



Peer Review on 'Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market'

Berlin (Germany), 11-12 October 2017

Bundling measures to an 'Integration Year'

Peer Country Comments Paper – Austria

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



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1 Situation in the peer country relative to the host country

1.1 Inflow of asylum seekers over the period 2015-2017

Regarding the number of asylum applicants relative to the domestic population in 2016, Germany was in the first and Austria in the third place among all EU member countries. (Eurostat 2017). This paper refers to different target groups, which are defined in the box below.

Box 1: Definition of target groups (BFA, n.y.)

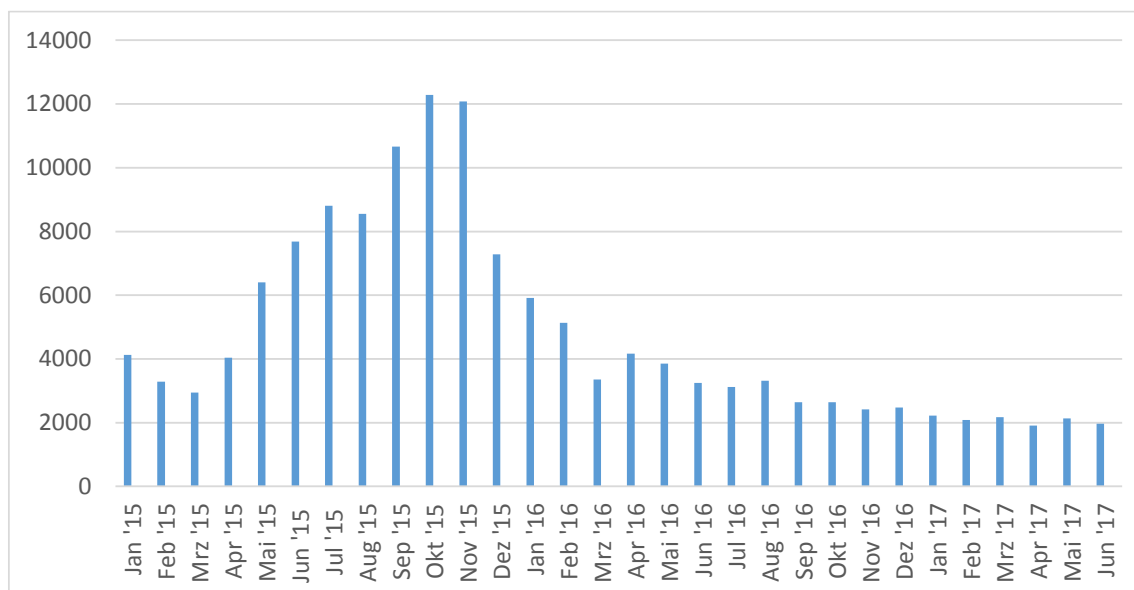
Asylum seekers are people, who are either in the admission procedure or in the standard procedure for asylum. During the admission procedure, the BFA decides, if it accepts an application and starts a standard procedure for asylum, or if it rejects the application and refers the applicant to another EU member state.

Refugee(s) is used in this paper as an umbrella term to cover the official categories person entitled to asylum (*Asylberechtigter*), person entitled to subsidiary protection (*subsidiär Schutzberechtigte*) and persons granted the humanitarian right to stay in cases of exceptional circumstances (*Aufenthaltstitel aus humanitären Gründe*).

If asylum applications are rejected, but deportation is not possible or permissible, a person can be granted the **status of toleration**. Toleration is not a right to stay, but a temporary suspension of deportation.

Similar to the German situation (Konle-Seidl), asylum applications in Austria peaked in 2015 (88,340) and declined since (42,285 in 2016 and 12,490 in the first half of 2017). The top five countries of origin in 2015 and 2016 have been Afghanistan, Syria, Irak, Iran and Pakistan (BMI 2016, 2017). Figure 1 below shows the inflow of asylum seekers to Austria in the period 2015-2017.

Figure 1: Asylum applications Jan 2015–June 2017



Source: BMI 2016, 2017, 2017

In 2016 (see table 1), 42 285 applications for asylum were registered in Austria. This is a decline from the peak of 88,340 applications in 2015, but still more than the 28,064 applications in 2014. (BMI 2017) The decline is in line with the general trend in Europe. In 2016, Austrian asylum policies have become more restrictive as well, e.g. by introducing a cap on asylum applications, or by contributing to the multinational closing of the West Balkan route.

