



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

Berlin, Germany, 11-12 October 2017

Synthesis Report

DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Unit C3

Contact: Maria Ilies

E-mail: maria.ilies@ec.europa.eu

Web site: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/home.jsp>

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

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

Berlin, Germany, 11-12 October 2017

Synthesis Report

Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion
Peer Review on "Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market"
Germany, 11-12 October 2017

**Europe Direct is a service to help you find answers
to your questions about the European Union.**

Freephone number (*):

00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11

(*) The information given is free, as are most calls (though some operators, phone boxes or hotels may charge you).

LEGAL NOTICE

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the official position of the European Commission

© European Union, **2017**

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background and purpose of the Peer Review	1
1.2	European policy context	2
2	The German approach to labour market inclusion and integration of refugees	3
3	The Lithuanian approach to labour market inclusion and integration of refugees ..	4
4	Country approaches to labour market inclusion and integration of refugees	5
4.1	Country Approaches to labour market integration	5
4.1.1	Context of labour market integration across Europe	5
4.1.2	Early labour market integration	6
4.1.3	Combined measures for individualised services	7
4.1.4	Upscaling of effective measures	8
4.2	Vocational language training	9
4.3	Implementation by key actors and cooperation approaches	12
4.3.1	Employers	13
4.3.2	Public Employment Services (PES)	14
4.3.3	NGOs	15
5	Conclusions and recommendations	16

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose of the Peer Review¹

With over 1.3 million people requesting asylum in 2015 and 1.2 million in 2016, Europe is facing the most severe refugee inflow since the Second World War². As many of these people are likely to stay for a longer time, Member States in the European Union (EU) have increased efforts to integrate refugees and asylum seekers³ into their societies. Labour market integration specifically is crucial in this respect given that it enables refugees and asylum seekers to become self-reliant, contribute to the labour market with their skills and knowledge, practice their language skills, build up social contacts and become aware of cultural norms and traditions in their host society.

With regard to labour market integration, refugees face low employment rates, especially on the short-term⁴. OECD/EU data based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey shows that the average employment rate of refugees was 56% in 2014⁵. Achieving labour market integration of refugees takes time: based on first experiences across the EU and recent research results, it is estimated that between five and six years will be needed to integrate more than 50% of refugees into the workplace and 15 years to reach a 70% employment rate – similar to the one for labour migrants⁶.

Information on outcomes of labour market integration for refugees is so far limited and not systematically measured at EU level. Indicators developed by the EU/OECD⁷ show outcomes for immigrants and their children in terms of employment, education and skills, social inclusion, civic engagement and social cohesion. The findings outline that the knowledge of the host language has significant influence on the chances of finding employment. Besides missing language skills asylum seekers and refugees are also challenged by a lack of social networks and knowledge about the society in the host country. Possible traumatic experiences in their home country and during flight as well as uncertainty about family and friends, who still live in their home country, form other potential barriers to labour market integration for refugees⁸. In addition, barriers for asylum seekers to enter the labour market are legal restrictions to access the labour market, a long duration of the asylum procedure and the related uncertainty about the residence status.

¹ The Peer Review on 'Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market' took place on 11 and 12 October in Berlin, Germany. It was hosted by the German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and was co-hosted by the Lithuanian Ministry of Social Security and Labour. Participants from the following countries attended: Austria, France, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Slovakia, Slovenia and Sweden.

² Eurostat, 'Asylum and first time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex' [migr_asyappctza].

³ Refugees and asylum seekers have a different legal status across Member States. Therefore, this document differentiates between: *Asylum seekers* who have applied for international protection. *Refugees* (beneficiaries of international protection) who have been granted refugee status or subsidiary protection status. According to the Qualification Directive, refugees have unrestricted access to the labour market.

⁴ European Parliament (2016), "Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices", available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU\(2016\)578956_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU(2016)578956_EN.pdf), last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

⁵ European Union and OECD (2016), "How Are Refugees Faring on the Labour Market in Europe? A First Evaluation Based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey Ad Hoc Module", Working Paper, No. 1/2016, available at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/87a8f92d-9aa8-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1>, last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ European Parliament (2016), "Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices", available at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU\(2016\)578956_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/578956/IPOL_STU(2016)578956_EN.pdf), last accessed on 2 November 2017.

Representative data on the educational levels of refugees, coming from various countries, is limited. Some surveys suggest that there are differences in terms of educational attainment in countries of origin: refugees from Syria tend to have higher educational levels, while refugees from Afghanistan, Iraq, Somalia, and Eritrea are, on average, less educated than the population in the host country or other immigrants⁹.

Refugees and asylum seekers often do not possess any documentation of their qualifications, the recognition process of qualifications in the host country is complicated and/or acceptance of foreign qualifications by employers is limited¹⁰. As a result, refugees and asylum seekers who have high levels of education risk working in low or medium skilled occupations or even fail to find employment¹¹. Moreover, many refugees and asylum seekers have professional work experience which is not recognised in the form of a qualification (possibly because a formal qualification is not needed in their home country). This puts refugees at risk of being unduly classified as "unskilled" and discourages hiring by employers.

1.2 European policy context

Refugees and asylum seekers have a different legal status across Member States which impacts on their access to the labour market. According to the Reception Conditions Directive, Member States shall ensure that asylum seekers, who have applied for international protection, have access to the labour market no later than nine months from the date of their application. Until then, the timing of access to the labour market for asylum seekers and the type of access (restricted/unrestricted in terms of occupations, working hours etc.) to the labour market depends on the Member States' regulations¹². By contrast, refugees, i.e. both Geneva Convention refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, should have equal treatment with nationals in access to employment as regulated in the recast 'Qualification Directive'¹³. In addition, Art.33 of the recast 'Qualification Directive' calls on Member States to ensure access to integration programmes for refugees. The organisation of integration measures is a national responsibility, so they differ between Member States.

In terms of the recognition of qualifications, the 'Professional Qualifications Directive'¹⁴ regulates the recognition of some professions (doctors, dentists, nurses, midwives, pharmacists, veterinary surgeons and architects) for EU citizens and third country nationals (incl. refugees), but only if the holder of the certificate has three years professional experience in the profession on the territory of the Member State which recognised the formal qualification. A review of the Directive in 2013 (2013/55/EU) aimed to support the effectiveness of recognition procedures.

