vienna where landlords take advantage of their difficult situation but where persons still feel compelled to stay due to a lack of alternatives: those mass lodgings are often small, overcrowded, without functioning heating, run down and over-priced.

““ *My first year in Austria (with subsidiary protection) was very difficult. I had no employment, a bad apartment, did not know anybody and asked myself: “Will I make it in Austria?”*

Iraqi computer scientist granted subsidiary protection 3 years ago

““ *You see how we live here, I was told, like animals. Nobody should have to live like this and nobody seems to care about our housing situation here.*

Male holder of subsidiary protection, living in one of these mass lodgings

## Citizenship

The aim to acquire citizenship was mentioned by many refugees, often as a sense of ultimate security but for instance also regarding opportunities for children and a better future for them (studies abroad, employment for instance as police officer etc.) Very often, however, the prerequisites for acquiring citizenship were mentioned as almost insurmountable obstacles, in particular the stable level of income requirement and not to have relied on social assistance for three consecutive years.<sup>42</sup> One family in Upper Austria for instance had not even drawn on any social assistance in years, although entitled to it, in order not to jeopardize their citizenship chances. Several mentioned that they rather worked somehow than followed an education in order to be able to get the citizenship later. However, due to the low level of income and temporariness of their employment and loss of jobs, they had not yet managed to acquire citizenship. Frustrations were voiced in particular by refugees and persons with subsidiary protection who had already been in Austria for many years and where still not able to fulfil the requirements for citizenship and who compared their situation with relatives in other European countries, who all had already acquired citizenship much faster.

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<sup>41</sup> It should, however, be noted, that this limitation will be extended to two years with a legal amendment entering into force on 1 January 2014.

<sup>42</sup> A Legal amendment adopted in July 2013 and entered into force 1st August 2013 requires as necessary income for 36 months within the last six years and at least the last six months before the application. This should mean that a temporary reliance on social assistance would no longer hinder acquiring citizenship.

## Health system

It should be noted that almost all refugees and persons with subsidiary protection interviewed for this research mentioned as positive aspect in Austria that they were very satisfied with the Austrian health system and health insurance: They spoke of it in high and appreciative terms and reported good experiences with hospitals and doctors and also pointed out that ambulances arrived quickly. They were content with the medical help in Austria, and also access to the health system was described as good and easy.

Language issues were mentioned, though, just like coping strategies, i.e. to be prepared before hospital visits, what they had to talk about, looking up medical terms and taking friends or acquaintances with them as interpreters. The latter became sometimes an issue as medical appointments had to be cancelled because no interpreter was available. One refugee woman from Afghanistan outlined a situation where the general lack of information combined with bad German language knowledge and a (at least in her view) xenophobic attitude of a doctor, led to serious financial loss, which also affected her child: Lacking explanation on the system of medical examinations as recommended in the Austrian “mother and child pass”, she missed one appointment, which the doctor saw as her own fault. This ultimately resulted in a reduction of her childcare benefits.

A state level stakeholder noted that for the group of elderly and persons with health problems, general legal amendments, therefore also applying to refugees, will aim amongst others to provide elderly and persons with health issues with funds for rehabilitation and an additional amount equivalent to the unemployment benefit, if they actively participate in health-related, therapeutic measures. Consequently, this would lead to an increased offer of funded psychological therapy.

Nevertheless, some persons with migration background do not feel understood or taken seriously by the Austrian health system or complain about inadequate treatment, according to some stakeholders. This has to do with health, therapy and disease concepts often very different in the country of origin. Differences in perceptions of diseases, e.g. occurrence of psychosomatic disorders, however, have an even larger impact. A stakeholder referred to situations in which healthcare professionals do not take migrants with psychosomatic disorders seriously. Finally, it is often believed that psychotherapy is rejected as a solution for psychosomatic illness by migrants. In fact, in a case described by a counselling stakeholder, a young refugee girl, who dropped out of a so far successful school career because of progressing anorexia due to her flight experiences, had a very ambivalent or even negative attitude towards the offered therapeutic support. She did a trauma therapy at a hospital and formulated during the counselling session, which she attended together with her mother, principle reservations against the method, through which she felt overburdened by the way she was compelled to confront her experiences.

### Practice example

The Counselling Centre for Migrants together with the Vienna Regional Insurance Scheme work on strategies on how to overcome recent problems in health care: They produced flyers in refugees' first language and offered medical examinations for asylum-seekers free of charge.

Project “MiMi-GesundheitslotsInnen in Wien” was initiated by People's Aid together with the State Secretary for Integration and reacts to the increasingly complicated world of healthcare, where migrants often feel overwhelmed by all the information and options given to them.

## Positive sides of Austria and subjective feelings towards Austria

Apart from the health system, other positive aspects of Austria mentioned by refugees are the public transportation system, the possibility of education, that some Austrians are very helpful and the (financial) support by NGOs and the AIF.

Feelings towards Austria differ amongst refugees and persons with subsidiary protection: Feelings of disappointment, bitterness were expressed as well as feelings of security and gratitude:

“ I love, like Austria, I want to stay here. I find it a very beautiful, peaceful country and good people. That is why I want to integrate into this society. ... If somebody feels good in a country and feels at home here, one strives to integration and to live on. ... Now because I found freedom and saved my life, I thought I can start to live again. Now I can breathe and move freely. I am happy to be in Austria.

Iranian refugee with status for 5 years

## Public awareness

The theme of public awareness and the image of refugees was also a recurrent theme in consultations. Although not an objective indicator of integration, it was felt important to stress the influence of lack of knowledge and subjective negative views about refugees and their situation in Austria and the need for a more positive public image of asylum-seekers and refugees.

### Practice example

The “MiA-award” honours women for their success and activities making Austria a better economic or social place. This often includes refugee women who are very well integrated in Austria.

“Medienservicestelle Neue ÖsterreicherInnen” (media service office new Austrians) is a team of young journalists, partly with migrant background who provide information of the situation and role of persons with migrant background in Austria for journalists of Austrian Media. The aim is to support Austrian media with research in the field of integration and migration.

UNHCR brochure “A look behind prejudices” which addresses the most common prejudices about refugees and asylum-seekers and rebuts them based on facts. Asylum-seekers and refugees are directly given a voice and tell their stories.

# Conclusions and recommendations

This study reviewed trends in development of integration indicators and considered the methods of integration evaluation and the inclusion of refugee specific data. It has also explored specific barriers or facilitators to refugee integration in Austria. Based on a review of literature relating to refugee integration and through consultations with integration stakeholders and refugees, this study tested assumptions about what are relevant integration indicator policy areas in the case of refugees and what are the main factors influencing success, or the lack of success in those areas. This study did not however evaluate the integration of refugees in Austria.