Also in 2016, 27 552 asylum seekers became recognised refugees (comprising all positive decisions on asylum, subsidiary protection and humanitarian residence). (BMI 2017). In the same year, the Arbeitsmarktservice – AMS (public employment service in Austria) registered 25 026 refugees as unemployed (or as in AMS-training) (AMS 2017a).

Table 1. Refugees in Austria (2016)

	male	female	% female	total
Applications for asylum ^a	28 328	13 957	31%	42 285
Recognised refugees ^b	16 937	10 615	39%	27 552
Unemployed refugees registered with the public employment service (AMS) ^c	18 715	6 311	25%	25 026

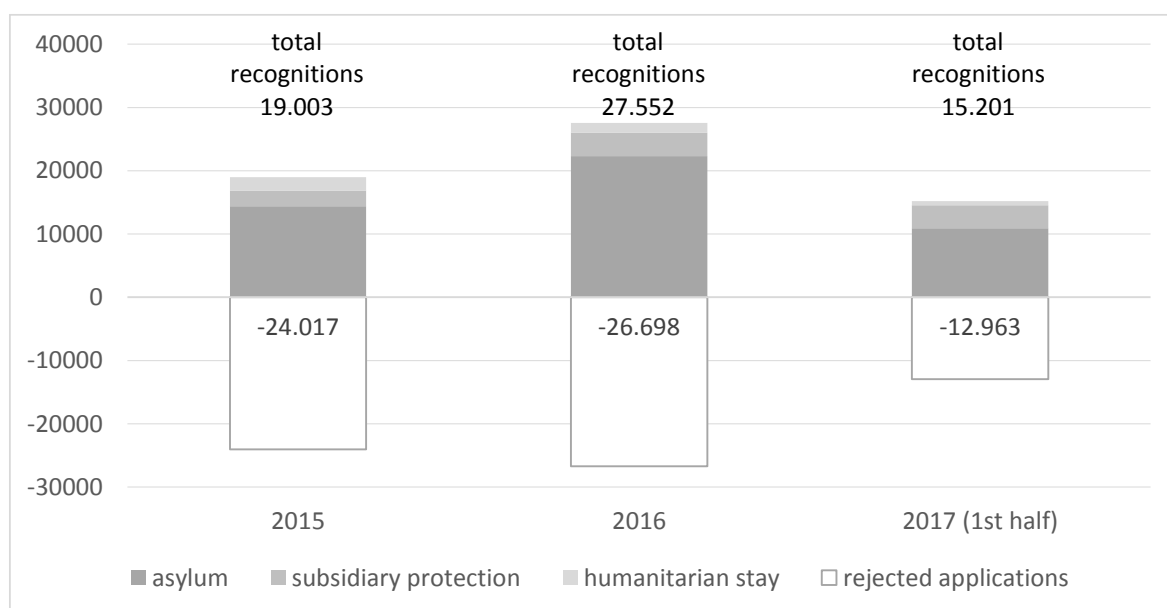
^a) Applications for asylum in 2016 (without cases of resettlement); BMI, 2017

^b) Refugees recognised in 2016 (comprising positive decisions on asylum, subsidiary protection and humanitarian residence); BMI, 2017

^c) Averaged stock of recognised refugees and people with subsidiary protection, registered as unemployed or as in AMS-training 2016; AMS Datawarehouse

The administrative processing of asylum applications takes several months¹, therefore refugee influx has a delayed effect on residence status decisions (see Figure 2). Residence permits for refugees (asylum, subsidiary protection, humanitarian residence) are a key indicator, since they have been the essential prerequisite for the access of refugees to the labour market (see section 1.3.1).

Figure 2: Residence status decisions Jan 2015 – June 2017



¹ In 2016, the average duration of an asylum procedure was nine monthmonths (Medienservicestelle 2017). By the end of 2016, 76,409 asylum procedures were still pending (BMI 2017).

Source: BMI 2016, 2017, 2017b.