In order to further support early identification and profiling of skills and qualifications of asylum seekers, refugees and other migrants, the European Commission developed a 'Skills Profile Tool Kit for Third Country Nationals'¹⁵. The online tool aims to identify

⁹ A German (non-representative) survey from 2014 showed that 8.3% of Syrian refugees had a tertiary education, compared to 12.6% from Afghanistan and 6% from Iraq. 12.8% of the Syrian refugees reported to be low-educated, compared to 15.7% of the refugees from Afghanistan (BAMF, 2016). In the same year, in Sweden above 40% of Syrians had least upper secondary education, compared to 20% of those from Afghanistan and 10% for those coming from Eritrea (Statistics Sweden). A recent UNHCR (2015) study suggests that Syrian refugees immigrating via Greece are highly educated. (European Parliament (2016), Labour Market Integration of Refugees: Strategies and good practices).

¹⁰ European Union and OECD (2016), "How Are Refugees Faring on the Labour Market in Europe? A First Evaluation Based on the 2014 EU Labour Force Survey Ad Hoc Module", Working Paper, No. 1/2016, available at: <https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/87a8f92d-9aa8-11e6-868c-01aa75ed71a1>, last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

¹¹ European Commission (2016), A New Skills Agenda for Europe – Skills and Integration of Migrants, ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15616&langId=en, last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

¹² EEP0 (2016), Synthesis on challenges faced by asylum seekers and refugees in successfully, <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=15894&langId=en>. last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

¹³ Directive 2011/95/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011.

¹⁴ Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005.

¹⁵ <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1223&intPageId=5019&langId=en>

qualifications, non-formal and informal learning of third country nationals as well as their future plans such as improving their destination country's language skills to finding a job in a field of their choice. The tool is designed to propose next steps for support measures on the basis of the provided information. The tool is mainly designed for national authorities responsible for reception and integration of refugees, public employment services (PES), education and training advisers, social services and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). It is designed in a way that it is easily understood by actors across the EU. Collected data will also be used for statistical purposes.

2 The German approach to labour market inclusion and integration of refugees

Germany has been one of the main destination countries for asylum seekers and refugees in the last years. In 2015, at the height of the refugee inflow in the EU, 890 000 asylum seekers entered Germany, whereas in 2016, 280 000 asylum seekers came to Germany and were allocated to a reception facility. As many of these people are likely to stay for a longer time, Germany has put an emphasis on the further development of its asylum system with a focus on early intervention for people from those countries who are more likely to stay whilst at the same time tightening rules for those who are not. Furthermore, there has been a strong investment in integration measures.

After legislation came into force in 2015 aiming at accelerating asylum applications¹⁶, asylum seekers with a good prospect of staying in Germany (i.e. asylum seekers in this group come from countries with previous protection rates of over 50%- currently Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Syria) have access to integration measures offered by the PES in order to facilitate a quick integration into the labour market. Other groups are those from so called "safe countries of origin" who are not allowed to work and have no access to integration measures, and asylum seekers with a more "unclear prospect" to remain in Germany. This latter group is considered to consist of "complex cases" to be individually assessed and who may gain at least a subordinated access to the labour market after three months, but they have no access to integration courses.

The 'Integration Law' from 2016 foresees more targeted support for some groups, which is guided by the 'rights and responsibilities' principle highlighting the individual effort asylum seekers and refugees are expected to make for successful integration. The key element of the German approach is granting asylum seekers with a good prospect of staying in Germany easier and quicker access to the labour market and increased support measures, such as easier access to integration courses covering language training and civic orientation (with an increased focus on civic orientation), as well as to PES job placement services and targeted support for vocational training (preparatory traineeships, assisted training and training grants). Furthermore, subsidised "work opportunities" have been established, which do not constitute formal employment, but seek to activate asylum seekers and provide a first insight into working life in Germany.

For tolerated people¹⁷ the '3+2 rule' provides the right to finish an apprenticeship (up to three and a half years) and to reside in Germany for a further two years if the trainee finds a job according to his or her new qualification. In addition, a limited (three years) termination of the 'Vorrangprüfung' (a priority review that existed in favour of German and EU citizens) in 133 out of 156 PES regions that have a low level

¹⁶ Asylverfahrensbeschleunigungsgesetz

¹⁷ Asylum seekers who cannot be returned to their country of origin after a negative asylum decision receive a toleration in Germany, meaning that the deportation is temporarily suspended.

of unemployment is possible for asylum seekers with a good prospect of staying in Germany and tolerated people.

Furthermore, recognised refugees are meant to settle in an allocated location in order to prevent social segregation, but refugees who are in education, an apprenticeship or employment (for a minimum of 12 hours per week) are excluded from this settlement rule meaning a refugee is free to choose a settlement area. Moreover, a permanent residence permit is dependent on individual efforts to integrate: it is granted after five years if the refugee has reached A2 level in German and is self-reliant or after three years if the person has C1 level in German and is self-reliant.

In order to implement this approach, actors responsible for labour market integration, the federal government, the federal states (Länder), municipalities, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF - responsible for assessing asylum applications as well as for general and vocational language courses), the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the Federal Employment Agency (responsible for providing support to asylum seekers and people with a toleration) and the 'Jobcentres' (responsible for supporting refugees) have increased efforts to offer integration measures, such as increased funding for language courses. There are a number of projects developed by the Federal Employment Agency providing targeted support and methods to identify skills for early labour market integration. In addition, there are also programmes co-funded by the European Social Fund that are targeted at migrants and refugees, such as 'Integration through Qualification (IQ)', a nationwide network of contact points to support the recognition process of qualifications, and about 400 sub-projects for training and capacity building measures for labour market actors.

3 The Lithuanian approach to labour market inclusion and integration of refugees

The number of asylum seekers in Lithuania is modest, with around 588 refugees and 1 315 in subsidiary protection (until January 2017). In addition, Lithuania has relocated 414 out of 1 077 asylum seekers, as agreed in the resettlement programme. However, 256 from those relocated to Lithuania have already left the country. The Lithuanian government is currently upscaling its integration policies, aiming at encouraging long term integration.