With a variety of activities at local level, the adoption of a National Action Plan on Integration and the establishment of a State Secretariat for Integration, the integration of migrants has become a major focus of national policymaking in Austria in recent years. One aim of the increased engagement in integration-related activities was and still remains the assessment and impact evaluation of integration measures at different levels, including the identification of good practices. Even if the government's commitment to refugee integration is evident through existing integration support, many of the measures taken in the past mainly focused on migrant integration and to a lesser extent on refugee integration. The present study, therefore, seeks to highlight those areas of integration which are particularly relevant for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

Overall, about 160 stakeholders and refugees were met for the purpose of the study. Through dialogue with stakeholders and directly with refugees, barriers and facilitators of refugee integration were explored. The main areas of inquiry were housing, education, employment, and social engagement as well as cross-cutting issues, such as family reunification, the time in the asylum process and health. They stemmed from the review of the literature and were decided upon in direct consultation with members of the National Reference Group, a group of experts from academia, the Government and the main refugee NGOs selected for their expertise on refugee integration in Austria. Consultation with stakeholders and refugees alike provided a clear insight into some of the key integration barriers and facilitators, as well as some of the practices developed to support refugees in the integration process.

Integration has a different meaning for everyone, a fact which was exemplified in consultation with members of receiving society. However, some elements defining integration emerged. As such integration was found to be an ongoing two-way process, peaceful living together without abandoning the culture of origin, the ability to live a self-determined independent life and participation in all areas of life. Integration was defined as an ongoing process, which takes a long time.



## Integration goals and policy areas

The integration policy areas identified in the Austrian NAP are language and education, employment, rule of law and values, health and social inclusion, intercultural dialogue, sports and social engagement, as well as housing. While most of these areas were generally identified in this study as relevant for integration, a review of policy areas and indicators has shown that certain refugee-specific areas, such as family unity, reception and asylum, documentation, and the transition period from asylum-seeker to refugee are not reflected.

The literature review and consultations undertaken for this study jointly confirmed that the specific challenges refugees face in integrating are complex and require some special measures. Family separation, the time spent in the asylum procedure and the process of seeking asylum, absent documentation, trauma and violence-related health issues, are key refugee-specific elements which influence if and how refugees are able to integrate in their new society. The variance of policy areas and measurable indicators demonstrates that knowing what to measure is clearly a challenge. There is therefore a need for clarification of the integration goals within the integration policy areas and clarity on how evidence from what is measured can and will inform integration policy.

This study has found that perception of integration sometimes varies considerably between the government and policymakers and those of refugees and stakeholders. Broad views at government level of integration being process-related and with earning the new language, acquiring work and housing at its heart reflect the refugees' understanding. However, refugees go further, grounding their idea of integration on being fully aware of rights and responsibilities, the passage of time, and subjectively developing "feelings of being at home". Therefore, governments' integration goals of equality, inclusion and achievement may be reached by refugees in ways different to government expectations or desires, and the expectation that everyone will achieve set goals does not reflect reality.

### RECOMMENDATION 1:

Integration policy areas supporting refugee integration should reflect refugee-specific concerns of family unity, reception and the asylum process, documentation, and the transition period immediately after recognition.

## RECOMMENDATION 2:

Where integration goals are formulated, flexibility should be considered for refugees as to how integration is understood and assessed, recognizing that integration may not occur in all policy areas in the desired timeframe.

## Refugee integration data

This study found that there is limited quantitative research or data relating to refugee integration. Little is therefore known about how refugees are faring in a number of areas considered relevant for integration in the NAP. Existing research and literature on refugee integration is rather mainly qualitative and looks at integration basically at a given point in time, as a snap shot, and not as a process. By contrast, evaluation of migrant integration is more comprehensive, aiming to look at integration over time. Qualitative research concerning both migrants and refugees deals with the following areas as key areas of integration: employment, housing, education and language, social integration/inclusion, and health.

There are only estimates on how many refugees are currently residing in Austria. In migration and integration statistics, citizenship is still the main variable for the identification of persons with a migrant background. However, also “country of birth” has increasingly become available in a number of key datasets, for instance some data related to unemployment of refugees and persons with subsidiary protection do exist with the labour market authorities (*Arbeitsmarktservice*) and the Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection. Similarly, there are data on social housing allocated to recognized refugees as well as naturalization statistics according to the variables “convention refugee”, “previous citizenship”, “country of birth”, “marital status”, “place of residence”, “age” and “sex”. However, without refugee specific data, the relatively small refugee population is not discernible within the overall migration context. As such refugee specific needs for integration support are hard to identify.

In terms of gender specific integration data the research did not reveal comprehensive information. Review of literature found that there is higher likelihood of illiteracy and lack of schooling or formal learning in groups of migrant women who, based on country of origin, are likely to be mainly refugees or other protection beneficiaries. Consequently, these women face particular integration challenges which put them in an even more difficult position than other migrants and refugees. For instance, the limited level of German language skills in this group may result in many women only working in un-skilled or low-skilled areas, which are often low-paid and with poor working conditions. In light of these circumstances women often decide against employment and in favour of staying at home, in particular if they have children to care for. Another gender related finding from consultations in this study relates to the difficulty in engaging in education activities or in employment because of the need to take care of children. Within the family, women often have the role of keeping the “link to the country of origin” and of preserving “old cultural values”. This role makes it even more difficult for them to open up to the new situation in the host country.

With respect to age specific integration data, the research had only limited results. Through consultations with stakeholders and older refugees, it came to light that elderly refugees often prefer to, or had to, work in low paid jobs in order to earn some money rather than investing their time in education without any income. Older refugees also faced more difficulties in learning and acquiring a certain level of German. Limited language skills, however, constitute an additional barrier for successfully accessing the labour market, which is per se already challenging for elderly people, including Austrians. In addition, many aged persons, in particular women, have to cope with downward professional mobility, which means that they will presumably never be able to exercise their professions in Austria as they previously practised in the country of origin.

Gaps in information and in measuring refugee integration in general, and in a number of refugee-specific issues that influence refugee integration in particular, were found in this study. These areas include the time spent in the asylum process and flight-related factors, family unity, the absence of documentation, and the transition phase from asylum-seeker to refugee. Although there is a general awareness that refugees have endured trauma, disruption and upheaval, this awareness is not

matched by the collection of data to measure how these factors influence integration. UNHCR finds this to be a gap in knowledge that is integral to understanding refugees' integration "success" and trajectories in Austria. There is therefore a need to bring the specificity of refugees into integration measuring and evaluation, where integration indicators are used to measure integration attainment and inform integration policy.

### **RECOMMENDATION 3:**

Further studies on refugee integration could usefully focus on gathering data on the impact of particular challenges for refugees to achieve formulated integration policy areas. Future research should place at its centre cross-cutting and interlocking areas that are specific to refugees, such as family separation, time spent in the asylum procedure and reception, absence of documentation, the transition phase upon recognition, language, and health in order to inform policy.

### **RECOMMENDATION 4:**

Measuring integration of refugees is important but not in isolation from qualitative data, which provides insights into the subjective level at which integration occurs. A combined approach involving collection of quantitative and qualitative data, preferably on a longitudinal basis, would be valuable, including, for example, age, gender, regional and educational factors. Refugees' experiences should be included in such efforts and their views considered in relation to the design and evaluation of integration support.

### **RECOMMENDATION 5:**

Targeted longitudinal qualitative research will be useful to better understand refugee integration in all policy areas and to understand the nuances that statistical data cannot reveal. Indicators related to legal aspects, such as attainment of citizenship and family reunification, are therefore relevant and should be included.

