Measures to support the integration of asylum seekers and refugees

Haakon Hertzberg
Head of Politics
Dept. Research and Analysis
Norwegian Directorate of Labour and Welfare

the norwegian way
Current situation in Norway

- 31,145 asylum seekers arrived in Norway in 2015
- 5,297 unaccompanied minors
- Estimated number of arrivals in 2016: approx. 25,000 persons

Integration process for refugees in Norway:

1. Refugee arrival
2. Refugee centre
3. Settlement in municipality
4. Introduction programme
5. Work
Introduction programme

- Based on the Introduction Act, amended in 2005
- The right and obligation to participate in an introduction programme applies to newly arrived foreign nationals between 18 and 55 years of age
- Municipality is responsible for implementation of introduction programme
- Content of the programme
  - Right to an individually adapted plan
- Participation triggers a right to introduction benefit
Introduction programme

- Main components of the introduction programme:
  - Norwegian language tuition
  - Social studies in the immigrant’s native language (when feasible)
  - Measures to attain skills for labour market entry and measures to continue education

- PES involvement
  - Partnership between PES and the municipality
  - Refugees have access to all labour market measures
  - Assistance in approaching employers
Norwegian challenges

- The Norwegian welfare model is dependent on high labour market participation
- Refugees have a substantially lower employment rate than the average population
Norwegian challenges

- *Too much, too late:*
  - extensive mapping process leading to devaluation of skills and competences
  - standardised approach instead of a more individualised approach bearing in mind the vast differences among the various groups of refugees
  - extensive language training without effect?
  - train and then place instead of place and train

- *Result:* refugees are pacified, lose motivation and do not enter the labour market
Need for a new approach

- Significant tightening bills on immigration passed by the government (December 2015)

- White paper on Integration (May 2016)

- White paper on PES (including suggestions on more involvement and new approach on work integration of refugees) (May 2016)
A new approach – White Paper on Integration

Before settlement

- Integration-reception centres (pilot project)
  - Reserved for people with a good employment potential
  - Self-registration of competences and skills
  - Career guidance
  - 50 hours of language and culture skills needed for the labour market
  - Vocational training in cooperation with local employers
  - All labour market measures available
A new approach – White Paper on Integration (cont.)

After settlement

- Fast track within the established introduction programme for those who are ready to enter into employment

  - Mobilise social partners and employers

  - Dedicated labour market measures
A new approach – role of the PES

White paper on PES:

- Early intervention by PES and collaboration with all actors in the integration process

- The work place should be the main arena for training and inclusion of refugees into society

- Increase labour market competence and experience in working with employers
EU/EEA approach

- Urgent need to keep each other updated - between countries and within EU/EEA on the current refugee situation

- Mutual learning events such as this - excellent arena for knowledge transfer and sharing best practice

- Board of the PES Network decided in December to establish a Working Group for the integration of refugees into the labour market
  - Highlights from the WGs «key considerations paper»