



**Fostering the Economic Integration of  
Asylum-Seekers and Beneficiaries of  
International Protection:  
The role of Social Partners**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

### 1.1. *The (uneven) advent of a migration and humanitarian crisis*

Since the advent of the current wave of cross-Mediterranean migration, Europe<sup>2</sup> has received an unprecedented number of asylum applications, far from the most recent surge in the late 1980s-early 1990s. According to Eurostat data,<sup>3</sup> 1.2 million persons claimed asylum in Europe for the first time in 2016, a slightly lower number compared to the 1.3 million first-time applications registered in 2015. In 2017, however, the number of applications decreased significantly, accounting for approximately 56 percent of the total number of arrivals in 2016 (Eurostat 2017a). Even if it is true that the number of arrivals has decreased significantly in 2017, Europe still faces important non-resolved resettlement, relocation, and integration challenges.

In 2016, first-time asylum applicants came mostly from Syria (28% of the total), Afghanistan (15%) and Iraq (11%). A clear majority, just above two thirds, were male; and more than 4 in 5 were less than 35 years old, with most of their active life ahead. If we disaggregate further in terms of age, among the total number of first-time applicants, about one third were minors below age 18, and half were aged 18 to 34 (Eurostat 2017a). If we take the population of Europe as a whole, 18 to 34-year-olds represented in comparison only 21% of the total in 2016. The population of first-time asylum claimants is therefore highly selected in terms of age and gender (Belloni and Pastore 2016; Belloni and Pastore *forthcoming*).

Little is known however about other important characteristics of the profile of the recent migratory influx. Protection seekers and beneficiaries of protection (PSBs) are to a great extent a statistically invisible population. Different countries apply different interpretations of the definition stated in the 1951 Geneva Convention. There is a high degree of cross-country heterogeneity on decisions about who deserves protection and why (Pastore 2015; Zetter 2007). In this study, PSBs are defined as third-country nationals who are seeking protection insofar they are entitled to work legally, either as beneficiaries of international protection under the Geneva Convention or EU legislation

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<sup>1</sup> This paper has been authored by Albert F. Arcarons (European University Institute, Florence, Italy; Forum of International and European Research on Immigration – FIERI, Turin, Italy) under the coordination of Ferruccio Pastore (FIERI). It has also benefited from the comments of Ester Salis (FIERI) (who has also written section 3.4) and from the discussions conducted in the framework of the Expert Group on Skills and Migration of the LABOUR-INT project (<http://www.labour-int.eu/>), supported by the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) of the European Commission and coordinated by the European Trade Unions Confederation (ETUC).

<sup>2</sup> EU-28 plus Norway and Switzerland.

<sup>3</sup> Eurostat monthly data on first asylum applicants. Available from [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr\\_asyappctzm&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=migr_asyappctzm&lang=en) (last accessed January 2018).

(subsidiary protection), or under some form of national humanitarian protection, insofar they are also entitled to work legally.

Systematic data about PSBs on key predictors of labour market entry and performance, such as level of education, skills, professional experience, and family structure are lacking.<sup>4</sup> Some estimates indicate that up to 15% of first-time applicants in the EU have tertiary education, about 50% secondary education, and the rest (between 30 and 40%) attended primary school or are illiterate (Martín et al. 2016). Recent initiatives of the European Commission, such as the 'New Skills Agenda for Europe' of 2016, intend to contribute in filling this information gap, although much work still needs to be done in this respect as information on education and skills is crucial to design appropriate labour market integration policies.

First-time asylum applications have been unequally distributed across the European territory. In absolute cumulative terms the top receivers throughout the period (2012-2017) have been Germany, France, Italy, Sweden, Hungary, United Kingdom and Austria. In 2016 more than 700,000 persons claimed asylum in Germany, increasing the number of applications by 63% compared to 2015, and representing about 60% of the European total. In 2016, the number of applications also increased significantly in Greece (more than four times) and Italy. Hungary and Sweden, the other two main receivers after Germany in 2015, reported instead an abrupt decrease in the number of applications in 2016 (Eurostat 2017a).

In addition to important differences in the number of applications, there are also cross-country differences in recognition rates,<sup>5</sup> and in the nature of the legal processes and obstacles to access the labour market. Clear examples of how the number of first-time asylum applications and recognition rates might be diametrically opposed are Sweden and Hungary. While both were top receivers (after Germany) in absolute terms in 2015, the former had a recognition rate of 72%, one of the highest in the EU, while the recognition rate of the latter was 15%, one of the lowest. Between 2015 and 2016 the overall average recognition rate in EU and EFTA countries<sup>6</sup> increased from 51 to 61%, and in 2017 decreased again to 46%.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> There have been however partial attempts to address this issue such as the UNHCR profiling of Syrian arrivals on Greek islands (<https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/47162>).

<sup>5</sup> 'Recognition rate' is a common term used in research on asylum seekers and refugees. According to Eurostat, it is defined as "the share of positive decisions in the total number of asylum decisions for each stage of the asylum procedure (i.e. first instance and final on appeal). The total number of decisions consists of the sum of positive and negative decisions."

([http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Asylum\\_recognition\\_rate](http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Glossary:Asylum_recognition_rate)).

<sup>6</sup> EFTA countries include Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

<sup>7</sup> For 2017 I only take into account first instance decisions, and refer to Eurostat monthly data on first instance decisions on applicants. Available from <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do> (last accessed January 2018).

## **1.2. The lack of a unified European response**

A European asylum system is, as such, missing despite past and more recent efforts to coordinate a common policy response at the European level (see e.g. the European Commission's Communication COM (2016) 197). Two main impediments to a common regulatory framework are the fact that host countries have large room for interpretation and leverage, and the inexistence of a valid and recognised mechanism to spread the refugee intake across countries.

Regarding the first impediment, border controls and integration policies are ultimately a national competence, and reception conditions vary greatly both in terms of the standards provided and organisation of the services. Regarding access to the labour market, minimum conditions are set forth in the 2013 EU directive laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection.<sup>8</sup> According to this Directive, the time limit for access to the labour market is nine months from the date when the application for international protection was lodged if a first instance decision by the competent authority has not been taken, and the delay cannot be attributed to the applicant. Yet despite this EU regulation, the conditions for access to the labour market continue to vary considerably between member states. This situation creates incentive for secondary movements across member states and generates differences in the PSBs' prospects for their integration in the labour market and their inclusion in society.

