A New Beginning – Refugee Integration in Europe

Key research findings

SHARE conference 22 October 2013, Brussels
Rational for the research

• Increased interest nationally and at EU level in measuring integration in select integration policy areas;
• UNHCR found that most studies or integration evaluations do not consider refugee specific integration;
• Outcome of studies or evaluation can impact integration policies, also for refugees, although little may be known about refugee specific integration;
• Some evaluations look at quantitative data only without gathering more qualitative data to support findings;
• Lack of understanding of barriers for refugees to integrate.
The research aims

• Consider methods of integration evaluation;
• Consider the inclusion of refugee specific data;
• Explore specific refugee barriers or facilitators to integration for refugees based on:
  • existing literature,
  • views of those engaged directly with refugee integration in areas like education, housing, health and employment;
  • views from refugees about their integration experience.

Did not evaluate integration or look at integration of children or asylum-seekers

Did not include resettled refugees due to the specific support often available to this group
What we did:
Overall report and research

(EU, Germany, UK, Austria, Ireland, France, Sweden and Canada)

• **National research** in Austria, Ireland, France and Sweden;
• Set up a **Reference Group** to give advice to the research (staff from ECRE, MPG and ULB);
• **Review of existing literature** on integration *indicators*, methods of integration evaluation and the inclusion of refugee data;
• **Summarize findings from the national literature review**, adding experience from additional three countries;
• **Summarize findings from consultations**;
• **Make recommendations** for research, evaluation and integration support.
Overall findings
Integration indicators and evaluation (refugees)

• Generally not a harmonized approach across countries and within countries - although some alignment also through EU initiatives;
• Difficult to measure the “right things” in order to influence policy;
• Quantitative data is generally not available;
• When it is, it generally does not allow for analysis of refugees integration (some exception in UK and France);
• Qualitative research is available, also for refugees = so we do know something about relevant barriers and facilitators;
• Some areas are under-researched or not well understood.
Overall findings
Relevant integration policy areas

• Some areas may mark integration progress – *good housing*;
• Some areas are means to achieve better integration – *good housing*;
• Different integration areas form complex influencing relationships.

Integration literature on refugees look at and include findings on Housing, Employment, Health, Social Integration, Active Citizenship, Family Reunification, Education, Language and The Asylum Process;

• These areas are also in different ways those which came out as relevant through our stakeholder and refugee discussions;
• Important to be clear about the integration goal, the objectives and what can be measured to inform policy in this regard.
Overall findings
Gaps in refugee integration research

• When research and data is available in quantitative studies – there is little research on establishing causal links and explaining trends;
• Lack of inclusion of the refugees’ voice in research;
• The impact of family separation and lack of family reunification on refugee integration is under-researched;
• The impact on integration of refugees’ experience of flight and the time in the asylum process is under-researched;
• Lack of research concerning integration of those with subsidiary protection needs;
• Other areas also require more consideration, in particular health (trauma), lack of documents and social networks.
Employment – findings from literature and data

- Important policy area in all countries and at EU level - indicator are developed;
- Some statistics available and more researched than other integration areas;
- Nevertheless, mainly not refugees specific;
- Generally a picture of lower employment, precarious employment and higher downward professional mobility compared with other migrants;
- Some nuances of note:
  - Study in Canada attribute relative higher employment among refugees compared with family migrants to the support available (Hiebert 2002);
  - Swedish study showed that performance gap decreases over time;
  - Over-qualification high among refugees 40% in Austrian study (Riesenfelder 2011)
  - Indication that women experience additional difficulties in the labour market.
- Role of freedom and mobility is under researched.
Employment – influencing factors

• While employment is seen as important - barriers were noted by stakeholders and refugees and indicated in literature;
• Some were specific to refugees others relevant for all migrants;
• General migrant difficulties: language learning, recognition of qualifications, discrimination and familiarity with the labour market culture;
• Other more specific barriers:
  • Time in the asylum process – deskilling, idle time, impact on family life, self-esteem;
  • Transition – all happening at once (housing, language, family, employment)
  • Documentation (identification, civil, driving license, status not understood, schooling, work, delays);
  • Lack of networks – more significant for refugees;
  • Health – stress, isolation, depression, flight related.
Employment – recommendations