### **RECOMMENDATION 6:**

Where refugee integration is mainstreamed into overall integration of third country nationals, and where existing evidence suggests refugees have needs and experiences different from the overall migrant population, specific measures should be taken to assess and meet such needs for refugees.

## **Thematic findings**

While the study confirms that integration policy areas reflected in Austrian policy and research, such as employment, housing and health, are of relevance for both migrants and refugees, it also revealed that some areas are specifically relevant for refugees only, those are family unity, reception and asylum, documentation, and the transition period from asylum-seeker to refugee.

Other key findings of the study relate to factors negatively impacting on refugee integration, such as the lack of networks, missing documents and problems of validation of qualifications. In the area of employment, deskilling was specifically emphasized, even if not only related to refugees. A general lack of information about the legal status of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, for instance among employers and landlords, was also a recurrent theme throughout all consultations.

Through consultations with stakeholders and refugees, this study found that most policy areas are cross-cutting and have influence on each other to varying degrees, determining the 'success' or otherwise of integration in different policy areas. The lack of, or poor, housing, for instance, influences the ability to acquire language skills and to find employment. The lack of employment again often results in poor housing conditions. Language skills, on the other hand, were considered as having direct impact on all other areas. The importance of a certain level of German knowledge was repeatedly emphasized as a requisite for finding employment and for understanding documents from authorities. Also in the area of housing and for communicating on health issues language skills were described as decisive factor. This interdependency makes integration a very complex process to understand. While the complexity might turn integration into a process requiring time, it also may show how positive developments within one area may facilitate positive developments within another area.

At the outset of this study the NRG and stakeholders highlighted and discussed the need to keep in mind that refugees in Austria come from very different, individual backgrounds which will inevitably impact their personal integration process. Although this report has shown that there are certain common structural obstacles and challenges that refugees face, these difficulties will not be solved if refugees are not recognized as individuals, rather than viewed as a homogenous group for whom the exact same interventions are envisaged. For the integration process to work well, it is important to respond to each person as an individual with a unique background, personality and resources. Every refugee has a different human capital brought in the form of previous education and experiences and networks in Austria.

## Employment

This study shows the added difficulties refugees are confronted with in terms of employment compared to Austrians. The specific difficulties faced by refugees relate in particular to the lack of recognition of the qualifications and experiences acquired in the country of origin and to language issues. The specific situation of beneficiaries of subsidiary protection also has a strong impact on their experience seeking employment. Stakeholders working with employment noted that beneficiaries of subsidiary protection can have a hard time convincing potential employers to hire them if they have to rely on a temporary residence permit for one-year, which can be renewed only for one year at the time.

### RECOMMENDATION 7:

All refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection should specifically be supported to finding employment upon recognition of status. Existing good practices from other countries, for instance Sweden, could be considered in this respect.

### RECOMMENDATION 8:

To support such efforts the Federal Asylum Office and the future Federal Office for Migration and Asylum respectively could refine its statistical dataset relating to socio-professional data of asylum-seekers with a view to enabling the labour market service to identify key tendencies and mapping patterns of professional activities exercised by protection holders.

### RECOMMENDATION 9:

In order to ease the labour market integration of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, early mapping of their qualifications and capabilities should be promoted and on-the-job initiatives for recognition of skills and competencies be adopted. Opportunities could include volunteering, internships, work experience and apprenticeships.

## RECOMMENDATION 10:

In light of the lacking awareness of protection holders' entitlements, accurate and timely information about rights, entitlements and documentation should be disseminated to relevant service providers and stakeholders.

## Education

Even if education and language are in principle separate policy areas, they were considered together in this study. Refugees' education has an impact on their chances to find employment and improve their economic situation. A common barrier within this area is, similar to employment, that many refugees lack documents to prove their qualifications. Hence, also in this policy area early interventions, such as mapping and validation of qualifications and capabilities, are particularly important for this group. Preferably this should be carried out as early as possible, and could be done already during the asylum procedure.

A key aspect of the connection between education and integration relates to learning the German language. However, limited support to attend advanced language courses are available for refugees. Language allows a refugee to feel part of the wider society, creates a sense of belonging, enables friendships, and facilitates day-to-day living. This study illustrates that language acquisition, or the lack of it, is vital to all facets of refugee integration, cross-cutting every area. Consultations showed that a lack of language skills presents barriers to networking, retraining, job-seeking, housing, employment, and severely restricts the ability to be self-reliant. Refugees quickly become isolated by their lack of language. Specific influences on language and education identified include employment, agency support and the provision of information, validation of certificates and skills, language training, age, family unity, household economics, health and the asylum process.

## RECOMMENDATION 11:

More research is needed on language acquisition and in particular on whether learning German at work might be a more effective alternative than attending German classes only. Such research could help influence future policies on language acquisition. For instance, if proven that language can be learnt better in the work place existing practice from other countries where language learning and work opportunities have been combined could be considered for newly recognized refugees interested in it.

## RECOMMENDATION 12:

When undertaking further research, the impact of refugees' special needs on their abilities to learn German and to engage in other education activities should be looked at more systematically.

## RECOMMENDATION 13:

Higher levels of language training should be made available to refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in order to allow the latter to improve their language skills as much as possible, in particularly those whose prior educational or professional background indicates a need.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 14:**

Language training should be made available as early as possible. Existing practices from other countries, including volunteer networks for language support, could be looked at.

## **Housing**

In consultations with stakeholders, housing was identified as one of the most important areas for refugee integration, with impact also on other areas of integration. Refugees however often face major challenges to access affordable and appropriate housing on the private market. In addition, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection may face prejudices from landlords and real estate agents who often lack information about their legal status and related entitlements. The links between housing and other areas of integration came out clearly regarding the questions on rural or urban housing. Consultations in this study showed that many refugees move to larger urban areas because of access to social networks, support and employment opportunities.

There is little data on refugees and housing but available research shows that refugees struggle with accessing suitable, affordable, secure, independent housing. Reasons include landlords' reluctance to rent to refugees; the urgency with which refugees must find housing after recognition of status; refugees' lack of employment, and therefore of secure income, particularly in the transition phase; a lack of security deposit; and the lack of work contract.

This study found that refugees overwhelmingly felt the transition period immediately after granting of refugee status is highly difficult and stressful regarding housing. Even if there is an up to four-month transition phase for refugees in Austria, refugees sometimes are driven to poor housing.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 15:**

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection should be supported to find appropriate and affordable housing upon recognition.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 16:**

Information to landlords about the rights of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection should be considered as part of integration support.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 17:**

Research should be undertaken to assess the quality and type of housing for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. As potential indicators, the living space and the percentage of household income spent on accommodation could be considered. In the context of further research, the impact of support structures, employment opportunities, language skills, health and lack of networks should also be analyzed.