Partly for these reasons, a revision<sup>9</sup> of the Directive is currently being discussed. It proposes, amongst else, to reduce the time limit for access to the labour market from 9 to 6 months. Further in its proposal, the Commission encourages the member states to grant access not later than 3 months from the lodging of the application where the application is likely to be well founded. On the other hand, the proposal excludes from access to the labour market applicants who are not expected to be recognised as beneficiaries of international protection. The proposal also includes a provision according to which applicants who have been granted access to the labour market, should be entitled to a common set of rights based on equal treatment with nationals of the member state including issues related to pay, dismissal, health and safety at work, working time and leave. The proposal also grants applicants equal treatment as regards freedom of association and certain branches of social security.

Having minimum conditions at the EU level regulating the condition of PSBs' access to the labour market should contribute to improve PSBs' integration prospects in

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<sup>8</sup> COM (2013) 33.

<sup>9</sup> COM (2016) 465.

the EU. The revision of the EU directive laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection is therefore a step in the right direction. Likewise, the steps being proposed regarding granting PSBs a common set of labour rights based on equal treatment with nationals is a positive development.

In what refers to the second impediment, the unequal spreading of asylum seekers and refugees across countries, the Dublin convention (and the subsequent Dublin regulations of 2003 and 2013<sup>10</sup>), as well as the more recent EURODAC regulation, have attempted to address the problem with moderate success so far. The EU Relocation programme, which came to an end in September 2017, managed to relocate less than 20% of the initial commitment between member states of 160,000 asylum seekers in Greece and Italy.

### ***1.3 Aims and contributions of this report***

Acknowledging the characteristics of the influxes and the obstacles toward a coordinated EU response outlined so far, the overall objective of this study is to contribute to the existing knowledge on the economic and societal integration of PSBs. More precisely, the study fills an important gap in the literature by focusing on the role of social partners and by arguing in favour of a reinforcement of such role, in the framework of a comprehensive multi-level, multi-stage, and multi-stakeholder approach towards PSBs' labour market integration. This report points out the main contributions of a multi-stakeholder approach, and claims that the active involvement and coordination of social partners (as knowledgeable implicated actors) is key for a more efficient and sustainable labour market integration of PSBs. In more practical terms, one of the main purposes of the study is to assess the key features and potential success factors of good or promising PSBs' integration policies which actively involve social partners in different European countries.

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<sup>10</sup> Dublin Regulation (EU) No 604/2013.

## **2. THE ROLE OF SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE ECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF PROTECTION SEEKERS AND BENEFICIARIES**

### ***2.1 Main challenges for the economic integration of PSBs***

#### *The specificities of PSBs and their main differences with migrant workers*

PSBs differ from migrant workers in several interrelated predictors of labour market access and attainment, due mostly to their often-disruptive migration circumstances. PSBs are, on average, less likely to be positively selected in terms of education. On top of that, educated PSBs face more difficulties to prove their education qualifications, assuming they are able to bring their certificates with them, or even more obstacles in case they cannot bring them. On the other hand, PSBs also face greater difficulties in proving their skills and prior learning/professional experience at destination. The recognition and validation of educational certificates and skills/professional experience usually implies an investment of time and monetary resources for PSBs. Competent host institutions might take more or less time depending on their relationship with origin institutions (e.g. agreements and joint educational programmes), but also on how they are structured and interrelated, and to which extent they make use of the EU's or other tools available. During the recognition and validation processes, there is on one hand a risk of skill downgrading as time passes and, on the other, a risk of abandonment as a result of the high associated costs. Moreover, for those PSBs who manage to get their education certificates or skills validated and recognised, they might be asked to retake or pursue additional courses or traineeships in host educational/vocational institutions and companies, which often implies having to face extra time and monetary costs.

Moreover, compared to migrant workers, PSBs also experience legal restrictions to work upon arrival (the length of which depends on the host country, ranging from no restriction to up to one year since the submission of the initial asylum application<sup>11</sup>), as well as legal insecurity before a decision on their refugee status is made (a crucial point in the labour market insertion process); and if it is negative, also during the following appeal process. This legal insecurity affects both the demand and supply sides of the labour market.

Furthermore, PSBs might also require psychological assistance due to the traumatic conditions at origin which made them migrate in the first place. PSBs are more

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<sup>11</sup> Even though the European Commission recommends (Article 15 (1) of Directive 2013/33/EU) member states to ensure access to the labour market to PSBs no later than nine months, in some countries such as the UK the minimum waiting time is still 12 months (Eurofound 2016:18).

likely to be vulnerable and less able to engage in formal employment right upon arrival. Mostly related to these adverse conditions at the time of displacement, PSBs usually lack a support network of co-nationals in the host country which might also negatively affect their likelihood to find employment. On the other hand, PSBs are most of the time forced to drastically reduce their links with their origin country, which often for some of them results on a higher likelihood to make long-term plans in the destination country (Martín et al. 2016).

#### *Past and recent evidence on the integration of PSBs into the labour market*

Overall, several authors have found a long-lasting PSBs' employment penalty with respect to natives and migrant workers (Cangiano 2014). Evidence from past refugee waves shows that PSBs from the same origin area and with similar level of education than economic immigrants are less likely to be employed in hosting countries (OECD 2016a). One could say that this difference is to be expected due to the initial legal constraints and obstacles PSBs face, identifying years since arrival as a key variable explaining it. Even if the PSBs' employment gap does narrow over time, there is however inconclusive evidence on whether the PSBs' employment penalty neutralises with time in the host society and, if so, how long does it take. Moreover, there is also inconclusive evidence on whether there are also PSB-native/other migrant differences in other labour market integration indicators —such as labour force participation (or inactivity, especially among women), earnings, or attainment—, and whether these behave similarly for male and female PSBs.