In contrast to Germany, the integration system in Lithuania relies on NGOs that play a leading role in providing integration services and coordinating the work of relevant stakeholders in order to address individual problems to enter the labour market.

Asylum seekers are not granted access to the labour market. However, due to the limited number of requests the average length for issuing a decision of the asylum request is limited to two to three months. A recent policy reform resulted in the inclusion of refugees and people in subsidiary protection among the categories considered as vulnerable. This gives them access to the general social inclusion assistance, entitles them to benefit from subsidised employment, vocational training, apprenticeships, and self-employment grants.

Furthermore, the Lithuanian reception system provides refugees with tailored integration support. Namely, during their stay at the reception centre, refugees benefit from free accommodation, health assistance, and cultural and integration courses (language, culture). Upon their transfer to the municipalities, refugees can access the services of the migration centres managed by NGOs. These consist of employment counselling (information about the Lithuanian labour market, preparation of CVs and for job interviews, career orientation, matching with employers), assistance to enrol in language courses and education training, housing and healthcare assistance, socialization and cultural opportunities. There have been furthermore efforts to accelerate the integration process by testing skills at vocational training centres or

workplaces, as well as vocational training in English and increased involvement of employers.

4 Country approaches to labour market inclusion and integration of refugees

This section focuses on the key issues related to designing effective policy interventions for the labour market integration of refugees as identified during the Peer Review. It is structured as follows:

- Section 4.1 considers the approaches in host countries and the peer countries to accelerate labour market integration of asylum seekers and refugees, with a focus on combined approaches and targeted support and the need to upscale approaches.
- Section 4.2 presents national approaches from the host and peer countries of vocational language training;
- Section 4.3 discusses measures that support key actors working with refugees including NGOs, PES, employers, volunteers, trade unions, training providers, counselling centres, national/regional/local authorities, refugees themselves and the host society.

4.1 Country Approaches to labour market integration

4.1.1 Context of labour market integration across Europe

Since 2015, there have been significant differences in the number of asylum applications and also recognition rates across European countries and there is moreover a difference between destination and first arrival/transition countries with regard to development and focus of the integration policy. Austria, Germany and Sweden as main destination countries have received the most applications in proportion to their population. Therefore, they have faced more pressure to welcome and register applicants and to plan measures for integration than countries like Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Slovakia or Slovenia which have received comparatively low numbers of asylum applications. Italy is slowly turning from a first arrival country, with high registration numbers and lower applications for asylum, to a settlement country with increasing asylum applications. Furthermore, Italy as a first arrival country is facing more difficulties in terms of accommodating traumatised newly arrived in reception facilities, so the focus is rather to provide first support measures than labour market integration measures. Moreover, since the agreement of the resettlement programme, fewer numbers from Greece or Italy had been reallocated to other European countries than originally planned. People who had been reallocated also often leave the country. For example, as mentioned above, in Lithuania 256 from the 414 accommodated asylum seekers under the resettlement programme have already left the country.

Countries presented at the Peer Review have different policy approaches towards migration which are partly also influenced by previous integration experiences of migrants. In particular, Scandinavian countries have a long-standing tradition and advanced policies in the field of integration. In contrast, most Central and Eastern European countries have not recently had high numbers of migrants, so there is less experience in the development of integration policies. The development of integration policies is also influenced by the general situation on the labour market and attitudes in society towards migrants. Countries like Germany or Sweden benefit from a positive labour market situation with low unemployment rates and sectors that need workforce, particularly in health care, education and in technical professions. In contrast, countries like France and Italy face a relative high unemployment rate and there is competition for low skilled jobs. Next to favourable labour market conditions,

public opinion also determines the development of policy measures. The investment into policy measures is harder in a country like Slovakia where large parts of the population view the integration of refugees and migrants into their society sceptically and do not see their potential to address demographic challenges.

4.1.2 Early labour market integration

Recent literature points out that early intervention, i.e. a timely provision of support measures has a positive impact on labour market integration¹⁸. However, the recent increase in numbers of asylum applications slowed down recognition procedures. This might cause demotivation for asylum seekers and increasing pressure on public budgets. Some countries (e.g. Germany or Italy) amended legislation to shorten the waiting time for labour market access for asylum seekers and countries such as Austria, Germany and Sweden have significantly stepped up their integration efforts, both in scale and scope. However, so far, only Germany provides early intervention measures for asylum seekers.

The provision of support measures to asylum seekers before a decision on their application is taken might bear a cost risk, hence preferential rules are applied in order to manage high numbers of asylum applications and concentrated support measures are provided to those who are likely to stay. Therefore, organisations like the OECD recommend the provision of integration services and facilitated labour market access to those asylum applicants with good prospects of being allowed to stay. The idea behind such measures is to best use the time period during the asylum procedure for language training, skills assessment and labour market training or gathering work experience in order to shorten the time it takes to enter employment and become self-sufficient. This approach has been taken forward by Germany and is also planned in Austria, in 2018 with the 'Law on the Integration Year' that will grant asylum seekers with a good prospect to receive recognition access to the labour market.

In Sweden, the focus is to provide comprehensive support as soon as possible to refugees. The 2010 establishment reform underlines a focus on early labour market integration for refugees. The Introduction Programme that is offered to every refugee consists of an introduction plan that is based on the individual's previous education and work experience and contains language courses, civic orientation and employment preparation activities. The participation in the programme can last for up to 24 months with a possibility of an interruption for up to eight months. Since 2010, the Swedish PES has been responsible for the introduction programme, also with the aim that a meeting with a case worker is done earlier than before. This highlights the focus on employment integration in the Swedish integration approach.

In order to support refugees and asylum seekers to enter the labour market as early as possible, but also to help them to find sustainable jobs, various support measures are needed. More specifically, when developing early labour market integration measures, it is important to address in parallel other crucial elements (i.e. language, cultural orientation, housing needs, reaction of the host society) ensuring overall integration into the host society. Along with that, national contexts such as the legal and institutional framework and the labour market situation need to be considered. For example, the German vocational and education training system (VET) requires vocational qualifications, usually accomplished after three years of a highly standardised (dual) apprenticeship training. In order to support refugees and some asylum seekers to take part in this standardised apprenticeship training, pre-training

¹⁸ Bertelsmann Foundation (2016), From Refugees to Workers Mapping Labour-Market Integration Support Measures for Asylum Seekers and Refugees in EU Member States, <https://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/de/publikationen/publikation/did/from-refugees-to-workers-mapping-labour-market-integration-support-measures-for-asylum-seekers-and-2/>, last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

schemes have been developed in order to meet the requirements in terms of social and vocational language skills and work expertise.