## Social Engagement

The consultations in this study around social engagement concluded that this is often based on subjective factors of motivation, available time and interest. Measurement of individuals' social engagement often includes involvement in: community activities, school events, religious activities, sports, volunteering, and uptake of citizenship. This study looked at refugees' relationships with institutions and NGOs, friends, fellow nationals and Austrian nationals and found that limited social networks, in particular with native Austrians were another barrier to integration, in particular among newly arrived refugee. Some of the barriers for refugees to engage socially were found to be lack of German language, lack of knowledge about the culture of the receiving society and limited access for refugees to volunteer organisations. Many refugees pointed to the support from organisations as their main entry point to Austrian society and had found this very important for their life. Lack of social engagement or connection were seen to also impede „success“ in other integration policy areas, for instance in finding housing and employment. Lack of networks and social isolation can also result in depression and poor health.

So while there is no doubt about the importance for refugees of engaging socially, whether in a private manner or through an organisation, there is little knowledge on actual participation in organisational life or level of social engagement. This is, among others, due to the limited data kept by organisations, sports clubs or otherwise on the legal status of their membership.

### RECOMMENDATION 18:

To strengthen the social engagement of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, more collective efforts would be needed by all stakeholders to support social networking, such as mentor projects and volunteer interaction.

### RECOMMENDATION 19:

More information should be collected in relation to the links between social engagement on the one hand, and integration more generally on the other. In this context, it would also be worth assessing the impact of social engagement on the subjective well-being of refugees and their feeling about integrating in Austria.

## Cross-cutting areas

### Family separation

Family reunification is not part of Austria's integration framework but the significance of this area on integration was expressed strongly by refugees and several stakeholders. Refugees regularly stated that family reunification was crucial for their well-being and ability to focus on their integration process. However, this study shows that for many achieving family unity is not without its challenges and that lengthy separation before reunification can have a destabilizing impact on family life. In particular, family separation was found to lead to high levels of general stress impacting negatively on refugees' health.

The study found that strong emotions related to difficulties in achieving family reunification are likely to affect the ability to concentrate and learn new things, sometimes even resulting in health problems. Delayed or denied family reunification makes it more difficult for the refugee to begin the integration process. For instance, in order to afford family reunification refugees may accept jobs fully unrelated to their qualifications instead of engaging in education. In addition, family reunification after years of separation, require sometimes difficult adjustments when some family

members have changed or new family members have been added. This area requires more attention from integration policy makers and researchers.

Family separation affects all areas previously discussed: the ability to learn a language, to re-train, to negotiate bureaucracy and officialdom, to search for work, to look for housing, and to build friendships. Enduring isolation and grief in the absence of family reduces an individual's ability to function. In the area of housing, challenges might also be caused after successful family reunification as it might lead, at least in an initial phase, to overcrowded accommodation.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 20:**

The limited knowledge that exists on the impact of family unity, or the lack of it, on integration should be improved through future research. This would enable an understanding of family unity in relation to refugees' integration trajectories and "success".

#### **RECOMMENDATION 21:**

Simplification of the family reunification process and flexible criteria applied in identifying family members in order to promote the comprehensive reunification of families, including extended family members, should be introduced for persons with protection status.

## **Asylum procedures and reception conditions**

The Austrian government has, over recent years, repeatedly acknowledged and emphasized the need to shorten the asylum process in order to reduce the financial and humanitarian costs resulting from a lengthy procedure. Hence, significant efforts to shorten both the first and second instance asylum procedures were seen in the past.

This study emphasizes the impact that the length of an asylum procedure can have on refugee integration. The study has shown the disintegrating effect on refugees a long period waiting for an answer to their asylum claim can have. The uncertainty and vulnerability that asylum-seekers are confronted with during that time may have longstanding implications on their mental health. However, the length of the asylum process, and the dignity and respect experienced in the asylum process are areas hardly covered in the integration literature and where gaps in knowledge of the impact on integration exist. Reception conditions and experiences of asylum-seekers are not represented in policy areas, but the impact on feelings of belonging, of feeling welcome, and having a future were voiced strongly by refugees.

Most significantly, the period of the asylum process was often seen by refugees as wasted time and time lost. As such the asylum period is both one of hope and of uncertainty and inactivity. The inactivity in particular was mentioned as a key factor for later education and employment related problems. Refugees reported that negative experiences made during the asylum procedure and in reception facilities often were of long lasting nature and would impact their lives for many years.

The consultations with refugees also echoed the view among stakeholders that an efficient asylum process has a positive impact on subsequent integration. However, consultations with stakeholders and refugees also revealed that very short asylum procedures may result in special challenges for subsequent integration efforts.

Among the suggestions from stakeholders and refugees to overcome this was that language would be best taught during the asylum stage to establish language proficiency for those later receiving status. This may also provide human capital for those who are unsuccessful and who later return to their country of origin. However, this is unlikely to be effective if the procedure is very lengthy. As such the asylum procedure and its restrictions can erode the very thing the receiving society later



seeks to encourage through integration: independence and self-sufficiency. Access to work has been shown above to improve language skills, increase confidence, increase social connections, in addition to the obvious benefit of reducing costly reliance on welfare benefits.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 22:**

In forthcoming studies on refugee integration indicators relating to the period of the asylum process should be included to increase knowledge of its impact on refugees' subsequent integration.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 23:**

Research should be undertaken to assess also other factors of the time in the asylum process which may impact on refugee integration, those are language acquisition during the asylum period, access to the labour market, opportunities of social engagement as well as social isolation and inactivity.

## Health

Respondents interviewed for the purpose of the project expressed their overall satisfaction with the Austrian healthcare system. At the same time, health was always noted as both a barrier and facilitator to integration, and as an outcome of flight, asylum, and of the many concerns refugees have upon receipt of status. Furthermore it was found that the period during the asylum procedure, with uncertainty and unfamiliarity, can lead to mental suffering and psychological distress. Similarly, family separation has a considerable psychological impact, especially on parents separated from their spouse and/or children, while concerns about the safety of family members also causes considerable stress. Additionally, physical health concerns are common, and before refugees can begin to think about building a future, torture, gender-based abuse, and injuries during conflict and flight require medical attention and counseling. While there is a significant need for mental health support for refugees, such structures in Austria are often considered insufficient to meet such needs.

Apart from research on trauma experienced by refugees and its consequences, there is not much research exclusively on refugees' health and integration. Existing research focuses mainly on migrants generally and much is at a descriptive rather than an analytical level. The available research existing on refugees and health is often interconnected with research on other policy areas where health becomes an influencing factor in those areas, and vice versa. Other examples are the influence of past violent or traumatic experiences leading to depression and disorientation, and the impact that the asylum process has on health. Health was found to be a cross-cutting issue influencing other areas as well. For instance, health influences the ability to learn a new language, and intertwines with employment and housing.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 24:**

Refugees' health should be understood as a cross-cutting issue influencing many aspects of the integration process. As such, more research should be undertaken to understand their specific needs and the impact of different policy areas on refugees' health and therefore their integration.

## RECOMMENDATION 25:

When conducting future evaluations of refugee integration, specific health needs of refugees should be taken into account. Good practice in relation to meeting specific health care needs of refugees should be promoted in the areas such as mental health, support to victims of torture or post-traumatic stress disorder and support to victims of female genital mutilation or gender-based violence.