Using data from the 2008 wave of the European Labour Force Survey (EULFS), Dustmann et al. (2017: 522-23) estimate both unconditional and conditional (on age, gender, and educational attainment) PSBs employment gaps with respect to natives using host country fixed effects. The authors find a PSBs-natives unconditional employment gap of 16 percentage points, the largest gap in comparison to those of EU15 and non-EU15 immigrants and natives. The authors also conclude that the PSBs-natives conditional employment gap increases, underlining that PSBs are disproportionately more likely to be young and male, two factors that correlate positively with the likelihood of being employed. Dustmann et al. (2017: 522-23) also come to the conclusion that time in the host country and area of origin only explain partly the observed employment gap. In comparative terms, the authors report important differences between hosting countries on conditional employment gaps. Countries such as Ireland and the UK present the largest PSBs-natives employment gaps, 46 and 29 percentage points respectively. These are followed by countries with a large presence of PSBs such as Sweden (23 pp),



Germany (17 pp), and Austria (9 pp). The lowest PSB-native employment gaps are found in countries which hosted a lower share of refugees, and already had comparatively low employment rates for natives, such as Italy, Spain, Greece, and Portugal (2017: 527).

Even if it is still early to predict how well current PSBs will integrate in the labour market, evidence from past waves clearly shows a PSBs-natives penalty in terms of employment across different national settings that does not seem to disappear completely over time. What we do know however is that the labour market integration outcomes of current PSBs will depend most certainly on which policies, labour market support measures and incentives structures are implemented. This is addressed in the next sub-section, with special emphasis on the necessity to move towards a multi-stakeholder approach with a higher presence of social partners.

## ***2.2 Integration schemes and policy packages***

The importance of labour market integration as a fundamental issue for the long-term societal integration of PSBs in host countries, and for social cohesion more generally, has long been acknowledged, also by the European institutions. The International Labour Organisation (ILO)'s 'Migration for Employment (Revised) Convention' of 1949 (No. 97), and the 'Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention' of 1975 (No. 143), serve as a framework for a comprehensive labour migration policy protecting migrant workers, including also refugees and displaced persons, and fostering their potential in the labour market. These two ILO conventions, their accompanying Recommendations and the recently adopted "Guiding principles on the access of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons to the labour market"<sup>12</sup>, are important standards and guidance tools to inform policy measures<sup>13</sup>. The Conventions in particular set the standards for PSBs' labour market integration policies, as they prevent unfair and abusive approaches towards vulnerable populations of workers.

### *The full-integration objective and the nature of integration policies*

Labour market integration involves several aspects, and should therefore be measured by means of different indicators such as exclusion or inactivity, informal employment, formal employment (full vs. part-time/ permanent vs. temporary contract),

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<sup>12</sup> The document on the ILO's guiding principles on PSBs' access to the labour market is available at: [http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed\\_protect/@protrav/@migrant/documents/genericdocument/wcms\\_536440.pdf](http://ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_protect/@protrav/@migrant/documents/genericdocument/wcms_536440.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> See also the ILO's General Survey concerning the migrant workers instruments (2016) available at: [http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS\\_453917/lang--en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_453917/lang--en/index.htm).

education/skills matching, occupational attainment, or earnings. Different processes operate at different stages of the labour market, and we might expect differences in outcomes related for instance to social background, education, gender, and age — or their interaction (Arcarons 2017). So far labour market integration policies for PSBs have mostly focused on access to formal employment. However, recent policy initiatives are moving towards addressing other more challenging labour market integration dimensions, such as occupational attainment and inadequate skills matching and skills waste, aiming at achieving a more satisfactory and long-term labour market integration which profits both PSBs and the economic functioning of the host society.

In order to support the full and speedy integration of PSBs in the labour market, a key debate is whether PSBs should be positively discriminated as a group, or instead equally treated and consequently mainstreamed in labour market programmes already in place for natives or other migrants. Research seems to indicate that mainstreaming should be the preferred option insofar as access to equal opportunities can be granted. As long as the latter is not likely to be the case, mainstreaming practices should be complemented with targeted policies until equality of opportunities can be ensured. Yet in order to avoid isolation and segregation of PSBs, it is important to clearly communicate about the objectives of targeted programmes and their duration. While most countries have opted in general for mainstreaming PSBs in existing labour market policies (Martín et al. 2016), targeted proactive and tailor-made policies to address the specific needs of the PSBs' population are being increasingly put in place.

#### *A converging skill policy response within an uncoordinated European asylum system*

Despite the lack of policy coordination at the European level, one can identify a standard cross-country policy package implemented by different European governments and based on four key processes namely (1) early skills assessment, (2) introductory programmes, (3) intensive language courses, and (4) access to general job intermediation services (Martín et al. 2016:9). There is, nevertheless, a capacity divide between countries in the design and implementation of this standard package. This capacity divide consists for instance on cross-country differences in the size of the programmes or initiatives undertaken, the availability of resources (financial and human), and the systematic implementation of support measures and its administration, accountability, and evaluation.

Within this broad policy package, there are several specific support measures. From their inventory and analysis of about one hundred labour market integration

support measures in nine European countries, Martín et al. (2016:13) conclude that these can be classified in five main types according to their specific field of intervention:

i) The first type is concerned with the screening of the PSBs' labour market characteristics of interest. Thus, it establishes a first profiling of PSBs in terms of qualifications, skills, and professional experience.

ii) Based on this initial screening, the second main type of support measures focuses on skills development. This can range from more immediate and basic actions such as host-country intensive or field-specific language courses, to the implementation of programmes to either improve or complement particular professional skills identified at the profiling stage or learn new ones.

iii) Third, building on skills profiling and development, another main type of support measures is job intermediation. Job intermediation measures imply actions such as labour counselling and professional orientation, and job matching and placement services.

iv) Fourth, acting upon the initial screening process, another type of measures supports the processes of recognition, validation, and certification of formal and informal skills and qualifications that PSBs might either bring from their origin countries or acquire at destination.

v) The fifth type of measures focuses on incentivising economic integration by providing support to PSBs who want, for instance, to become self-employed or start a business.

The validity of the design and implementation of the policy package, and its specific support measures described so far, can only be ensured if representative data on the PSBs population is available before policy design. Then it is also necessary to plan at the designing stage the required instruments for periodically testing the implemented measures.