1.2 Responsibilities for the integration of refugees

1.2.1 Federal agencies

At the national level, three federal agencies are responsible for the integration of refugees: the Bundesamt für Fremdenwesen und Asyl – BFA (Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum), which is subordinated to the Bundesministerium für Inneres – BMI (Ministry of Interior), the Österreichischer Integrationsfonds – ÖIF (Austrian Integration Fund, which is funded by the Bundesministerium für Europa, Integration und Äußeres – BMEIA (Ministry of Europe, Integration and Foreign Affairs) and the Arbeitsmarktservice – AMS (Public Employment Service), which is controlled by the Bundesministerium für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz – BMASK (Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection). Roughly speaking, the BFA decides upon the residence status of refugees, the ÖIF deals with general integration measures and basic language courses (A1), while the AMS carries the main responsibility for labour market integration and advanced language courses. All of the three agencies have branches in each federal state. Especially in the case of the AMS, but also in the case of the ÖIF, regional branches have considerable leeway to interpret national guidelines and to adapt measures to regional demands.

1.2.2 Federal states

Additionally, the nine federal states (*Länder*) in Austria play an important role for the integration of refugees. This is due to the segregation between labour and poverty policy. Labour policy is based on social insurance and a matter of national concern, while poverty policy is based on social assistance and subject to state legislation. Austria has a comparatively low level of social assistance recipients, since major are covered by social insurance (Leibetseder 2015). However, entitlements to social insurance are gained via employment. This explains, why 65% of all unemployed refugees rely on bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung – BMS (needs-based minimum benefit)² as social assistance, while the average among all unemployed is 12% (Lacina 2016).

Since social assistance, like the Grundversorgung (provision with basic supplies)³ or the BMS, is subject to state legislation, amounts differ. Higher amounts, like in Vienna, can attract larger numbers of refugees, while lower amounts are used as deterrents. In combination with a lack of residence requirements, these differences contribute to an uneven distribution of refugees in Austria. Two thirds (63%) of all unemployed refugees in Austria were registered in Vienna. (AMS 2017a)

Since the beginning of the 2000s, federal states have established their own integration measures, which also comprise refugees as one (smaller) target group among others. State governments also cooperate with regional branches of the AMS and may co-fund particular labour market measures.

1.3 Policy measures

1.3.1 Access to the labour market in Austria

Asylum seekers are rather restricted in their access to the Austrian labour market. For the first three months after having been admitted to the asylum procedure, they are

² Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung – BMS (needs-based minimum benefit) is a social assistance to avoid poverty and to cover basic subsistence. Individuals that consume BMS and are capable of work have to register with the AMS.

³ Grundversorgung (provision with basic supplies) is the Austrian support system for needy foreigners. It caters for asylum seekers and tolerated persons, but also for persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection until four months after their positive status decision. The latter group either finds employment or switches to BMS as social assistance. Grundversorgung pays mainly for shelter and board (mostly to providing organisations), health insurance and a small amount of monthly pocket money. (Republik Österreich, 2017d)

not entitled to take up employment. After three months, they may receive temporary work permission for seasonal jobs in tourism or agriculture, if nobody registered with the AMS is willing to take the position. This form of Arbeitsmarktprüfung (labour market test) is performed by the AMS. Additionally, asylum seekers, who are younger than 24 years, may also be permitted to enter apprenticeship training in so-called Mangelberufen (shortage occupations). Apart from these two exceptions, the AMS does not actively cater for asylum seekers (Lacina 2016). The situation for asylum seekers will slightly change by January 2018, when the new law on the Integration Year will grant asylum seekers with 'good prospect for recognition' access to the Integration Year, a comprehensive labour market measure. (Republik Österreich 2017b). However, this policy does not include access to the labour market itself. But it will create a new (but probably not very big) target group for labour market measures.

After having received formal recognition and residence status, persons entitled to asylum or to subsidiary protection have full access to the labour market, to all services of the AMS and to other social benefits, like the BMS.

1.3.2 General integration measures by ÖIF: language courses, value and orientation classes and integration agreement

After having received a positive asylum decision, refugees are obliged to contact one of the regional integration centres of the ÖIF. The ÖIF serves as the primary agency for integration counselling and refers to German language courses and so-called Werte und Orientierungskurse (value and orientation classes). The ÖIF also administers the obligatory integration agreement, which has to be signed by all third country nationals who aim at permanent residency in Austria. By signing the integration agreement, they commit themselves to learn German up to an advanced level (A2) within two years, and to attend the prescribed value and orientation classes. Failure to meet these requirements may lead to a reduction of social benefits. (Republik Österreich, 2017a).