4.1.3 Combined measures for individualised services

A combined set of measures, rather than sequential measures, are a key aspect to accelerate integration into the labour market. Combined measures of training and language support and especially the combination with work experience might facilitate a more rapid integration for some groups. Contact with employers and colleagues allows the refugee to acquire vocational language skills, gain work experience, build contacts and strengthen his/her understanding of the local labour market. This can go along with an assessment of skills and qualifications, complementary education and training (bridging courses) leading to a certain qualification and continuous language training (often addressing vocational language needs). In Sweden, for example, with the reform of the introduction programme a sequential approach of integration measures has been abandoned and refugees participate in different types of measures parallel to each other, for example language training and work practice. In Germany, there have been a variety of individual projects and programmes that combine language training, vocational training and work experience. In Austria, the "Competence Check" takes place as a training measure in classes consisting of about 12 participants who meet for 11 hours per week for about five to seven weeks. The "Competence Check" focuses on the identification and documentation of formal qualifications and work experience, but also includes workshops about the Austrian labour market or 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.

A phased 'work-first' approach focused on work experience is also useful for refugees whose primary focus is to work and earn money, however the focus should be also on training and upskilling in order to ensure sustainable work that addresses the skills needs on the labour market. A good approach presented in this regard are cooperation approaches with sectors that face a workforce need. An example of this concerns the Swedish Fast tracks (Snabbspår) targeting those with qualifications and skills that are in demand on the Swedish labour market. The Fast tracks, consisting of a combination of work experience, lessons in Swedish for the workplace and/or a supplementary education programme at a higher education institution, exist now for around 30 professions. Together with the trade unions and employer organisations, the PES has selected and designed the Fast tracks for certain occupations, such as for example for electricians, truck drivers, nurses and teachers and self-employed.

Refugees and asylum seekers are a very diverse group and many might face multiple and different barriers to enter the labour market: possible health conditions and traumatic experience in their home country and during flight as well as language and cultural barriers. In addition, they have very different levels of education and work experience. Measures that consist of a more 'flexible' package of services may be better suited to address the different individual barriers faced to enter the labour market. This in turn might contribute to a more effective use of public resources, as not everyone might need intensive language training or upskilling measures. This approach can moreover be flexible depending on the particular sector and profession. For example, language training depends on various factors: native language skills, individual learning, vocational language skills and the profession itself, so different professions require different levels of language proficiency. In terms of tailoring approaches to certain groups of refugees, it might make sense to target highly qualified people, as they have a chance to integrate quickly into the labour market. This is for example the approach taken forward in the French Pilot Refugees¹⁹ in which

¹⁹ <http://simplon.co/refugeeks-fr/>

language classes offered at the same time as web coding classes has proven successful for more than half of the trainees enabling these to secure a job at bigger companies in 2017.

In order to develop tailored support measures, meaningful cooperation among the key actors, including PES, NGOs, social and education services, employers, volunteers, trade unions, training providers is needed. Support and career advice need to be coordinated between different partners, ideally in an accessible way, like one-stop shops (see cooperation approaches below). In addition to individualised services to accommodate the very diverse group of asylum seekers and refugees, local labour market conditions and workforce need to be taken into account when implementing specific measures. For example, the German 'KompAS' programme combines language promotion with an employment support measure and is arranged flexibly by taking regional needs into account or by adapting the content and time frame of the measure to individual circumstances. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the use of combined measures in Germany and Austria that include elements targeted at particular groups of refugees, like for example targeted language and vocational training for young refugees and asylum seekers to get into the German apprenticeship system or the 'Competence Check' for women in Austria which includes certain elements of peer support and information addressing the role of women in the Austrian labour market.

4.1.4 Upscaling of effective measures

Across Europe, the existing evidence about outcomes of measures that promote labour market integration of refugees is limited. More systematic monitoring of the current pilot programmes/measures is needed to ensure successful upscaling and a translation into sustainable policy measures. Austria, Germany and the Netherlands have started to pilot certain solutions and have upscaled them to the regional or national level. In Germany from 2015 onwards the project 'Early Intervention' targeted asylum seekers already in reception centres with a high likelihood of staying in Germany. Asylum seekers were offered an identification of skills, training, further job counselling or job placement. A qualitative evaluation²⁰ shows that the aim to integrate asylum seekers and refugees into the labour market takes some time and does not come without challenges (concerns about family members in their home country, traumatisation, fear of failure but also unrealistic ideas of the German education and labour market system). Nevertheless, many participants showed a very strong will to integrate and work. Moreover, staff were trained to work in a new innovative way with a different client group and gained new intercultural competencies. The pilot project was an important step towards the development of early integration procedures for asylum seekers in Germany, because it highlighted challenges and underlined the need for language courses, training measures for staff and other structural requirements within the PES. In Austria, the above mentioned 'Competence Check', was first tested in Vienna on project level and was then rolled out nation-wide.

In the Netherlands, a pilot was tested in 2012 to assess undocumented qualifications. whereas in France, there have been pilots that were rolled out for a wider group of participants, based on the previous experience of previous smaller pilots.

In order to identify if a measure meets its aim, evidence about the outcomes is needed. The costs of integration are certainly high, but possible information on the cost-effectiveness of measures would not only help to justify funding but would also generate buy-in from employers and the society. For example, in Germany, the

²⁰ Daumann, Dietz, Knapp, Strien (2016) Abschlussbericht Modellprojekt Early Intervention – Frühzeitige Arbeitsmarktintegration von Asylbewerbern und Asylbewerberinnen Ergebnisse der qualitativen Begleitforschung durch das IAB, <http://doku.iab.de/forschungsbericht/2015/fb1015.pdf> , last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

Institute for Employment Research and the German Institute for Economic Research have estimated that on the long-term, every Euro invested into integration measures will result in a three times higher decrease of cumulative fiscal costs²¹. It is crucial that institutions communicate the costs of non-integration and the effectiveness of pilots and programmes to the wider population and institutions at various levels of governance to receive support for integration policies and to address hostile attitudes.