## Transition

Throughout this study, the period upon recognition as refugee or subsidiary protection beneficiary has been stated as particularly difficult relating to securing housing and employment, and the sudden possibility of everything now being able to start has been highlighted as stressful. This issue is rarely addressed specifically in integration related discourse and is not reflected in policy areas in Austria, but has considerable impact on refugees, their integration, and the support that is able to be provided to them.

In light of the manifold integration challenges for refugees, in particular in the first few months post recognition of status, various stakeholders and refugees pointed to the importance of making available targeted integration support for protection holders during the initial phase after being granted protection. Refugees highlighted in particular that they were highly motivated to work as soon as status was granted but that the difficulties faced in finding work and housing; the lack of information and support meant that many did not succeed and this could lead to depression.

## RECOMMENDATION 26:

Initial targeted integration support to beneficiaries of protection upon recognition should be considered as a good practice. This support should recognize the individual character of integration, for instance through individualized integration plans for refugees or through a personal point of contact for the individual refugee where information on practical and logistical aspects of living in the receiving society can be obtained.

## Citizenship

Consultations with refugees have confirmed that acquiring Austrian citizenship is considered an affirmation that one's residency in Austria is permanent. Naturalization also gives the individual important rights, such as the right to vote and the right to obtain an Austrian national passport.

At the same time, legal requirements for acquiring citizenship were often mentioned as almost insurmountable obstacles. Frustrations were voiced in particular by refugees and persons with subsidiary protection who compared their situation with relatives in other European countries, who had acquired citizenship much faster.

### **RECOMMENDATION 27:**

Qualitative research on the impact of naturalization on refugee integration should be undertaken.

### **RECOMMENDATION 28:**

In view of the positive impact naturalization can have on refugees' commitment to integrate in the host society and on their political participation, ways of further facilitating the naturalization process for refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection should be considered.

## **Beneficiaries of subsidiary protection**

Throughout consultations with stakeholders and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection it was discovered that persons granted subsidiary protection are not only granted a less favourable legal status compared to refugees but actually clearly face a significantly more challenging situation as regards their integration process in Austria.

For instance, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are granted a temporary residence permit valid for one year which, regularly needs to be extended. This was found to cause insecurity in the lives of the protection holders but also negatively impacts on the readiness of landlords and employers to engage with this group of persons. This again results in sometimes precarious housing situations and in limited access to the labour market.

Other factors negatively impacting on integration of subsidiary protection holders in Austria are the requirement of a one-year waiting period before family reunification procedures can be initiated; limited access to social allowances; and restrictions of the right of movement due to sometimes restrictive administrative practices in issuing travel documents. Moreover, an additional challenge faced by beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is the general lack of knowledge about their legal status and entitlements by the local population.

### **RECOMMENDATION 29:**

In future research on integration of protection holders in Austria, specific emphasis should be placed on beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in order to analyse the impact of their particular legal situation on different integration areas.

### **RECOMMENDATION 30:**

In light of the practical obstacles faced by beneficiaries of subsidiary protection in their efforts to integrate in Austria, which makes successful integration even more challenging than for refugees, an equal legal status and, consequently, an equal treatment between those two groups of protection holders is recommended.

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# List of abbreviations

- AIF** Austrian Integration Fund (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds)
- AK** Chamber of Labour (Arbeiterkammer)
- AKIS** Association Afghan Culture, Integration and Solidarity  
(Verein Afghanische Kultur, Integration und Solidarität)
- AMS** Labour Market Service, Public Employment Office (Arbeitsmarktservice)
- ARGE AAG** African and Asian Catholic Communities  
(Arbeitsgemeinschaft Afro-Asiatischer Gemeinden)
- ASKÖ** Association for Sports and Physical Culture  
(Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Sport und Körperkultur in Österreich)
- AST** Contact points for persons with qualifications acquired abroad  
(Anlaufstelle für Personen mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen)
- AVP** Africa Networking Platform (Afrika Vernetzungsplattform)
- BFI** Vocational Training Institute (Berufsförderungsinstitut)
- BMASK** Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection  
(Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz)
- BMUJK** Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture  
(Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur)
- CarBiz** Caritas Educational Centre on Campus (Caritas Bildungszentrum am Campus)
- CV** Curriculum Vitae
- DG** Directorates-General
- ECRE** European Council on Refugees and Exiles
- ECRI** European Commission against Racism and Intolerance  
(Europäische Kommission gegen Rassismus und Intoleranz)
- ENIC-NARIC** European Network of Information Centres – National Academic Recognition  
Information Centre (Nationales Informationszentrum für akademische  
Anerkennung)
- ERCOMER** European Research Centre on Migration and Ethnic Relations
- EU** European Union
- EU-SILC** European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
- ExCom** Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
- GmbH** Company with limited liability (Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung)
- HTL** Technical High School (Höhere Technische Lehranstalt)

- ICMPD** International Centre for Migration Policy Development
- IKEB** Institute for Children's Rights & Parental Training  
(Österreichisches Institut für Kinderrechte & Elternbildung)
- IQUAL** Institut für qualitative Arbeits- und Lebensweltforschung
- ISOP** Innovative social projects (Innovative Sozialprojekte)
- MA 17** Municipal Department 17 - Integration and Diversity  
(Magistratsabteilung 17 - Integration und Diversität)
- MA 50** Municipal Department 50 - Housing Promotion and Arbitration Board for  
Legal Housing Matters (Magistratsabteilung 50 - Wohnbauförderung und  
Schlichtungsstelle für wohnrechtliche Angelegenheiten)
- NAFA** New African Football Academy
- NAP** National Action Plan for Integration (Nationaler Aktionsplan für Integration)
- NGO** Non-governmental organization
- NRG** National Reference Group
- OG** Offene Gesellschaft
- PISA** Programme for International Student Assessment
- RIKO** Regional Integration of Convention Refugees  
(Regionale Integration von Konventionsflüchtlingen)
- UNHCR** United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
- VAVÖ** Federation of the Austrian Alpine Associations  
(Verband alpiner Vereine Österreichs)
- VHS** Viennese Adult Education Centres (Wiener Volkshochschulen)
- VIDC** Vienna Institute for International Dialogue and Co-operation  
(Wiener Institut für internationalen Dialog und Zusammenarbeit)
- WIFO** Austrian Institute of Economic Research Vienna  
(Österreichisches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Wien)

# Annexes

## Annex 1 – List of National Reference Group members

**Ms. Karin Abram**, Head of Department for Refugee and Migration Matters, Caritas Austria;

**Prof. Heinz Faßmann**, Professor for Applied Geography, Spatial Research and Spatial Planning at the University of Vienna, Chairman of the Committee of Migration and Integration Research at the Austrian Academy of Sciences, Head of Expert Council for Integration regarding the implementation of the National Action Plan on Integration advising the Austrian Ministry of Interior;

**Ms. Lisa Fellhofer**, Head, Team Knowledge Management and International Research, and Ms. Edith Vasilyev, Austrian Integration Fund (AIF);

**Ms. Anny Knapp**, Chairwoman, asylkoordination Austria;

**Mr. Christoph Riedl**, Head of Refugee Service, Diakonia, Austria Protestant Refugee Service;

**Mr. Peter Webinger**, Deputy Director-General for legal affairs, responsible for asylum, migration and integration issues, Ministry of Interior.