Only after refugees have successfully completed a basic German language course (A1) and the respective basic value and orientation class, they are referred to the public employment service. In parallel to other measures by the AMS, refugees have to attend an advanced German language course (A2), which are commissioned by the AMS. However, ÖIF determines the curricula of both A1 and A2 language courses, in particular the elements of the respective value and orientation classes, and certifies providers of these courses.

1.3.3 Labour market integration 1: federal budget

The public employment service AMS distinguishes roughly between three types of labour market measures:

- Employment measures comprise direct subsidies for actual employment. One example are Eingliederungsbeihilfen/Eingliederungshilfen (settling-in allowances), which are basically temporary (five month) subsidies to salaries (AMS 2017b). Another example is work in subsidised employment projects, such as sozialökonomische Betriebe (socio-economic enterprises, or Gemeinnützige Beschäftigungsprojekte (non-profit employment projects). In these latter cases, long term unemployed find temporary (transit) employment. (AMS 2017c).
- Qualification measures are normally training measures aiming at apprenticeship certificates (*Lehrabschluss*) or to qualifications for already employed. Regarding refugees, qualification measures also comprise German language courses and the Competence Check. The AMS subsidises costs for vocation related training and for subsistence of participants. (AMS 2017d).

- Support measures refer to particular additional advisory services or placement activities, which are performed by specialised Beratungs- und Betreuungseinrichtungen (advice and care facilities) (arbeitplus 2017).

Applying this typology to the federal budget spent for the labour market integration of refugees (table 2), it becomes clear that the strongest emphasis of the AMS (or two thirds of the budget) is put on qualification measures for refugees. In 2016 alone, the AMS spent 48,9 Mio. € on German language courses (BMASK 2017). Additionally, it becomes clear that most of the AMS measures for refugees are regular labour market measures, while only a few are new developments, particularly designed for refugees.

Table 2. Federal budget for labour market integration of refugees, 2015-17 (in million €)

	2015	2016	2017*
Active labour market policy AMS	50.3	96.3	180.0
<i>Employment measures</i>	8.3	19.8	
<i>Qualification measures</i>	37.7	67.3	
<i>Support measures</i>	4.4	9.2	
'Activating unemployment benefits' (incl. social insurance)	8.2	8.7	10.8
Total of active and activating measures	58.5	105.0	190.8
*planned			

Source: BMASK 2017

Until 2015, all AMS measures for the integration of refugees had been funded by the general AMS budget. From 2016 onwards, a particular 'integration fund' (10 Mio. €) had been created. For 2016 and 2017, the federal budget for the labour market integration of refugees has been increased to 105 Mio. € and 190.8 Mio. €, respectively.

1.3.4 Labour market integration 2: 'The Integration Year'

In May 2017, the so-called Integration Year Act (*Integrationsjahrgesetz*) on the compulsory Integration Year for refugees was passed by the Austrian parliament. Having become effective by September 2017, the Integration Year is modularly composed of different integration measures (Republik Österreich, 2017b). The law lists the following measures:

1. Competence clearing
2. Language courses
3. Clearing of qualifications and certificates, support for their recognition
4. Value and orientation classes in cooperation with the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)
5. Job orientation and application training
6. Job preparation measures
7. Job training
8. Other measures

None of these measures is completely new. Rather, the Integration Year Act bundles existing labour market measures to a comprehensive package. Some of these measures have been developed for refugees (e.g. competence clearing, language courses and value and orientation classes). Other measures are traditional labour

market measures, which were adapted or expanded for the particular needs of refugees (e.g. job orientation, job training).

Even if the law mentions a long list of measures, their use is optional and mainly following the requirements of the individual case. Normally, a competence check (see 1.3.5) will provide the necessary for the respective case worker at the AMS to propose a selection and combination of useful further measures for each individual case. Rather than rigidly focusing on the completion of all measures, the main target for the integration year is employment for the refugee. Therefore, measures can be interrupted or dropped, if necessary. However, refugees also have to demonstrate commitment and willingness to work, otherwise they might lose social benefits.