4.2 Vocational language training

It is widely accepted that knowledge of the host language has a significant impact both on labour market integration and the general social integration process. Language is one of the main barriers for integration of refugees, as they often only have limited knowledge of the host country language²².

Specifically for labour market integration, obtaining 'sufficient'²³ knowledge of the host country language is crucial. Vocational language training can play an important role in supporting refugees to acquire sufficient knowledge of a workplace in a relatively short amount of time and to be able to continuously improve their language knowledge "on the job".

Results from a recent OECD study show that many employers consider vocational language training as very important for the integration of refugees²⁴. Furthermore, current research shows that vocational language training, ideally provided on the job, is a particularly effective labour market integration measure²⁵.

While many countries across the EU have undertaken efforts to increase orientation and language acquisition, often already in the initial stages of the asylum procedure, in order to prevent inactivity from depreciating asylum seekers' skills and experiences and deteriorating their integration prospects, vocational language training in the countries present at the Peer Review is still mostly in early development stages, with only few examples of already implemented measures.

In Germany, the Government has been offering vocational language training since 2008 with an increase of the federal budget for vocational language learning from EUR 179 million in 2016 to EUR 410 million in 2017.

From 2008 to 2017 the so called "ESF-BAMF" courses have been co-funded by the European Social Fund and are implemented by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees BAMF. They focus on work-specific language such as vocabulary for workplace communication (including e-mail writing) and a training module that includes internships or site visits (depending on the provider). Additionally, there is a possibility to offer classes for certain sectors or professions, e.g. health care²⁶. The language levels necessary for certain jobs differ across professions. The courses aim

²¹ Institute for Employment Research and the German Institute for Economic Research (2017), available at http://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.551736.de/diw_econ_bull_2017-03.pdf, last accessed: 14 December 2017.

²² OECD (2016): "Making Integration Work. Refugees and Others in Need of Protection." OECD Publishing Paris: available at: <https://www.oecd.org/migration/making-integration-work-humanitarian-migrants-9789264251236-en.htm>, last accessed on: 2 November 2017.

²³ The peer review participants discussed at large what a 'sufficient' level of language knowledge consists of. However, the discussion did not yield to an encompassing definition. It rather became clear that the language knowledge required differs largely between the sector and type of work a person is doing.

²⁴ OECD (2017), "Finding their Way, Labour market integration of refugees in Germany", OECD Publishing Paris: available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Finding-their-Way-Germany.pdf>, last accessed: 19 July 2017.

²⁵ Liebig, Thomas; Huddleston, Thomas (2014), "Labor Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills", in *International Migration Outlook*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en, last accessed: 30 October 2017.

²⁶ Konle-Seidl, Regina (2017). "Strategies and targeted measures to support integration of refugees into the German labour market", Host Country Discussion Paper – Germany, Peer Review on 'Integration of Refugees into the Labour Market', DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1274&newsId=9009&furtherNews=yes>

to provide the minimum language level, whereby the additional skill building module, including technical instruction, work placement, and site visits aims to enhance the workplace-related language skills²⁷.

However, after the large inflow of asylum seekers and refugees in 2015, the Government decided to change the approach for vocational language training and introduced vocational language training as part of their integration policy. The courses under the new "Vocational Language Training ordinance" (*Deutschsprachförderverordnung*)²⁸ are coordinated by the BAMF and have been running since 2016 solely funded by the German Government. This training is a core element of the new integration policy. It builds on the language proficiency (Common European Framework Reference of Languages B1) obtained in the integration course. The main difference between this training and the ESF-BAMF courses is that the new courses are a direct follow-up to the integration course in which participants receive a basic level of German (not work-specific). In-line with the governmental changes to the integration policy, the training will replace the ESF-BAMF courses by the end of 2017.

Further, several stakeholders (including the BAMF and employer associations) led by the PES have introduced short term labour market programmes with a share of vocational language training targeted at refugees, e.g. "Perspectives for Refugees" (PerF) or KompAS that include site visits to companies, skills assessment and counselling for asylum seekers and refugees. Another pilot project "Kommit" run by PES, BAMF, employers and trade unions aims to prepare young refugees to enter a dual apprenticeship training.

The example below shows an initiative from the Deutsche Bahn (DB) to support young refugees to enter and successfully complete a vocational training at the company²⁹.

"Chance Plus"-Programme for refugees

The programme 'Chance Plus' was initiated in the Berlin location of Deutsche Bahn DB (German railway) and is now available across 10 locations in Germany. A pilot of the programme was running between March and September 2016. The aim is to enable young refugees to participate in the vocational training, whereby regular training is complemented with vocational language training hereby enabling refugees to achieve a mid-level of German (B1) after participating in the programme. The programme duration is 10 months whereby the refugees receive also social-educational assistance. Since 2017 around 90 places have been offered in the programme. Those that have successfully passed the training receive a guaranteed vocational training spot at DB.

In addition to the above mentioned Fast tracks, the 'Swedish for immigrants' language courses can be offered specifically for certain occupations. Thereby, migrants (including refugees) can combine these courses with work practice, which is similar to the German approach. The difference is however that in Sweden, only newly arrived

²⁷ BAMF (2015), The ESF-BAMF programme, available at:

<http://www.bamf.de/EN/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/DeutschBeruf/Deutschberuf-esf/deutschberuf-esf-node.html>, last accessed: 10 November 2017.

²⁸ BAMF (2017). „Berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung (gem. § 45a AufenthG)", available at: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Willkommen/DeutschLernen/DeutschBeruf/Bundesprogramm-45a/bundesprogramm-45a-node.html>, last accessed: 1 November 2017.

²⁹ For further information see S-Bahn Berlin (2017), "Wie funktioniert Integration?", available at http://www.s-bahn-berlin.de/aktuell/2017/007_qualifizierungsprojekt.htm, last accessed: 29 October 2017.

who have received a residence permit are eligible to participate while these types of courses also are open to asylum seekers from countries with a high recognition rate in Germany.