## Annex 2 – List of stakeholder organisations and experts consulted

Afrika Vernetzungsplattform (AVP) and Radio Afrika

Association Arcobaleno, Verein Begegnung, Linz

Association AKIS, Afghanische Kultur, Integration und Solidarität

Mag. Friedrich Altenburg, academic, Donau University Krems, Department for Migration and Globalisation, Center for Migration, Integration and Security

Amt der Niederösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Wohnungsförderung/Office of the Provincial Government of Lower Austria, department of housing subsidies

Amt der Oberösterreichischen Landesregierung, Abteilung Soziales, Integrationsstelle/Office of the Provincial Government of Upper Austria, Department Social Affairs, Integration office

Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung, Fachabteilung Gesellschaft und Diversität, Referat Diversität, Abteilung Soziales, Referat Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten/Office of the Provincial Government of Styria

Arbeitsmarktservice (AMS)/Labour Market Service, Public Employment Service, Vienna, Upper Austria and Graz, Styria

Arbeiterkammer (AK)/Chamber of Labour, “Labour Market and Integration” department

ASKÖ, Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Sport und Körperkult in Österreich/Association for Sports and Physical Culture in Austria

Beratungszentrum für Migranten und Migrantinnen/Counselling Centre for Migrants

- Arbeitsmarktpolitische Beratungseinrichtung
- “Perspektive” – Recognition and further educational counselling office

BFI (Berufsförderungsinstitut) Oberösterreich, vocational training institute Upper Austria, Linz

Bundesministerium für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur (BMUKK)/ Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, department adult education

Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz (BMAŠK)/Federal Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, section VI "Labour Market", group B, department 7

Caritas

- Bildungszentrum am Campus (CarBiz), Vienna
- Linz and Steyr, Upper Austria
- Integrationszentrum Paraplü, Steyr
- Graz, Styria

Association Danaida, Graz

Diakonia Refugee Service

- Integration department
- INTO Wien
- "ZukunftsRaum"

Association Fair & Sensibel

MMag. Volker Frey, academic legal expert, Klagsverband zur Durchsetzung der Rechte von Diskriminierungsopfern/ Litigation Association of NGOs Against Discrimination

Mag. Dr. Martin Gössl, academic, Fachkoordinator für Gleichbehandlung und Vielfalt der Fachhochschule Joanneum/Equality and Diversity, University of Applied Sciences, Graz

Dipl.Soz. wiss. Kenen Güngör, Research Consultant, expert on integration and diversity issues, research and consultant agency [difference:]

Dr. Konrad Hofer, academic, sociologist, IQUAL - Institut für qualitative Arbeits- und Lebensweltforschung

Immobilien Borger, real estate agency

Industriellenvereinigung/Federation of Austrian Industries, Socio Politics

Association inspire, Verein für Bildung und Management, Projekt "Anerkannt"

Integration office of the city of Linz

"Integration House" Vienna

- Education department
- Knowledge management
- psycho-social support department

Interface Vienna, Department Starting Aid for persons entitled to asylum or holding a subsidiary protection status

Association ISOP (Innovative Sozialprojekte), Graz

Emer. Prof. Dr. Hans-Jürgen Krumm, academic, University of Vienna, Department of German Studies

Association LEFÖ

Dr. Stephan Marik-Lebeck, expert, Statistics Austria

Association "menschen.leben", "Language & Integration" division

Migrare, Upper Austria

Municipal administration MA 17, “Integration and Diversity”, Vienna

Municipal Department 50 (MA 50), Vienna, Housing Promotion and Arbitration Board for Legal Housing Matters, Unit “Soziale Wohnvergabe”

NAFA, New African Football Academy, Integrativer Sportverein/Integrative Sports Association

Österreichischer Bundesfeuerwehrverband/Austrian Federal Fire Service Federation

Österreichischer Gemeindebund/Austrian Association of Municipalities

Österreichischer Integrationsfonds (ÖIF)/Austrian Integration Fund

- Habibi Job Center
- Integrationszentrum Oberösterreich/ Integration Center Upper Austria
- Integrationszentrum Graz/Styria Integration Center
- Integrationszentrum Wien/Viennese Integration Center
- “Zusammen:Österreich”

Österreichischer Verband Gemeinnütziger Bauvereinigungen – Revisionsverband/Austrian Federation of Limited-profit Housing Associations and provincial group Styria

Peregrina, counselling centre for women

Pfadfinder und Pfadfinderinnen Österreichs/Association of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides of Austria

Frauentreff, Verein Piramidops für Migrantinnen/women’s meeting point, association for migrant women

Mag. Norbert Pretenthaler

Univ.-Prof. DDr. Erwin Rauscher, Rektor Pädagogische Hochschule Niederösterreich/University College of Teacher Education in Lower Austria

Mag.a. Dr.in Ursula Reeger, academic, Institute for Urban and Regional Research and Planning, Austrian Academy of Sciences

Prof. Dr. Christoph Reinprecht, academic, Institut für Soziologie, Universität Wien/Institute for Sociology, University of Vienna

Dr. Ariane Sadjed, academic, Austrian Society for Political Education

Univ.-Prof. Dr. Annette Sprung, academic, University of Graz, Institute of Educational Sciences

Association Sprungbrett, Verein für Sport, Bildung und Integration&Association for Sports, Education and Integration

Verband Alpiner Vereine Österreichs/Association of Austrian Alpine Club (VAVÖ)

Volkshilfe Österreich/People’s Aid Austria, Department on Integration and intercultural work

- Vienna
- Upper Austria

Wiener Hilfswerk, Nachbarschaftszentrum/Neighbourhood centre 16. Bezirk/16th district, Vienna

Wiener Rotes Kreuz/Viennese Red Cross, Integrationszentrum/Integration center

Wiener Volkshochschulen (VHS)/Viennese Adult Education Centres, “lernraum.wien”

Wiener Wohnen, research department

Wirtschaftskammer Österreich/Austrian Economic Chambers

- Fachverband der Immobilien- und Vermögenstreuhänder/  
Professional Association of Real Estate and Asset Trustees
- Department of Educational Policy
- Delegate for migration and integration, Social Policy and Health Department

Association Wohnplattform, Netzwerk Wohnungssicherung, Linz and Wels

Association ZEBRA, Interkulturelle Beratungs- Therapiezentrum, Graz

**MEMBERS OF THE RECEIVING SOCIETY CONSULTATION:**

Thomas Breth, Volunteer, Caritas Vienna, Tandem project „Neuland“

Hans Petter Friis, Buddy, Red Cross

Hermine Heger, Teacher at primary school

Evamarie Kallir, Volunteer

Alexander Kraljic, Secretary-General of ARGE AAG – Archdiocese of Vienna

Afra Margaretha, Buddy, “Integration House”