The names used for the eight modules in the law do not necessarily follow the typology of the AMS budget, nor the technical terms used in the daily practice of the AMS. The following two sections therefore explain two important measures mentioned by the law.

1.3.5 Labour market integration 3: 'The Competence Check'

The module 'competence clearance', a distinct cornerstone of the Integration Year, is clearly based on the positive experiences made with the Competence Check (Republik Österreich 2017c, p. 2). Following Pfeffer (2017) one can describe the Competence Check as a 'formative' validation of competencies, since its focus lies on the identification and documentation of competencies. Additionally, it refers to other procedures of assessment or certification, without assessing or certifying itself.

Most commonly, the Competence Check takes place as a training measure in classes of about 12 participants, which meet for 11 hours per week for about 5-7 weeks. In its core, the Competence Check focuses on the identification and documentation of formal qualifications and vocational experiences, but it also deals with introductions in the Austrian labour market or in placement training. The Competence Check familiarises refugees with regional labour markets and society, which also makes it easier to find and describe competencies gained abroad. Further, the Competence Check refers to institutions, which help with the recognition of foreign qualifications and certificates.

1.3.6 Labour market integration 4: Job training

Job trainings are offered by institutions, which are providers for alternative community services in lieu of military service, e.g. community services, health care, care for the elderly or for disabled, work for refugees, etc. Work in such a job training does not establish formal employment for refugees, since the education and training character is dominant. Additionally, job trainings have to be neutral for the labour market and must not compete with regular employment opportunities. Providers for community services receive a compensation of € 120 per person and month, while participating individuals receive benefits for basic subsistence, which are counted against the BMS. Job trainings can last for up to a year and subsidies are funded by the AMS. Regarding labour market integration of refugees, the main purpose of job trainings is to familiarise refugees with routines and attitudes at the Austrian labour market, an experience that can be documented in written confirmations.

The AMS has offered job trainings before already. In the context of the Integration year, job trainings will be better targeted towards refugees, and providers of community services will be addressed to offer job trainings for refugees in particular.

1.3.7 Labour market integration 5: complementary measures

Two measures have been designed as reactions to peculiarities of the Austrian labour market, but gain particular importance for the integration of refugees.

The national placement of apprenticeship positions is a reaction to an imbalance in the Austrian labour market: 83% of the apprenticeship vacancies are in the six western states, while 75% of all recognized refugees live in the three eastern states, mainly in

Vienna. In a pilot project for young refugees, the AMS together with the Wirtschaftskammer Österreich – WKO (Chamber of Commerce), the Bundesministerium für Wissenschaft, Forschung und Wirtschaft – BFWFW (Ministry for Economic Affairs) and the BMASK, wants to match supply and demand, but also to coach both young refugees and interested enterprises in preparing for the apprenticeship training of refugees. (WKO 2017).

Another promising measure is the JUST integration implacement foundation for young adults between 18 and 30 years of age. It aims at refugees and unemployed young adults with multiple problems. It aims at using existing vocational experiences as basis for an apprenticeship exam, and to combine the reintegration of participants with the workforce demands of companies. The measure was introduced in 2016 and will cater for 900 participants. (BMASK 2017)

1.3.8 Labour market integration 6: specialised support units

In spring 2017, the Erstanlaufstelle (initial contact point) of the AMS Vienna together with the ÖIF was established. The purpose of this initial contact point is the foster closer cooperation between AMS and ÖIF beneath the same roof, which is additionally enhanced by regular meetings. Another benefit is the staffing with native speakers in a wider range of languages as AMS case workers, which helps to cater for clients from different cultural backgrounds. This structure also helps to coordinate specialised measures for refugees. Rather than dealing with several hundred case workers, the coordination can focus on about a dozen of case workers specialised on refugees.

Other specialised support units are the Anlaufstellen für Personen mit im Ausland erworbenen Qualifikationen - AST (contact points for people with qualifications gained abroad) in five Austrian states, which additionally provide consultation hours in the other states, which are funded by the BMASK. They were established to support all kinds of individuals with foreign qualifications and assist them in finding recognition or evaluation. All over Austria, 8.264 individuals made use of one of the contact points in 2016. (BMASK 2017).