### *Changing trends in policy design and implementation*

Different countries have so far offered a rather compartmentalised and linear standard package. This has however started to change. Early intervention, removing administrative and objective obstacles, has proved to be beneficiary for labour market integration, and the limits between the four policy stages described above are increasingly being blurred. As a general tendency, integration systems have shifted their focus towards employment-related factors relaxing their initial emphasis on the welcoming phase. A balance and complementation between the two policy stages is however necessary for a sustainable labour market integration of PSBs. Earlier

intervention strategies based on a combination of active labour market policies (ALMP)<sup>14</sup> targeting PSBs and basic introduction programmes are increasingly common, and according to many authors necessary to reduce the time PSBs take to find employment in comparison to natives and migrant workers. A combination between quick access to work and equity should be the guiding principle. Fast access to the labour market needs to go along with a more global integration strategy based on active integration programmes across different life domains. Policies for pursuing an efficient geographical distribution matching individual PSBs' skills and labour market needs, as well as fast-track integration pathways for those skills in demand are also gaining popularity and should be fostered (Martín et al. 2016; OECD 2016b).

In many countries, there is still fragmentation (or little coordination) between actors (e.g. central and local governments, but also central governments and implementing organisations) in the implementation of integration policies and labour market support measures. However, for a more proactive policy approach to work, there is a need to improve multi-level governance and multi-stakeholder coordination challenges. To this end, national and European governmental bodies need to work hand in hand with social partners and local employment agencies, and capitalise their expertise and know-how.

### ***2.3 Towards a multi-stakeholder approach***

The inclusion of PSBs in host societies should be seen as a collective endeavour. The LABOUR-INT and REFISMES projects,<sup>15</sup> among others, conclude that in order to address the labour market integration challenges posed by the current migration wave there is a need to move toward a higher level of coordination among governmental bodies, and at the same time towards a better cooperation with all stakeholders. This report advocates for a greater delegation of the services provided to PSBs to stakeholders and local authorities, and the maximisation of the transmission of knowledge and expertise between these actors. At the same time, it also proposes that this decentralisation of the delivery of integration policies should be accompanied by the monitoring of the actions undertaken by stakeholders, in order to fit in their respective agendas within a collective societal endeavour. In this direction, this section stresses the

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<sup>14</sup> Defined by ILO as "purposive, selective interventions by the government in the pursuit of efficiency and/or equity objectives, acting indirectly or directly to provide work to, or increase the employability of people with certain disadvantages in the labour market." (Mosley et al. 1998:2).

<sup>15</sup> Further details on the LABOUR-INT project are available at: <http://www.labour-int.eu/the-labour-int-project/>. For the REFISMES project, more detailed information can be consulted at: <http://www.migrationpolicycentre.eu/refismes/>.

need for an effective social dialogue, collective bargaining, and joint actions between stakeholders and central governments.

#### *The definition of stakeholders and the focus on social partners*

There are different types of stakeholders, which can be grouped in three main categories: governmental bodies, social and economic partners, and civil society organisations. Social and economic partners refer to employers' organisations, trade unions and chambers of commerce, while civil society organisations encompass non-governmental, academics and others. Along with social partners and civil society organisations, national and local public employment services are, among governmental bodies, key for the labour market integration of PSBs. This report focuses mostly on the current and potential role of social partners in their relationship with government/state bodies to design and implement high quality and efficient labour market policies for PSBs, acknowledging, although not deepening on, the crucial role of civil society organisations in many European countries. The focus on social partners is justified for their long tradition and involvement (although at different levels and in different ways depending on the countries) in labour market policies.

The relationship between the state and social partners is known as tripartism. Tripartism and sound industrial relations are a means to promote better working conditions as well as peace, social justice and cohesion, and security in society. Based on ILO experience, these are instruments of good governance that can foster cooperation for economic performance and ensure decent work. Therefore, employers' and workers' organizations in the public and private sectors have an important role to play in the inclusion of PSBs into work and society. In particular they can inform PSBs about their rights and obligations at the workplace and they can play a key role in the assessment, screening and testing of skills and competences and help validation of skills and skills matching with a view to guaranteeing equality of opportunity and treatment of workers.

#### *Challenges for a pan-European social partner approach*

There is significant variation across European countries in the level of institutionalisation and efficiency of social dialogue processes at the national level. The country-specific tradition of social partnership is reflected in the level of involvement of social partners in the elaboration of labour market integration policies. This ranges from no involvement at all; some involvement in the form of participation as external consultants and/or advisors;

active involvement in policy design/policymaking at the national and/or regional level; or direct provision of services and measures (Eurofound 2016: 38-39).

There are several reasons that can explain the lack of involvement of social partners. First, the number of PSBs in a country determines the level of priority social partners give to the issue of their labour market integration. Second, the fact that for some host countries the current wave of PSBs have been a new development, has implied that social partners could not count on previous experience. Third, both the existence of contextual barriers for PSBs labour market integration and the capacity of social partners to address them also determine to a certain extent their level of involvement. Fourth, the quality of tripartism affects the scope of social partners' initiatives: if tripartism is weak, governments are not likely to scale up such initiatives (Eurofund 2016: 42). Top hosting countries in the current migration crisis such as Sweden or Austria have, however, a long and consolidated tripartite tradition, with a strong trade union density. In these countries, and also in Denmark for example, social partners are playing a central role in the labour market integration of refugees, having raised their level of prominence in the design and implementation of support measures in the last two years.

#### *The technical and societal functions of social partners*

The labour market integration of PSBs is commonly understood as a multi-stage process.<sup>16</sup> As argued in section 2.2, the so-called 'standard' policy package in different European countries for the labour market integration of PSBs consists in four main stages, in which five types of support measures are offered. How and to which extent trade unions, employers' organisations, and Public Employment Services (PES) can contribute to each of these different stages, and more concretely to the implementation of support measures and their ex-post evaluation, are relevant questions. Among social partners we might also find different fields of policy, as well as economic sector/profession, specialisation, being their specific contribution to each stage and support measure likely to vary.