Siegfried Oberlechner, Protestant Pastor in Attersee

Hanna Oberlechner, Pastor’s wife

Peter Schalken, Volunteer

Erich Mohammed Waldmann, Imam

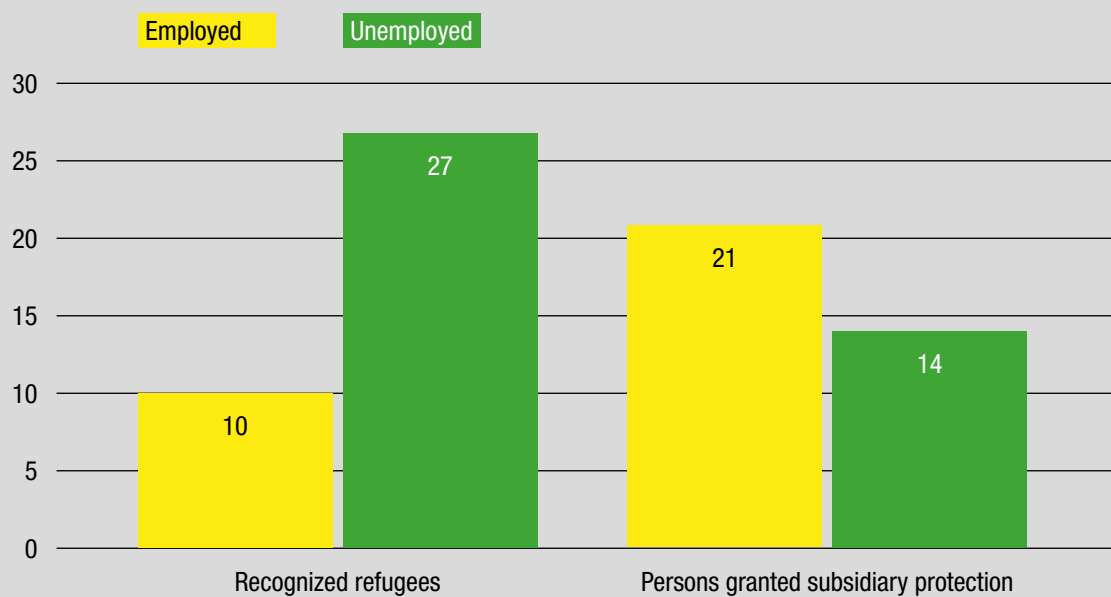
Anne Wiederhold, Artistic Director of “Brunnenpassage“

and individually or by phone: Arthur Baier, volunteer; teacher from a HTL (Höhere Technische Lehranstalt) school in Vienna as well as Stadtbücherei (public library); companies Simacek Facility Management Group GmbH and ISS Austria.

## Annex 3 – Further statistics on refugees consulted

**Table:** Duration of asylum procedure

| Start of asylum procedure | > 1 year  | 1-2 years | 3-5 years | 6-10 years | < 10 years |
|---------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|------------|
| 1997                      |           |           |           |            | 1          |
| 1998                      |           |           | 1         |            |            |
| 2000                      |           | 1         |           |            |            |
| 2001                      |           | 3         | 3         | 1          | 1          |
| 2002                      |           | 1         | 4         |            |            |
| 2003                      | 3         | 1         | 4         | 3          |            |
| 2004                      | 5         | 4         | 2         |            |            |
| 2005                      | 2         | 3         | 1         | 1          |            |
| 2006                      |           | 3         |           |            |            |
| 2007                      | 1         | 1         | 1         |            |            |
| 2008                      | 3         | 5         | 2         |            |            |
| 2009                      | 2         | 2         | 3         |            |            |
| 2010                      | 4         | 5         |           |            |            |
| 2011                      |           | 4         |           |            |            |
| 2012                      | 3         |           |           |            |            |
| <b>Total</b>              | <b>23</b> | <b>33</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>5</b>   | <b>2</b>   |





## Annex 4 – List of indicators

### LIST OF INDICATORS IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL ACTION PLAN FOR INTEGRATION

#### LANGUAGE AND EDUCATION

1. Children in pre-school care facilities 2010 by age and nationality
2. Children requiring remedial language help 2008 by mother tongue and attendance at kindergarten
3. School pupils in the school year 2010/11 by type of school and nationality
4. Regularly matriculated foreign students at public universities in winter semester 2010/11
5. Level of education of the population aged 25-64 years in 2011 by migrant background status
6. Repeaters and early school leavers after 8th grade 2010 by mother tongue and school type

#### WORK AND EMPLOYMENT

7. Employment rates 2011 by age, gender and migrant background status
8. Self-employed persons 2011 by migrant background status and gender
9. Unemployment rates 2011 by nationality and level of education
10. Those with paid occupations 2011 by nationality and best level of education
11. Long term unemployment 2011 by nationality
12. Youth unemployment 2011 by nationality

#### HEALTH AND SOCIAL ASPECTS

13. Net annual income 2010 (median) of those with paid occupations for 12 months (excluding apprentices) by nationality
14. Risk of poverty and manifest poverty 2008 - 2010 by nationality
15. Life expectancy in 2011 at birth and at age 65 years by gender, nationality and country of birth
16. Use of healthcare services 2007 (inoculation, early diagnostic and screening options) by gender and origin

#### SECURITY

17. Level of criminality 2011 by age and nationality
18. Crime victim rate 2011 by nationality (all crimes/offences)

#### HOUSING AND REGIONAL DISTRIBUTION

19. Per capita living space 2011 by migrant background status of the household representative
20. Housing cost quotients 2008 - 2010 by nationality
21. Type of housing 2011 by migrant background status and household representative
22. Population on 1 January 2012 in districts with an immigrant proportion of more than 25% by origin

#### IDENTIFICATION

23. Marriages between persons of Austrian and foreign origin 2011 by nationality/country of birth of the foreign partner
24. Naturalizations 2011 as a percentage of persons resident in Austria for at least 10 years by previous nationality

#### SUBJECTIVE VIEWS OF INTEGRATION

25. Surveys to determine views of integration in 2012 of the population as a whole and of selected groups of Immigrants

## LIST OF INDICATORS OF THE VIENNESE INTEGRATION MONITORING 2009-2011

The integration monitor defines 60 indicators covering the following areas:

- Basic demographic information
- Immigration, integration & legal status
- Education
- Employment & labour market
- Income & social security
- Housing
- Health
- Social & political participation
- Social climate, living together & safety and security

### INTEGRATION MESSEN DIVERSITÄT GESTALTEN

1. Bevölkerung zum Jahresbeginn mit Aufenthaltsbeginn seit 2002 nach Staatsbürgerschaft, Geburtsland, Herkunft, Aufenthaltsdauer, Geschlecht und Altersgruppe beim Aufenthaltsbeginn
2. Bevölkerung nach Migrationshintergrund
3. Haushalte nach Migrationshintergrund
4. Verteilung der Bevölkerung nach Gebietstypen
5. Kleinräumige Konzentrationen nach Herkunftsgruppen
6. Zuzüge, Wegzüge, Wanderungssaldo der Außenwanderung nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Geburtsland
7. Zuzüge, Wegzüge, Wanderungssaldo der Wanderung zwischen Wien und den Bundesländern nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Geburtsland
8. Lebendgeborene nach Staatsangehörigkeiten und Geburtsstaaten der Eltern
9. Einbürgerungen nach Rechtsgrund, Geburtsland, Staatsangehörigkeitsgruppe, Altersgruppe und Geschlecht