2 Assessment of the policy measure

2.1 The "Rights and Responsibility" approach in Austria

Elements of a "rights and responsibility" approach have been in place for quite a while in Austria. For example, the implementation of activating labour market measures has always been accompanied by instruments to enforce the cooperation of clients by withdrawing certain social benefits. Similarly, the integration agreement has been part of the migration law in Austria since 2003, trying to enforce the language training for migrants, who want to extend their temporary residence permit in Austria. Failure to fulfil the integration agreement can lead to a reduction of social benefits, but will not revoke the international protection status of asylum or subsidiary protection.

Beyond these considerations, there exist obvious limitations to the rights and responsibility approach as well. On the one hand, individuals may be limited by a lack of personal abilities, or by physical or psychological issues (e.g. due to traumatisation). On the other hand, there may also exist limitations of the labour market.

In recent years, the emphasis on responsibilities of refugees and potential sanctions for failures to fulfil them has increased in public debates. It is questionable, in how far these debates are concerned with improving integration measures only or rather with making the Austrian asylum (and migration) system more restrictive.

2.2 Bundling measures to an 'Integration Year'

The main function of the new law on the Integration Year is to bundle existing labour market measures to a comprehensive package. It does not just list targeted measures, but comprises general labour market measures as well, which otherwise might stay unnoticed (or are at least difficult to communicate) in their contribution for the integration of refugees. Quite probably, this also made it easier to nearly quadruple the federal budget for the labour market integration of refugees within a few years.

The bundling of measures to an Integration year may also improve the awareness of case workers and of refugees as clients of the AMS about the range of measures and about potential links between them. However, it creates a tight time frame and sense of urgency: labour market integration should be completed within a year. Beyond that, clients might either be employed, or else regarded as regular (unemployed) clients of the AMS. Some actors are concerned, that integration would require more time in many cases. Premature end of targeted support due to limited timeframes of individual measures or the entire integration year might lead to incomplete integration.

Since the Integration Year came into effect in September 2017 only, it is too early to assess a 'bundling effect'. However, it is possible to tentatively describe the impact of the entire bundle of labour market measures for refugees, which by and large already existed before the introduction of the Integration Year: among those that received their refugee status in 2015, 9,523 individuals, were registered with AMS between January 2015 and June 2016. By December 2016, 15% of this group were employed (44% unemployed, 23% in AMS training and 18% out of labour force). For the entire period, January 2015 to December 2016, 19% from this group were employed for at least 62 days (AMS, 2017).

2.3 The Competence Check as a measure for formative validation

The Competence Check focuses on the identification and documentation of competencies, and refers to potential routes towards formal assessment and certification, without assessing or certifying itself. In doing so, it can be defined as a highly innovative form of formative validation of non-formal and informal competencies (Pfeffer & Skivanek 2017).

Quantitative results of the Competence Check must be used with caution, due to the following two reasons. On the one hand, participants in Competence Checks have been chosen due to practical, not due to statistical criteria, and therefore cannot be regarded as statistically representative for the composition of the refugee population in Austria. On the other hand, the evaluation of qualifications is based on self-assessment of participants (and the reporting of providers of Competence Checks), and not on formal recognition, as would be the requirement for the official database of the AMS. (AMS, 2017).

Still, the results for the 5 982 participants, who completed a Competence Check in 2016, are interesting. The largest groups among all participants is from Syria (46%), followed by Afghanistan (23%), Iran and Iraq (both 6%). 19% came from other countries. (AMS, 2017).

The majority of participants from three countries to have completed at least higher school certificates, or even tertiary education: 62% of all participants from Syria, 85% from Iran, and 57% from Iraq are from this group. In contrast to that, only 20% of all participants from Afghanistan had a higher a higher qualification, 30% completed compulsory education, 25% basic education and 25% had no formal education at all. (AMS, 2017).

Another remarkable result is the high amount of tertiary education among women, especially in comparison to their male counterparts. 29% of all women participating in Competence Checks in 2016 held university degrees, compared to 19% of the men. With regard to countries of origin, 36% of all female participants from Syria held tertiary education (male: 21%), the share for female participants from Iran is 42% (male: 26%), for Iraq 44% (male: 31%), for Afghanistan 11% (male: 5%), and for other countries 34% (male: 16%). (AMS, 2017).