Social partners fulfil two main types of functions, i.e. technical and societal, towards the labour market integration of PSBs. The former mainly refers to the actual labour market integration, and the latter to the fact that this integration takes place in a wider context and affects social cohesion. Regarding technical functions, social partners have acquired expertise in developing labour market policies. Their active role in the

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<sup>16</sup> In this regard, see also the conceptual framework developed in the context of the LABOUR-INT project: <http://www.labour-int.eu/>.

labour market integration of PSBs in different European countries has mostly focussed, among other aspects, on specific activities such as the development of apprenticeship and traineeship programmes; specific training and provision of information; and the acceleration of labour market access and recruitment by means of fast-track schemes or the promotion of entrepreneurship.

In the initial stage of skills assessment and profiling, social partners' involvement can help set minimum conditions for PSBs' access to certain sectors or occupations in order to ensure a smooth integration in the work processes at appropriate skills level. This is the case in Austria for instance, where they have introduced labour market tests to ensure minimum common starting conditions. Regarding the introduction and training stage, in some countries such as Denmark, social partners provide intensive language courses allowing for the possibility to combine them with work or traineeships. In terms of intermediation services, employers' organisations in different countries have put forward measures to facilitate job search. Some of these measures help to provide PSBs with necessary information on labour market related issues and with an access to different networks, while other measures offer on-the-job training (such as apprenticeships and traineeships) or placements.<sup>17</sup> In some instances, employers' organisations have also promoted both occupational and geographical mobility to fill labour market shortages. Moreover, a common social partners' initiative is to provide PSBs with relevant information about their labour rights and obligations through e-platforms in different languages. Regarding support measures on skills and qualifications certification, employers' organisations and chambers of commerce also play an active role.<sup>18</sup> In all these cases policy initiatives result either from a tripartite agreement or are promoted unilaterally by one of the social partners (Eurofound 2016: 39-42).

A good example of how an efficient coordination between social partners can foster integration is labour market access. In the current policy debate, tensions have sometimes arisen between the need to provide quick versus sustainable labour market integration. While employers' organisations, and to a certain extent governments, are

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<sup>17</sup> These practices are common in many member states. Some examples are the Wir Zusammen [We Together] initiatives (<https://www.thyssenkrupp.com/en/company/sustainability/society/we-together-help-for-refugees/>) and the German Association of Public Transport Companies (VDV) in Germany; or the agreement between Cofindustria (i.e. the leading representative association of manufacturing and service companies in Italy) and the Italian Ministry of Interior to offer apprenticeships to PSBs ([http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/accordo\\_definitivo\\_min\\_interno\\_confindustria.pdf](http://www.interno.gov.it/sites/default/files/allegati/accordo_definitivo_min_interno_confindustria.pdf)) (for more details see LABOUR-INT).

<sup>18</sup> See for instance the Valikom project of the German Confederation of Skilled Crafts (DHKT) and the German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK), which together with the Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF) aimed at promoting the validation of non-formally and informally acquired skills in Germany (for more details see LABOUR-INT).

keen on accelerating the labour market access of PSBs, trade unions tend to push for complementing labour market access with parallel education and skills-development programmes in order to build PSBs resilience on the labour market and ensure integration in the long-run.

Trade unions are also key actors in informing PSBs about their labour rights, as well as in providing legal assistance in the cases in which these are undermined or violated. As such, they have an empowering role while contributing to the fight against abusive practices likely to have negative externalities on other employees. Moreover, the knowledge of sectoral legislation by trade unions also allows them to be ideally positioned to ensure that the application of labour agreements applies for PSBs in each specific sector. Social partners and public employment agencies are key in providing employers with updated information and advice on the hiring of PSBs, as some employers might be unaware of the complex and changing legal framework. For example, the Belgian federation of employers has issued a guide targeted to entrepreneurs<sup>19</sup> in Belgium on “building capacity and hiring refugees and asylum seekers”.

Still on the technical function, in sum, social partners decentralised sectoral structure and good knowledge of the characteristics of their national and European (through transnational confederations) systems of production, place them in a central position to contribute to the labour market integration of PSBs. Their sectoral structure and capillary distribution along the national territory allow them to, together with PES, identify labour market shortages and foster intra-national geographical mobility of PSBs if needed. Regarding the informed knowledge of social partners on the characteristics of the national system of production, these can work together with the government in ensuring that supply shocks can be efficiently absorbed in the short and in the long-run by promoting for instance the acquisition of skills and qualifications that better fit in the characteristics of the system of production.

The role of social partners should however not only remain at the technical level, aiming also at having an impact on society more generally. This broader societal function revolves around the idea of the ‘whole worker approach’ (McAlevey and Ostertag 2014), which basically entails that the labour market integration of PSBs is intertwined with their integration in other spheres of society. To acknowledge the role of civil society and the importance of social cohesion is crucial in ensuring a successful labour market integration of PSBs. In that regard, it is worth noting that social partners can and have in

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<sup>19</sup> See ‘The Refugee-Crisis Task Force’ set up by the Belgian confederation of employers FEB-VBO: <http://www.vbo-feb.be/en/publications/guide-pour-les-employeurs--former-et-employer-des-refugies-et-demandeurs/>.



some cases built counter-narratives highlighting the contribution of migrants and refugees to host societies. Social partners can and have boosted anti-racism and anti-discrimination messages along with specific labour market policies, with a view of influencing the public opinion. For example, the EU economic and social partners in their statements (see box 1) stress that migration, when properly managed, is key to address the increasing old-age dependency ratio deriving from the ageing of European populations. More generally, through their contribution to adequate policy framework and public campaigns, social partners can address negative, either real or perceived, impacts of PSBs on the functioning of the labour market and minimum wages. They can also address the risk of segregation in the labour market and society more generally, as well as prevent or counter hostile attitudes towards migrants and refugees.

#### **BOX 1: The engagement of economic and social partners at the European level**

At the European level, economic and social partners have signed two partnerships, namely the *Statement of the European Economic and Social Partners on the Refugee Crisis* (Tripartite Social Summit, 16 March 2016), and the *European Partnership for Integration. Offering Opportunities for Refugees to Integrate in the Labour Market* (20 December 2017), in which they state their commitment with the labour market integration of PSBs.

In these partnerships, the social and economic partners and the European Commission jointly state that in front of the unprecedented migrant and refugee inflows to Europe in 2015 and 2016, a better integration and fair participation in the labour market of PSBs is key for social cohesion, and stress that this should be the goal of all member states acting in a coordinated manner. To this aim, a multi-stakeholder approach is seen as a necessary condition.