In some countries vocational language training is supported by NGOs. For example, in the second host country Lithuania, courses offered by NGOs are funded by the European Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). These are, however, not supported or institutionalised by the government. Additionally, private companies and other organisations offer vocational language training for a fee. In France, there is a great variety of projects and activities being implemented by non-governmental organisations. For example, the initiative ACCELAIR is implemented by the association Forum Réfugiés with support from other actors including firms and public institutions. It has been implemented with support of the EU Equal Programme in 2002 and combines accommodation, vocational training including vocational language training. Additionally, France started in mid-2017 a pilot programme for for 1 000 participants³⁰ implemented by the Public Service Agency for Vocational Training (AFPA) and funded by branch-level funds for vocational training. The programme targets refugees under 25 who can prove an A1 language level knowledge and combines housing, vocational training and language education. In a first step of the programme the participants take part in 400 hours of vocational orientation and training. In a second step the refugees enrol in a training scheme in cooperation with employers, including access to language training and subsequently receive an employment certificate.

Other countries participating at the Peer Review have less elaborated vocational language training in place, but in several cases there are promising pilot schemes running:

- In Latvia a new vocational language training pilot is planned in 2018 whereby Latvian language teachers are supposed to mentor refugees individually, helping them to acquire language proficiency and the job-related vocabulary.
- In Slovakia a call for AMIF grants is currently being prepared. The aim of the programme to be implemented with the AMIF grant is to increase professional competence of refugees through direct workplace training, to prepare training for the use of language skills requested directly for the specific job, and to prepare internship programmes for the beneficiaries of international protection. Slovakia aims to support employers via subsidies, and those should in turn offer mentoring at the workplace, as well as language training.
- Slovenia has recently implemented targeted labour market support measures via pilot projects. These projects foresee a support sum of 250 Euros monthly for employers who recruit refugees for vocational training for up to six months. This training also includes vocational language training.

Several conclusions related to vocational language training based on the Peer Review discussion can be drawn:

- Basic language courses are necessary as a minimum and followed by targeted vocational language training this can substantially speed up the general integration process.
- The required language standard depends on the profession, hence 'on the job' language training for a certain profession is helpful in order to be able to work in that profession.
- Employers should be financially supported in offering vocational language training (e.g. through subsidies) and so called 'language mentors' at the work place can help to fill the gap of professional terminology. However, it was

³⁰ Framework agreement for experimental pathways for refugees, May 2017.

pointed out that the quality of the vocational training on offer should be guaranteed throughout and that what is on offer is widely recognised.

- Refugees should be provided with incentives, such as e.g. loans to access training.

In sum, during the Peer Review, the countries collectively agreed that a 'flexible approach' to language training is crucial for a better labour market integration: language training should be provided to asylum seekers and refugees at the earliest stage possible and be combined with vocational education and other professional paths.

4.3 Implementation by key actors and cooperation approaches

The process of integration of refugees in the labour market involves a number of key actors beyond the respective migration institutions. These include employers, trade unions, national/regional/local authorities, PES, training providers, NGOs, volunteers, the refugees themselves as well as the host society whose support is pivotal to fully integrate refugees into society more generally and work more specifically. During the Peer Review discussion, the strong need was expressed to put in place measures of support to those actors both in terms of capacity building and of making (human and financial) resources available. In addition, the OECD report³¹, in line with several interventions made during the discussion, emphasised that a key factor of successful integration is ensuring meaningful cooperation of all stakeholders in order to maximize synergies and guarantee the best use of (limited) available resources. However additional efforts are needed to improve such cooperation.

Whilst taking into account the specificity of each institutional set-up, an element of success to ensure a synergic approach is a strong ownership of the process of one institution, who should take the lead implementing and coordinating activities, also through inter-institutional working groups to coordinate policies, programmes and funding. For instance, in Sweden the PES coordinates the different integration measures with the responsibility for an individualised plan on support services and granting an introduction allowance. In Germany, there are approaches for a better coordination between the BAMF and PES³², such as the local establishment of reception centres where actors work together under one roof to register asylum seekers and to plan further measures.

During the Peer Review discussion, the resistance of the host community on one side and the low level of ownership of refugees in the integration process on the other, were repeatedly raised as main challenges to sustainable integration of refugees. Low participation in integration initiatives, conflictual relationships on the work place, or open opposition of the host society to the integration of asylum seekers and refugees are some of the most visible consequences of this. In this context, the employment of mediators, or the use of social media to reach out and collect views of refugees, or the organisation of cultural and social events are some of the positive practices mentioned during the Peer Review, in use in some countries such as Germany, Italy, Latvia and the Netherlands to build bridges between refugees and host communities.

³¹ OECD (2017), "Finding their Way, Labour market integration of refugees in Germany", OECD Publishing Paris: available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Finding-their-Way-Germany.pdf>, last accessed: 19 July 2017. Liebig, Thomas; Huddleston, Thomas (2014), "Labor Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills", in *International Migration Outlook*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en, last accessed: 30 October 2017.

³² The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) and the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA) are the main institutions at Federal level responsible of refugees' integration. BAMF has a responsibility on the processing asylum applications and on supporting the integration process of migrants. BA has a key role in supporting asylum seekers and refugees in finding employment and increasing their professional skills.

Furthermore, as emphasised in the previous sections, integration measures imply budget expenses that are often difficult to justify towards the public. Thus socialization and cultural activities and wide information and awareness raising initiatives should also be used as a tool to effectively communicate the costs of non-integration and why it is important to invest in the integration of refugees and asylum seekers.

The paragraphs below will look at some of the challenges and identified good examples of practices discussed during the Peer Review related to three of the main actors in the labour market integration process, namely employers, PES, and NGOs, with an emphasis on cooperation aspects.

4.3.1 Employers

Labour market integration can only be successful when employers are willing to hire asylum seekers and refugees. Thus, there is consensus that more attention should be given to involve employers as a key player in the integration process. Discussions highlighted that what employers most need is information and legal certainty about procedures and consequences on hiring asylum seekers and refugees, incentives to hire refugees - i.e. subsidized work or apprenticeships, support to reach out to asylum seekers and refugees with the right skills.