The top priority of the Competence Check is orientation, not placement. Internal data of the AMS show that participants of the Competence Check are more likely to participate in qualification measures, compared to those that do not participate in Competence Checks.

2.4 Lack of effective measures to tackle the uneven distribution of supply and demand at the labour market

There already exists an uneven distribution between supply and demand between East and West at the Austrian labour market, especially regarding vocational qualifications, regardless of the large influx of refugees. The discrepancy between job vacancies in the West, and oversupply with job seekers has existed prior to the humanitarian crisis in Syria.

This problem is further increased by regional differences in social benefits and by a lack of measures for conditional settlement. Some state governments try to reduce social benefits, especially the needs-based minimum income (BMS), to reduce the influx of refugees, a policy that also effects local recipients of BMS. Other state governments try to maintain their comparatively higher social benefits. This discrepancy also reflects ideological differences between the governments of different federal states in Austria. Simultaneously, there is a lack of measures for conditional settlement in Austria, which might counterbalance push and pull factors regarding general work and living conditions, but also with respect to social benefits. Obligations to settle in designated regions might relieve the uneven distribution of refugees, but it seems unlikely to find consensus among all involved state governments on this topic, especially since federalism is an important principle in Austria. Complementary measures, like the national placement of apprenticeship positions seem to be promising, but maybe not enough to compensate for these problems.

3 Assessment of the success factors and transferability

3.1 Success factors

3.1.1 Comprehensive set of measures plus case-specific customisation

The Integration Year comprises a comprehensive set of general and targeted measures, which are interrelated to each other. It serves as a tool-box of distinct, but compatible instruments, where selection and application are customised to the individual case. Top priority of the Integration Year is the placement of refugees in employment, not the completion of measures.

3.1.2 Taking identification and documentation of competencies as a task in its own right

The Competence Check acknowledges the different contexts in which competencies can be developed, and takes the identification and documentation seriously. On this basis, further steps, like the referral to potential forms of recognition or evaluation, or consecutive training measures can be taken.

3.1.3 Creation of specialised support units

Austria made good experiences with the development of support units of distinct, specialised tasks, e.g. the contact points for people with qualifications gained abroad (AST), or the initial contact point for refugees in Vienna. In both cases, the foundation of specialised units led to a professionalization in their respective fields, and to a relief for other, more general service units. In the case of Vienna, the excessive demand led to the differentiation of new specialisations. However, it would be wrong to assume that each innovation via specialisation has to spread over all administrative sub-units (e.g. each federal state). The case of the five contact points for qualifications gained abroad demonstrates that the spread of specialised support units does not need to strictly follow existing regional sub-units, but can rather be subject to quantitative demand.

3.1.4 Sufficient capacity

Regardless of the conceptual quality of a measure or an infrastructure, sufficient capacity (budget) is crucial for achieving results on a larger scale.

3.2 Transferability

3.2.1 Bundling of measures

Bundling a range of measures (e.g. 'strategies and targeted measures for the integration of refugees') under one integrating idea or catchphrase (like the Integration Year) may be a practice transferable to other countries as well. In the worst case, the result is a mere marketing gimmick, but it can also help to transfer a list of measures into a more coherent concept.

3.2.2 Competence Check

In this core function, the Competence Check is highly standardised, but only with respect to its objectives, namely the deliverables that should be produced according. These standards with respect to objectives allow for much variation in conducting this measure. These standards with respect to objectives allow for much variation in conducting this measure, variations in course format, in complementary content and in target groups. (Pfeffer 2017).

3.2.3 Specialised support units

Easily transferable are concepts for specialised support units, like the initial contact points for refugees at the AMS, or the contact points for people with foreign qualifications. In both cases, the specialisation of support units led to the development of highly developed services and to a professionalization of experts. However,

efficiency gains through specialisation mainly can be achieved, if large numbers of clients are involved. In Austria, most specialisations of support units (and of new measures) were pioneered in Vienna, where two thirds of all refugees are located.