More concretely, social and economic partners underline, among other aspects, their commitment and willingness to work with governments and other stakeholders in the development of policies and support measures for the labour market integration of PSBs; that this integration must guarantee equality of opportunity and treatment between nationals and migrants; the necessity to promote a coordinated pan-European programme for the provision of VET and apprenticeships; the challenge for local public services at a time of scarce resources and increasing needs for local communities; and that a proper management of migration can bring positive outcomes such as for instance addressing the increasing old-age dependency ratio.

More information at: [https://www.etuc.org/sites/www.etuc.org/files/press-release/files/14.03.16\\_final\\_eco\\_soc\\_partners\\_message\\_refugee\\_crisis.pdf](https://www.etuc.org/sites/www.etuc.org/files/press-release/files/14.03.16_final_eco_soc_partners_message_refugee_crisis.pdf) and [https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/integration/docs/20171220\\_european\\_partnership\\_for\\_integration\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/e-library/documents/policies/legal-migration/integration/docs/20171220_european_partnership_for_integration_en.pdf)

In the following section, I move to describe and discuss specific national labour market integration policy examples which involve the active participation of social partners in countries that have quantitatively hosted unequal shares of PSBs, but where social partners have, even if at different levels of involvement and cooperation, an active role.

### **3. EVIDENCE ON GOOD PRACTICES INVOLVING DIFFERENT STAKEHOLDERS IN EUROPE**

This section includes an analysis of promising labour market integration practices which entail, to different degrees, the participation, cooperation, and coordination of social partners and governments. Two of the practices (respectively stemming from Denmark and Sweden) result from national tripartite agreements, and are in consequence broad in their scope, as well as more comprehensive in the activity domains covered. The third and fourth practices (Spanish and Italian respectively) emerge instead from a unilateral bottom-up initiative at the local/regional level targeting an unsolved labour market specific problematic unattended by the government. Integration practices based on tripartite agreements could be therefore classified in two large groups based on i) whether they come into being as a result of top-down approaches proposed and led by governments; ii) or instead from bottom-up initiatives from one of the social partners (or both) aiming at convincing the government in reforming some dysfunctional operating practices with the objective of teaming-up in the solution process.

The screening of labour market integration practices draws on the efforts of the LABOUR-INT (see box 2) and REFMISMES projects. In terms of the profile of the beneficiaries, promising practices are selected on the basis that they either exclusively target PSBs, or PSBs and also other migrants and natives. Practices that are exclusively directed to non-PSB migrants and natives are therefore not considered. The analysis of the practices draws on descriptive and evaluation reports, secondary data, and interviews with key actors. By defining and comparing different national policies, this section also contributes to the discussion on the portability of good country-specific practices across national contexts with different socioeconomic realities and institutional traditions.

## **BOX 2: The LABOUR-INT project**

LABOUR-INT is a project coordinated by the European Trade Unions Confederation (ETUC) with the financial support of the European Commission's Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). The main aim of the project is to promote the inclusion of PSBs in the labour market. To this end, it promotes multi-layered and multi-stakeholder integration paths by bringing together businesses, chambers of commerce and industries, trade unions, and migrants' associations across Europe.

The LABOUR-INT project can be understood on one hand as a meta- or second-level practice, as it aims at networking social partners and other stakeholders and increase their capacity to operate both autonomously and together towards the inclusion of PSBs in the labour market. LABOUR-INT ultimately aims at creating an effective infrastructure to optimise a cooperative approach at both the European and national levels.

On the other hand, the LABOUR-INT project materialises in three concrete and result-oriented pilot actions in Belgium, Germany, and Italy. These pilot actions prioritise skills assessment and skills matching, and target PSBs in a context of equal treatment with domestic workers.

Of special interest is the role, within the LABOUR-INT framework, of the Expert Group on Skills and Migration (EGSM). The EGSM is in charge of reviewing and identifying promising/successful support measures for the PSBs' labour market integration that take a multi-stakeholder approach. The EGSM identifies about 20 practices across Europe involving in most of cases social partners.

More information at <http://www.labour-int.eu>.

Evidence shows that the degree of institutionalisation of social partners in active labour market policies is not the same across Europe. This is determined by different country-specific historical tradition on tripartism, together with cross-country differences in the production structure and the industrial relations system. As a result, we cannot expect the level of involvement of social partners in the development and implementation of policies for the labour market integration of PSBs to be the same across countries. Moreover, we cannot expect either the scope (number of participants, budget, territory covered, etc.) of the policies in which social partners participate to be the same across countries. The examples provided in this section are chosen to exemplify this diversity, but at the same time they also reflect the benefits of the participation of social partners even if this is not institutionalised from the onset.

### **3.1 The tripartite Agreement on Labour Market Integration in Denmark**

#### *Context and description of the initiative*

In front of the low employment rate of PSBs and reunified relatives in the Danish labour market (i.e. approximately below 30% after having spent three years in the Danish integration programme), in March 2016 the government and the country's main social

partners reached a tripartite agreement on labour market integration.<sup>20</sup> The latter promotes a more comprehensive and flexible labour market integration approach, and is based mainly on a two-year integration training programme (abbreviated IGU in Danish) that targets PSBs aged between 18 and 40 years who have lived in Denmark for less than five years. The IGU programme officially started on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July 2016.

In a country with a long tradition of tripartism and a strong trade union density, the government sought the collaboration of social partners to proactively face the challenges posed by the recent migration wave. The final agreement came as a result of the negotiations between the government, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), and the Confederation of Danish Employers (DA).

The Danish initiative represents a clear example of the recent change in the integration paradigm outlined in the last paragraph of section 2.2, and of how this change in the paradigm requires almost by definition the proactive involvement of social partners. The Danish work-based training programme proposes a structural policy change aiming at improving and increase the efficiency of the implementation of most of the labour market support measures described in section 2.