In Germany, the reforms introduced by the 2016 Integration Act, including the preferential integration path for asylum seekers with higher chances to be granted refugee status and tolerated migrants, provided employers with a clear perspective about employability of asylum seekers that helped them when deciding on hiring and investing resources (for example for training) before a decision on their application is made.

Next to ongoing support for employers, subsidies and monetary support can help to incentivise employers to hire refugees. In Lithuania for instance, the government subsidises 75% of the salary to employed refugees for a period of 24 months. However, there is a risk that the employer's interest ends together with the financial support. Thus it is important to also introduce other non-monetary measures to gain employers buy-in. Most importantly, it is essential to raise employers' awareness on the business opportunities of employing refugees based on robust labour market analysis presenting sector bottle-necks in workers supply across sectors and type of employment. Refugees could hence be considered as a resource to fill identified current and future gaps in terms of required skills.

In Germany, to encourage the commitment and active participation of employers, cooperation models between PES, BAMF, BMBF (Federal Ministry of Education and Research), employers, and trade unions have been developed to provide orientation on the German vocational and employment system while also giving the opportunity to attend language classes (PerjuF and PerjuF-H, Kommit, MySkill).

A proposal coming from employers in Lithuania is to involve employer associations in the skills recognition process. In the context of relocation, the assessment of skills could start at an early stage even before the refugee departs from the country of origin, in order to have additional time to look for available opportunities or design a specific employment access path.

To support employers in dealing with refugees once hired, the employment of cultural or social mediators on the workplace could provide a solution to accompany refugees in their integration path. For instance, in Germany the Deutsche Bahn (German Railway) set up a company-driven programme to support young refugees, which also include the support of cultural mediators appointed to help the refugees with administrative procedures but also to help solving potential cultural conflicts. Similarly, in Latvia it is planned to employ language mentoring schemes on the work place, to support the refugees to acquire language proficiency and the vocabulary necessary for their integration on the job.

NGOs and PES may play a crucial role in providing the kind of support that employers wish to receive to employ refugees and asylum seekers. In Germany, OECD data shows that more than 40% of participating employers who hired asylum seekers or refugees did so through the involvement of civil society initiatives, while 34% did so through PES. Other important channels were spontaneous applications (29%), employees or friends (23%), Chambers of Commerce/Crafts (21%) and schools (20%)³³. Besides being a main channel of information about opportunities and procedures, PES and NGOs could be pivotal in facilitating the meeting process between offer and demand especially targeting those sectors that face labour shortages. Those measures are especially important for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) as often these face skills shortages, but have limited capacity to deal with administrative requirements. For instance, in Austria the Chamber of Commerce provides essential assistance to SMEs on the identification and recruitment of refugees. In Lithuania, the migration centres managed by NGOs also hire an employment counsellor whose tasks include facilitating the initial contacts between the refugee and the employer.

4.3.2 Public Employment Services (PES)

The role and efficiency of PES varies strongly across the EU. However, when dealing with refugees' integration, it is crucial to invest in the upscaling of PES services, which should be tailored to the specific situation of refugees and asylum seekers. Those services should in particular encompass counselling, support to obtain recognition of certificates and skills validation, tailored employment schemes and upskilling opportunities (e.g. apprenticeships, vocational and language trainings) as well as help to provide access to people and professional networks.

However, the challenge that PES encounter in adapting to the needs of this new group of service users is twofold: on the one hand there is a lack of knowledge of the relevant legal circumstances and employment opportunities available to refugees and asylum seekers whereas on the other hand there is a lack of staff with an understanding of the barriers refugees may encounter (cultural and linguistic barriers, discrimination, obstacles in accessing rights and services) and the necessary skills and tools to interact with refugees i.e. cultural awareness, mediation and managing diversity abilities. Furthermore, the practice in certain countries such as for example in the Netherlands, shows that while the counselling and matching process for higher skilled refugees is relatively easy, greater challenges are related to finding solutions for those who are low skilled or/and face multiple barriers to enter the labour market, such as illiteracy or disabilities.

Hence, support to PES should simultaneously include the design of tailored services coupled with capacity building actions for PES's staff covering topics such as asylum issues, managing diversity, inter-cultural approaches, legal knowledge, etc. In this task, the cooperation between PES services and NGOs, and with training providers, social and health services where relevant, is a desirable solution.

A good example of cooperation in this area is the Network Integration Through Qualification (IQ), a German funding programme, which brings together central level institutions, PES services, and NGOs to improve the chances of refugees' integration into the labour market through full recognition of their skills and credentials. The programme is initiated by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, and focuses on supporting PES staff to direct refugees and asylum seekers to support with the recognition of foreign credentials in Germany through a nationwide infrastructure of contact points (mostly civil society organizations) that inform people with foreign qualifications (including asylum seekers) about their recognition and assist them

³³ ³³ Liebig, Thomas; Huddleston, Thomas (2014), "Labor Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children: Developing, Activating and Using Skills", in *International Migration Outlook*, OECD Publishing, Paris, http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2014-en, last accessed: 30 October 2017.

during the administrative process. They also offer tailored adjustment training if the foreign qualifications only partly meet the German requirements. The individual activities are supported by capacity building measures for labour market actors (such as employment offices, job centers etc.) in order to improve their intercultural competences, to create a diversity-friendly environment for enterprises and to increase their future competitiveness. Another network, IvAF provides similar services implemented by welfare associations (e.g. Caritas) offering integration support for migrants already since 2005. As part of the Network IQ and of the IvAF Network between November 2015 and June 2016 more than 9 000 people from Employment Agencies and Jobcentres have been participating in intercultural awareness rising courses with a focus on asylum.

A different approach was used in Slovenia, where instead of training existing PES's staff and relying on services outsourced to NGOs, the national employment service hired specialized personnel previously trained by the Social Chamber of Slovenia. The latter, which is the national professional social welfare institution, in cooperation with local NGOs, developed a training on intercultural communication, asylum and forced migration for professional staff working with refugees. Upon advocacy of the Social Chamber and NGOs those subjects have also been included in the professional exam for social workers, contributing to the creation of a pool of professionals with the skills required to deal with the specific challenges of the integration of refugees.