• List of the practices brought out in this study to overcome the barriers;
• Some concrete suggestions were made during the consultations and are included for consideration;
• Recommendations are set out in the report:
  • Skills recognition
  • Support to employment agencies;
  • Early assessment of practical skills;
  • Exiting good practice to be shared;
  • Combination of work/language
  • Language learning as early as possible;
  • Volunteering, internships, apprenticeships;
  • Good coordination between asylum authorities and issuance of documentation;
  • Documentation which is clear and simple and well understood;
  • Time in the asylum system which preserves the dignity of the individual.
Education and language - findings from literature and data

• Important policy area for all countries and at EU level;
• Language and education not necessarily together conceptually;
• Different approach for adults and children;
• Gaps in research on links between education/language and integration;
• Generally language seen as very important to all areas of integration, most notably employment;
• Some points of note:
  • Study in France showed that refugees have more difficulties than other migrants to learn the language (Beque 2007) – (absence of francophone links);
  • That language plays an important role for social contact, gaining independence, finding jobs and education was found in Austria (Kraler et al. 2013);
  • Germany evaluation of integration courses – 93% language improved, contact with Germans improved, 51% maintained level of German after course, 56% attachment to Germany intensified;
  • UK Spotlight on Refugee Integration (2010) showed that language improved over time.
Education and language – influencing factors

• Education for adult refugees – linked to language, but also separate
• Common barriers include:
  • Age can play a role both for language learning and education in general;
  • Lack of advice and support – also linked to knowledge of service providers
  • Gender related barriers (child care, gender roles) – however important aspect in strengthening self-perception and aspiration
  • Illiteracy.
• More specific issues are either language or education:
  • Health – including stress – also linked to family separation;
  • Limited linguistic links between country of origin and country of asylum;
  • Lack of contact with receiving community – practice of language;
  • Lack of language courses during asylum process;
  • Availability of appropriate language courses;
  • Validation of foreign qualifications.
Education and language – recommendations

• Higher level of language education based on individual assessment;
• Language courses available as early as possible;
• Sharing of practice and lessons learned from language courses to a/s and on ways to link language and employment or practice;
• Service providers who know how to empower refugees and can give correct advice;
• Loan, grant and scholarship schemes for higher education also for refugees;
• Include guidance on education in individual integration plans;
• Improve the information and research on the reasons for education outcome.
• Other recommendations from migrant education considered.
Active Citizenship – findings from literature and data

• Elements reflected in all countries, but in different ways;

• Some typical features;
  (Voting rights and voting participation; Participation in political parties and associations; Acquisition of citizenship; Representation in media; and Volunteering)

• Generally little research available - especially on refugees;
  ➢ Foreign-born Swedish citizens are “fare more likely to vote than non-citizen foreign born”
  ➢ High political interest, but no membership of parties among refugees.

• Other: citizenship important for protection in country of origin; citizenship reduced discrimination in employment; language; lack of network; previous persecution can hinder trust in political processes.
Social Integration – findings from literature and data

- Social inclusion, social exclusion, social integration, social connections – different approaches with different focus (risk of poverty and inclusion / relationships);
- Some overlap therefore with active citizenship and participation;
- UK – Ager/Strang framework speak of social bridging and social bonding
- Some points of note:
  - France ELIPA study shows that refugees are much more socially isolated, and less likely to have family and social connections than other migrants;
  - Studies in France point to the important role refugee communities can play in settling other refugees from that community;
  - Studies looking at xenophobia and discrimination are relevant;
  - UK studies point to different patterns in bonding and bridging among migrant groups (*Rethinking Integration* (2012), COMPAS (2007));
  - Canada evaluation conclude that there is a need for programming addressing barriers to newcomer integration, including racism and discrimination.
Social integration and Active Citizenship – influencing factors

Commonly sited influencing factors:

• Political participation influenced by past negative experiences;
• Attitude in society and portrayal in media;
• Barriers to volunteering – including documentation;
• Limitations to political participation (voting) or citizenship;
• Isolation and lack of social bonding and bridging;
  • Lack of language ability;
  • Habits around socializing
  • Uncertainty about cultural norms;
  • Fear of rejections/ racism;
  • Psychological and health related barriers;
Social integration and Active Citizenship – Recommendations