### GLEICHSTELLUNG & PARTIZIPATION

10. Zusammensetzung der Bevölkerung nach Aufenthaltsbeginn, Aufenthaltsdauer, Staatsbürgerschaft tsgruppen Altersgruppe und Geschlecht und aufenthaltsrechtlichem Status
11. Anteil der Personen mit Daueraufenthalt-EG an allen mit Aufenthaltstitel niedergelassenen Drittstaatsangehörigen
12. Anteil der Personen mit freiem Arbeitsmarktzugang an allen beschäftigungsbewilligungspflichtigen Drittstaatsangehörigen
13. Anteil der jährlich Eingebürgerten an der Bevölkerung mit ausländischer Staatsangehörigkeit (Einbürgerungsrate)
14. Anteil der Personen mit mehr als 10jähriger Aufenthalts/ Niederlassungsdauer (Einbürgerungsoptionsrate)
15. Anteil von Personen ohne Wahlrecht auf kommunaler Ebene an den Personen im Wahlalter
16. Anteil von Personen mit kommunalem Wahlrecht und Geburtsland Ausland an den Personen im Wahlalter
17. Verteilung der Mitglieder in Bezirksvertretungen und Gemeinderat / Landtag nach eigenem Geburtsland bzw. dem Geburtsland der Eltern
18. Verteilung der Mitglieder von Interessensvertretungen nach eigenem Geburtsland bzw. dem Geburtsland der Eltern
19. Wahlbeteiligung zu den Bezirksvertretungswahlen nach Staatsbürgerschaft

## **BILDUNG, AUS- & FORTBILDUNG**

20. Kindergartenbesuch nach Dauer, Staatsangehörigkeit und Erstsprache, nach Geburtsland, Geburtsland der Eltern
21. Kinder mit Förderbedarf laut Sprachstandscreening nach Dauer des Kindergartenbesuches und Erstsprache
22. SchülerInnen nach Schultypen, Staatsangehörigkeit und Erstsprache (nach Klassenjahrgang und Geburtsland)
23. Lehrlinge nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Geschlecht (nach Geburtsland und Sparte)
24. Ausbildungsbeteiligung: 15bis 24Jährige, die sich in einer Ausbildung über der Pflichtschule befinden nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Geburtsland der Eltern
25. Bildungsstand: Verteilung der Abschlüsse der nicht in Ausbildung befindlichen Bevölkerung in erwerbsfähigem Alter ab 25 Jahren nach Staatsangehörigkeit und Geburtsland der Eltern
26. Studierende BildungsinländerInnen nach Staatsangehörigkeit
27. Lehrkräfte mit Geburtsland Ausland bz w. ausländischer Staatsangehörigkeit nach Schultypen

## **BESCHÄFTIGUNG & ARBEITSMARKT**

28. Erwerbsstatus nach Geschlecht und Migrationshintergrund
29. Unselbstständige und selbstständige Erwerbstätige nach Geschlecht und MH
30. Wirtschaftstätigkeiten nach Staatsbürgerschaft und Geburtsland
31. Beschäftigungsquote mit / ohne Berücksichtigung der Arbeitszeit nach Bildungsniveau, Bildungsstaat, Geburtsland der Eltern und Geschlecht
32. Ausmaß der Dequalifizierung: Anteil der Beschäftigung in Hilfs/Anlern Tätigkeiten nach Bildungsniveau, Bildungsstaat, und Geburtsland der Eltern und Geschlecht
33. Häufigkeit von befristeter und Zeitarbeit nach Bildungsstaat und Geburtsland der Eltern
34. Häufigkeit von Schicht-, Wochenend-, Spät- und Nachtarbeit nach Bildungsstaat und Geburtsland der Eltern
35. Häufigkeit von Beschäftigung in Saisonbranchen nach Bildungsstaat und Geburtsland der Eltern
36. Arbeitslosenrate nach Bildungsniveau, Bildungsstaat und Geburtsland der Eltern und Geschlecht
37. Durchschnittliche Beschäftigungsdauer pro Beschäftigungsverhältnis nach Geburtsland der Eltern

## **EINKOMMEN & SOZIALE SICHERUNG**

38. Erwerbseinkommen nach Bildungsstand, Herkunft und Geschlecht
39. Haushaltsnettoeinkommen nach Herkunft und im Zeitvergleich
40. ArbeitslosengeldbezieherInnen nach Staatsbürgerschaft, Geschlecht, Alter und Bildungsstand
41. BezieherInnen der bedarfsorientierten Mindestsicherung nach Staatsbürgerschaft, Geschlecht, Alter Herkunft und Bildungsstand

## **GESUNDHEIT & PFLEGE**

42. Vorsorgeuntersuchungen nach Geschlecht, Alter und Herkunft
43. Inanspruchnahme ambulanter und stationärer Gesundheitsleistungen
44. Durchschnittliche Dauer der stationären Aufenthalte nach Geschlecht, Alter und Herkunft
45. Subjektiver Gesundheitszustand nach Geschlecht, Alter und Herkunft
46. Stationäre und ambulante Behandlung nach Staatsbürgerschaft und Geburtsland
47. Pflegebedürftige nach Stufe der Pflegebedürftigkeit, Geschlecht, Alter und Herkunft

## **WOHNEN & INFRASTRUKTUR**

48. Verteilung der unterschiedlichen Herkunftsgruppen innerhalb der einzelnen Wohnungssegmente nach ihrem Rechtsgrund
49. Verteilung der Herkunftsgruppen auf die Ausstattungskategorien
50. Durchschnittlich verfügbare Wohnfläche pro Haushaltsmitglied nach Herkunftsgruppen
51. Wohnkosten pro Quadratmeter über alle Wohnungssegmente und Ausstattungskategorien
52. Bezug von Wohnbeihilfe nach Migrationshintergrund und Dauer des Bezuges
53. Wohnen im Gemeindebau nach MH und nach soziostruktureller Zusammensetzung sowie Veränderungen im Zeitverlauf
54. Zufriedenheit mit ausgewählten städtischen Infrastrukturen nach Migrationshintergrund

## **ÖFFENTLICHER RAUM, ZUSAMMENLEBEN & SOZIALES KLIMA**

55. Zufriedenheit mit der Lebenssituation in Wien nach ausgewählten Merkmalen
56. Potenzieller Nutzungsdruck auf den öffentlichen Raum
57. Einstellungen zu Zuwanderung und Zusammenleben
58. Kontakthäufigkeit nach Staatsbürgerschaft, Geburtsland und Lebensbereichen
59. Sicherheitsempfinden und Diskriminierungserfahrungen im öffentlichen Raum
60. Anzahl der Personen, die sich diskriminiert fühlen bzw. Diskriminierungserfahrungen gemacht haben





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