4.3.3 NGOs

It is largely acknowledged that NGOs play a key role in the integration process of refugees across EU countries. Generally, the NGOs have privileged access to refugees, their staff possessing the skills and knowledge to have a deeper understanding of the migrants' situation and hence they are ideally placed to work as intermediary between the refugees, institutions and employers.

However, NGOs often face financial insecurity and are at risk of fragmentation of integration measures consisting of smaller scale activities of which the impact is hard to assess and may be jeopardized by missed synergies' opportunities.

It was discussed that given the crucial role this actor plays in the integration of refugees, more funding opportunities to NGOs should be created, with a preference for actions seeking to boost cooperation with employers/creating employment opportunities. Ideally projects should be implemented under an umbrella framework overseen by the coordinating authority (depending on the national institutional framework).

As already mentioned above, Lithuania brings a good example of one possible approach of the role of NGOs in the integration of refugees into the labour market. NGOs - the main provider is Caritas Lithuania and Red Cross - are leading the management of municipal migration centres established with government and AMIF funds to assist refugees throughout their stay in the municipalities to facilitated their integration. The NGO managed centres provide a variety of services from employment counselling, to facilitating access to healthcare, housing and education, as well as promoting opportunities for socialization with the host community through cultural events. In performing its duties, the centres closely liaise with the government managed reception centres where refugees are hosted before being transferred to the municipality, and acts as a cooperation hub for employers, PES and other public services.

In Italy, one of the added values of the NGOs interventions is the role they play as a mediator between refugees and central or local level administrations in particular on facilitating the engagement of refugees in voluntary work, facilitating access to people and professional network, but also creating opportunities to access work schemes in

the private sector, or in social enterprises and cooperatives³⁴. This usually takes place in the framework of the assistance provided by the reception centres of the National Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees (SPRAR) or other programmes. There is a great variety of such initiatives, mostly taking place at local level. One interesting example of such cooperation at national level is the inclusion of refugees in the group eligible to apply to the National Civil Service, a national scheme which subsidizes temporary employment of youth between 17 and 27 years in jobs of public benefit with public (local and central level institutions and services) and private (NGOs and cooperatives) employers. Another advantage for refugees of these kind of short-term employment schemes, concerns the access to social and professional networks as well as a concrete opportunity to develop professional skills which may facilitate finding sustainable employment at a later stage.

5 Conclusions and recommendations

The Peer Review on 'Integration of refugees into the labour market' highlighted the need to adopt a comprehensive holistic approach for labour market integration of refugees and asylum seekers. Integration policies need to address various issues: the education background and work experience of the newly arrived, cultural differences, housing and health care needs, social support as well as attitudes in the host society. Equally, policies need to be adapted to the national contexts and the role of the country in the migration process i.e. first arrival country compared to destination countries, integration approaches, and local labour markets.

Early intervention measures have a positive impact on labour market integration, as they use the time period during the asylum procedure to provide information, identify and make already first contact with the labour market. However, the provision of support during the asylum procedure for all asylum seekers might bring a cost risk. Hence, preferential rules for specific groups that concentrate the support on those asylum applicants who are more likely to stay are useful to manage a more efficient integration process.

Furthermore, a **combined set of measures** rather than sequential measures for refugees can also accelerate integration into the labour market. Combined training and language support with work experience might facilitate a more rapid access to work for some groups. This can go along with an assessment of skills and qualifications, complementary education and training (bridging courses) leading to a certain qualification and continuous language training (often addressing vocational language needs). A degree of flexibility of service provision still needs to be ensured, considering the very diverse group of asylum seekers and refugees (as some require support of a different scope and scale). A tailored approach to address individual barriers is therefore beneficial to support a person to find work in a sustainable matter, but also to use public resources more efficiently.

Knowledge of the language of the host country has a significant impact on labour market integration as well as on the general social integration process. There is a large consensus on the need to provide language classes as soon as possible, alongside with vocational language training to improve professional skills. Employers should be financially supported in offering vocational language training (e.g. through subsidies) and so called 'language mentors' at the work place can help to fill the gap of professional terminology.

The process of integration of refugees in the labour market involves a number of key actors beyond the respective migration institutions. A tailored approach requires

³⁴ The SPRAR is the official national system of refugees' protection, funded by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and managed by local authorities in close cooperation with civil society organizations.

meaningful cooperation among several actors, including PES services, employers, trade unions, training providers, NGOs and civil society, such as volunteer groups, as well as adequate support provided to each actor to ensure their effective contribution to the integration of refugees seeking to maximize the impact of individual initiatives:

- A focus on employers as a key player in the integration process is crucial – this includes the involvement in skills identification procedures, training measures and ongoing support for employers. PES services or NGOs should be an essential support to employers by providing first orientation and support the matching process between employers and refugees. Mentorship could be used to facilitate the integration process of refugees in the work environment as well overcoming cultural barriers and helping to prevent and solve conflicts. This kind of support should be especially provided to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) to enable them to employ refugees.
- NGOs and PES services play a crucial role in the integration process of refugees. By working in cooperation with public institutions and employers, they provide essential services on career guidance and offer continuing support once a person is in employment. This assistance should be tailored to individual needs, also in order to support those who are low skilled or/and face multiple barriers to enter the labour market, such as illiteracy. Support for these groups might be specialised language classes (like vocational language training), social entrepreneurship schemes and voluntary work combined with training to up-skill professional skills and provide access to professional networks. In order to do so, the staff working with this group also need training in terms of cultural awareness, diversity management and asylum issues, but also training to work on new ways to identify skills is needed to work with this new group of service users. It is also important to ensure financial stability for the work of NGOs.

There is a wide range of programmes and integration initiatives, mostly implemented locally, however evidence on their impact is limited and follow-up inconsistent. More systematic **monitoring** of the current pilot programmes/measures is needed to ensure successful upscaling and a translation into sustainable policy measures. The costs of integration are certainly high. However, it is crucial that institutions communicate the costs of non-integration and the effectiveness of pilots and programmes to the wider population and institutions at various levels of governance to receive support for integration policies and to address hostile attitudes.