• Collective efforts to support social networking;
• Strong anti-discrimination framework;
• Promotion of intercultural dialogue;
• Strategies to promote active citizenship;
• Community engagement promoted (sport clubs, recreational);
• Further research on the links between citizenship and integration;
• Facilitation of citizenship.
Housing – findings from literature and data

• Housing – not an EU policy area, but prominent in many countries’ framework – also linked to question of urban development;

• In all countries refugee housing seemed a particular concern and with poorer outcome for refugees, including homelessness, than for migrants in general;

• Some points of note:
  • Study in France shows refugees suffer a more chaotic residential history than other migrants (Beque 2007);
  • ELIPA showed 25% of refugee respondents lived in transitory housing, 25% with family or friends;
  • Study in Ireland in 2012 noted 9.3% of those in need of housing support were refugees;
  • In the UK Spotlight on Refugee Integration showed 50% of refugees relied on the National Asylum Support Service of which likelihood of homelessness was considered high;
  • In Canada, research showed that refugees have poorer housing conditions than other migrants, but this is under researched (Hyndman 2011);
  • Study in Sweden shows that those a/s who arranged their own accommodation had slightly better housing and employment integration over time (Boverket 2008);
Housing– Influencing factors

• The transition phase from asylum to refugee status particularly relevant and time of vulnerability;
• Urgency upon recognition;
• Lack of employment, and therefore secure income;
• Landlords reluctant to rent to refugees
• High landlord requirements, which refugee cannot easily meet;
• Shortage of affordable and suitable housing;
• Insufficient support to find housing;
• Urban preference, do to networks or employment.
Housing – Recommendations

• Support to finding suitable and affordable housing upon recognition;
• Measures to prevent homelessness among refugees;
• Create greater awareness among landlords and social housing authorities about some of the limitations faced by refugees when accessing housing;
• “Housing mediators”;
• Information as part of integration support;
• Access to guarantor scheme may be a good practice.
Some cross-cutting issues – Family Reunification

- Not an indicator area – although in Canada one of the strategic outcomes are “Family and humanitarian migration that reunits families and offers protection to the displaced and persecuted”:
- Some research highlighting the role family re-unification plays for the integration;
- Barriers to achieving reunification well researched;
- Studies highlight that separation from family can lead to stress and anxiety, but also that the prolonged time apart has consequences on its own, including difficulties readjusting;
- It is next to impossible to “measure” the impact family separation has on other areas of integration in a quantitative manner.
Some cross-cutting issues – Asylum Process and Condition

• Not a policy or an indicator area – however clearly an important factor in refugee integration;

• Research exists in general on impact of aspects of asylum reception - highlights the negative impact the long process can have – stress, anxiety, distrust of authorities, dependency, general health and psychological stability;

• Research gap in relation to the impact of asylum procedures on integration;

• This study did not include looking at impact of detention;

• There is not enough evidence to tell apart the impact of reception standards from the time spent in the process, but the time factor is clearly relevant.
Some cross-cutting issues – Health

• Not an indicator area at EU level, but included in the framework in Germany, Austria, France and the UK;
• Generally little research on refugees and health, some studies do find significant need for psychological support;
• Refugee health may be included in studies on other integration areas as for instance a barrier to employment;
• In Sweden there is a larger body of research on refugee health – looking at impact also on employment, living conditions and social integration;
• Overall there are indications that refugees suffer poorer health than other migrants and natives;
• While some health issues pre-existed prior to flight, experiences during the asylum procedure clearly play a role as well.
Some cross-cutting issues – Transition and documentation

• Not a policy or an indicator area;
• This study shows that the transition period is very important for the integration trajectory;
• The transition period is not well understood or researched;
• Importance of validation of study and work degrees is understood in integration support and thinking;
• Little or no focus on documentation more general.
Some cross-cutting issues – Recommendations

• Further research and knowledge of the links between family unity and integration trajectories;
• Simplification of the family reunification process and flexible criteria applied in identifying family members;
• Ensure that asylum procedures are efficient;
• Conditions, practices and support during the asylum process should promote dignity and aim to empower the individual;
• Information about difficulties for refugees accessing documents should be improved with service providers;
• Lack of documentation should be addressed in individual integration plans;
• Initial targeted integration support should be considered as good practice;
• Good management of the transition period is essential;
• Refugee health should be understood as a cross-cutting issue.
Thank you