4 Questions to the host country in the Peer Review

- Peak of asylum seekers, which data?
Konle-Seidl claims 2015 as the peak of refugee inflow in Germany, while Eurostat data for first time asylum seekers peak in 2016 (Eurostat 2017). How can this discrepancy be explained? Is this the "*statistical artefact resulting from the delayed registration*", caused by the EASY pre-registration, as has been described by Konle-Seidl on p. 1?
- De-skilling of refugees?
On page 4 of the host country paper, it is stated that about 50% of all employed refugees work in unskilled jobs. Given the composition and competencies of refugees in Austria, the question is, in how far employment is linked to a de-qualification of refugees?
- Guaranteed residence permit during and after the apprenticeship ("3+2 rule")?
Are there any experiences, if employers understand - and how they react - to the 3-2 rule?
- How does the Wohnsitzauflage (settlement restriction, obligation to settle in a location to which a recognised refugee has been allocated) work in practice? Does it show the expected results?
- Who checks, how 'well integrated' refugees are? How reliable is it for refugees to work towards integration and the respective (permanent) residence status? Do 'well integrated' refugees gain an entitlement for permanent residency, or do they just improve their chances?
- Why are asylum seekers in Germany not allowed to work as self-employed, while they may work as employees?
-

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Annex 1 Summary table

Situation in the peer country relative to the host country

- Similar to Germany, Austria is among the countries with the highest inflows of asylum seekers 2015-17 (in relative terms).
- Similar to Germany, Austria has federal states, which play an important role in (labour market) integration. The way in which they execute this role seems to differ.
- The Austrian labour market seems to be more restrictive towards asylum seekers than the German one.
- While Austria has more (three) federal agencies responsible for the integration of refugees than Germany (two), the responsibility of labour market integration seems to be clearer than in Germany. On the federal level, it is only the public employment service AMS.
- Due to the clear responsibility of the AMS for labour market integration, the competence clearance via the Competence Check, and the bundling of measures in the Integration Year, labour market integration seems to be more synchronised in Austria than in Germany.

Assessment of the policy measure(s)

- In its labour market policy, but also in its integration policy, Austria already had an (implicit) 'rights and responsibility' approach for quite a while. In the meantime, it is unclear, how much this approach contributes to a more effective integration, or rather to restrictions in asylum policies.
- Both Competence Check and the Integration Year seem to have a synchronising effect for integration measures.
- The Competence Check as an innovative measure for formative validation, which takes identification and documentation as tasks in their own rights.
- There seems to be a lack of effective measures to balance uneven distribution of refugees, especially with regard to supply and demand at the Austrian labour market
- Specialised support units help to professionalise specialised task for particular target groups.

Assessment of success factors and transferability

- The bundling a range of measures under a comprehensive catchphrase (Integration Year), plus the leeway for case-specific customisation helped with the synchronisation of measures. Additionally, the Integration Year combines general and targeted measures.
- Taking the core functions of identification and documentation as tasks in their own right (leaving certification to others), and giving the criteria of the results report as the objectives of the Competence Check, while allowing for variations, have been the success factors of the Competence Check.
- The concept of specialised support units, which follow quantitative demands for particular, may lead to professionalization and efficiency gains.

Questions to the host country in the Peer Review

- Is the EASY pre-registration the main reason for 'statistical artefacts', delaying the peak of refugee inflows to 2016?
- Is the 50% rate of employed refugees in unskilled jobs a sign of de-skilling of refugees?

- What are the experiences regarding the 3-2 rule? How do employers, the general public, but also refugees react to this measure?
- How do settlement restrictions work in practice? Do they show the expected results?
- How do incentives for integration work in practice? Who assesses the integration success, how does the communication with refugees work?
- Why are asylum seekers in Germany not allowed to work as self-employed, while they may work as employees?

Annex 2 Example of relevant practice

Name of the practice:	Competence Check for Refugees
Year of implementation:	2015
Coordinating authority:	Public Employment Service (AMS)
Objectives:	To gain information about the qualifications and competencies of refugees To familiarize refugees with the Austrian labour market
Main activities:	5-7 weeks á 11 hours' courses Clearance of formal qualifications and potential for recognition Clearance of vocational experiences Elaboration of development perspectives Summaries and prospects
Results so far:	Results reports form excellent basis for case work, determining training needs and placement opportunities Aggregated results allow for differentiation between client groups, to gain insights in their potential and needs



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