### *Objectives*

By reforming the existent labour market integration scheme towards a more employment-oriented one, the goal of the government is to get at least half of the country's PSBs into employment in the long term (i.e. 5 rather than less than 3 in 10, which was the proportion at the beginning of the programme). To accomplish this goal, the tripartite initiative defines two overarching objectives. First, to endow integration programmes with a more proactive job focus, and second to introduce an integrative training programme (IGU). The agreement contemplates 32 specific points towards achieving these two goals. One of the main target groups are PSBs with no/or low qualifications, as this is the group that presents more difficulties in integrating into the labour market. The main idea is to allow them, and other PSBs, to enter the labour market through previously planned traineeships in Danish companies.

Regarding the first overarching objective of introducing a sharper job focus, the main aim is to guarantee an early start by considering PSBs as being ready-to-work or employable upon arrival, as long as a major cause (e.g. psychological distress) does not

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<sup>20</sup> The English version of the tripartite agreement is available at: [https://www.google.es/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwiOkpzZzt7XAhXJIOwKHaj1B8IQFgg3MAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fstar.dk%2F~%2Fmedia%2FSTAR%2FFiles%2FEnglish-files%2FTripartite%2520Agreement%2520on%2520Labour%2520Market%2520Integration\\_2016%2520pdf.ashx&usg=AOvVaw0U4cQVQ0lr-8iLHLS0u4lo](https://www.google.es/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0ahUKEwiOkpzZzt7XAhXJIOwKHaj1B8IQFgg3MAI&url=http%3A%2F%2Fstar.dk%2F~%2Fmedia%2FSTAR%2FFiles%2FEnglish-files%2FTripartite%2520Agreement%2520on%2520Labour%2520Market%2520Integration_2016%2520pdf.ashx&usg=AOvVaw0U4cQVQ0lr-8iLHLS0u4lo).

impede it. To this aim, one of the first objectives is to use time more efficiently during the asylum application process and in transition phases from asylum centres to municipalities. The agreement states that policy interventions during the asylum application process need to be guided by employment-oriented criteria. This implies a more efficient screening of PSBs' competences, as well as better use of country of origin background qualifications/skills, and provision of language training in accordance to the future occupational field. The main objective in the transition phase is to improve the transfer of information between asylum centres and local authorities. In this direction, decisions taken to resettle PSBs to a local district should be based, according to the agreement, on employment prospects —i.e. resettled to districts where there are occupational opportunities—, especially if they already have a job offer in place.

In terms of objectives directed to improve demand-side policies, the main one is to achieve a higher involvement of employers, as companies have a pivotal role in the new Danish integration model. This is sought to be accomplished by implementing a better and more efficient screening system, which correctly identifies both formal and informal qualifications, on which employers can rely on and base their decisions upon. A more efficient screening procedure entails for instance mapping out PSBs' competencies sooner, ensure that these are visible for employers, or enhance the relationship between local authorities and migration agencies in transition phases. To this aim, in their agreement the social partners commit on designing and ensuring the correct implementation of a new nationwide job-targeted competence clarification tool.

By taking advantage of this more reliable screening, the objective is also to target those who face the most adverse labour market situation/prospects, and if they are below age 25, involve them in education or training. The rationale behind the IGU programme is that integration is a matter of skills' upgrading, and the earlier this issue can be tackled, in terms of time in the host society but also in the life of the person, the better.

### *Actions*

The social partners, i.e. DA and LO, jointly designed the IGU programme, which was ratified by the Danish parliament, and is supported and financed by the Danish government. The initial design is thought for a three-year trial of the programme, and requires the continuous monitoring from the social partners (such as discussions on number and characteristics of IGU contracts, or ensuring that employers pay appropriate wage rates in accordance with collective agreements) with annual follow-ups on the agreement. Regarding the programme's concrete actions, once the competencies of job-ready PSBs are screened, asylum centres contact municipalities with relevant jobs

(bypassing the job centre if necessary) in order to find a residence close to potential or actual new workplaces. Moreover, as work is combined with employment-oriented Danish lessons, asylum centres also make sure that this can be done close to the new workplace.

More concretely, the Danish integrative programme (IGU) seeks to provide short-term company work training agreements (up to a maximum of two years) to PSBs combined with 20-weeks skill and education upgrading courses. The salary obtained in these jobs (between 6.72 and 16.13€ per hour at the time of implementation) must fall within the lower and upper limits of the apprentice salary level in the country complying with collective agreements. This was another of the points social partners agreed upon, although not all trade unions were satisfied with the decision — e.g. Trade Union of Public Employees (FOA). For the LO, it was essential that the collective bargaining already in place was not affected by this new tripartite agreement. Actually, the IGU programme is based on and pays the same salaries of the two-year pre-existing basic vocational education programme called EGU. Regarding actions on the demand side, the programme offers financial bonuses (up to a lump sum of approximately 5,400 €) to companies/businesses that hire PSBs under the IGU scheme and employ them for the whole two-year period. The main challenge of the IGU-scheme is to recruit employers and keep them actively involved. In this regard, an extensive marketing of the training programme is key to inform employers and convince them to sign up. Social partners are responsible for obtaining a substantial volume for the IGU programme to work, and expected to develop and support initiatives in this direction through communication to workplaces.

The International Recruitment and Integration Board (SIRI), reported that by the end of October 2017 (one year and a half after the IGU programme started), there were already 1,022 registered IGU-courses, and more than 300 companies had already hired a refugee for an IGU-position. In the second quarter of 2017, 32% of the 21 to 64 years old refugees and family reunification members are in employment after 3 years of residence in Denmark. This figure is about 4 percentage points higher than when the new tripartite agreement started in July 2016<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> These data are available in Danish at: <https://integrationsbarometer.dk/aktuelt>.

*Table 1. Summary table of the tripartite agreement on labour market integration (Denmark)*

Period	July 2016-present
Target group	Refugees, 18-40 years, lived in Denmark for <5 years
Key actors	Confederation of Danish Employers (DA), Danish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), Danish government, local authorities
Social partners involvement	Design and implementation

### **3.2 The fast-track initiative in Sweden**

#### *Context and description of the initiative*

Being one of the top receivers of PSBs in Europe, Sweden has had important difficulties in integrating newly arrived migrants in the labour market. The country presents large employment gaps between immigrants and natives, and particularly between PSBs and natives (Bevelander 2011). To increase migrants and PSBs' employment rates, Sweden decided to change its 'traditional' integration paradigm in March 2015, launching a pioneer labour integration programme for newly arrived immigrants.<sup>22</sup> Like in the Danish case, the Swedish initiative also results from a tripartite agreement led by the national government. In the agreement, both public and private employers — i.e. the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR) and sectorial employers' organisations respectively — are represented, as well as the three main trade union confederations —namely LO (blue collar workers), TCO (white collar workers), and SACO (academics)— formed by about 50 unions (although not all of them participate) and representing more than 3.5 million employees. The final implementation of the Swedish fast-track programme depends on the collaboration of social partners and PES at the local level.

The government has held talks with social partners in different strategic sectors of the economy interested in implementing a fast track in their industry. The ultimate aim of this new programme is to generate a win-win situation. Thus, on one side it promotes a faster and more efficient labour integration which benefits both PSBs — making the best use of their skills and qualifications —; and on the other this is expected to have positive economic and social externalities for the society as a whole. It goes therefore beyond the idea of increasing employment rates, as apart from aiming at migrants to have a job, it also pursues the idea that they have the 'right job' with parity with natives.

<sup>22</sup> The Swedish fast-track initiative (official webpage): <http://www.government.se/fasttrack>.

This is an advanced feature of this system in comparison to other integration systems in Europe.

The programme targets third-country nationals aged 20 to 64 who have received their first Swedish residence permit (either temporary or permanent) within the past 36 months. Without the residence permit you are allowed to work but not to participate in the fast-track system. As the programme is organised in different fast-tracks with the objective of filling labour market shortages in different sectors of the economy, targeted participants are required to have work experience or education related to one of the tracks offered.

Currently there are 14 main fast tracks in place comprising 30 different low and high-skilled professions in different economic sectors. The fast-track scheme actively seeks new agreements as it develops to incorporate new employers and trade unions from different economic sectors/professions to broaden its scope as much as possible. From October 2015 until now, several tracks have been opened. The current 14 tracks concern: (1) Cooks; (2) Food industry; (3) Energy industry; (4) Real estate business; (5) Health care sector; (6) Painters; (7) Officials in the construction sector; (8) Truck drivers; (9) Teachers and preschool teachers; (10) Social scientists (including economists and lawyers); (11) Social work; (12) Animal nurses; (13) Wood industry; and (14) Electrical engineering sector.

The creation of each fast-track requires an agreement, fostered by the government, between employers and trade unions in the specific economic sector the fast-track is created in. In some cases, these agreements imply the modification of sector-specific laws in order to facilitate the integration of the newly arrived in the appropriate training programme to then be able to get the certificates required to work in the specific sector of the fast-track. For example, in the truck drivers fast-track, the test to be able to have a license is in Swedish. In this case, social partners agreed upon requesting the authorities in charge to issue licenses to provide study books in other languages.

### *Objectives*

The Swedish fast-track labour market integration programme has two main objectives. First, as in the Danish case, its main interest is to get newly arrived migrants (many of them PSBs) involved in the labour market as soon as possible. Concerned also with the long-term career of newly arrived migrants, and the returns to society as a whole, the initiative seeks, on top of fostering employment, a good match between migrants' formal and informal skills and qualifications and their final occupation. Second, the programme



also contributes in making the integration system more efficient. On one hand it seeks to coordinate several existing PES measures in place into a streamlined package; and on the other, to connect this coordinated integration infrastructure with labour market shortages. In both cases, the advisory and proactive role of social partners is crucial.

### *Actions*

Despite important differences in the nature of the different fast-tracks, we can identify some common steps (see *figure 1*). Once labour market shortages are identified, and sector/profession-specific agreements between employers and trade unions are reached to create a fast-track, there is first a competency mapping on the basis of self-assessment forms in the relevant language provided by the Public Employment Service (and previously jointly designed with social partners) in which the educational and vocational background of newly arrived migrants who fulfil the requirements to participate in the programme is identified. If this background is relevant for at least one of the fast tracks offered, the person is informed about his/her available options in the programme, and assigned a professional code based on the Swedish Occupational Classification Standard. He or she is then referred to the next step, i.e. fast-track training, for which either public or private authorities are responsible for. For instance, vocational training for blue-collar workers is quite privatised in Sweden.

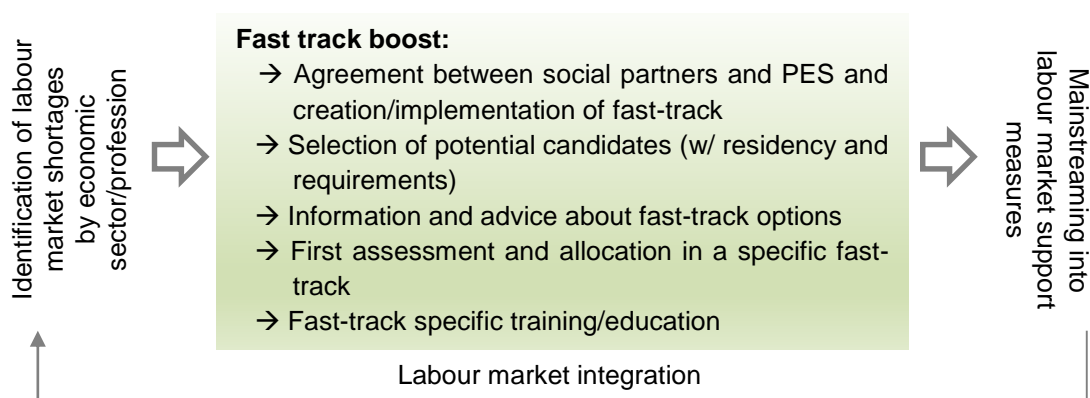
For fast tracks that require post-secondary education, there is an extra assessment by competent public authorities (i.e. the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR), the National Board of Social Affairs or the Swedish National Agency for Education) aimed at testing whether applicants are able to practice their profession based on the length, level, content, and focus of their educational background. For persons with skills acquired in Sweden but without a certificate, and for persons with skills acquired abroad, there is also a validation process according to the particular industry model by means of practical and theoretical tests. The nature of this validation process is agreed upon social partners and PES. This process concludes in either: a) the skills are appropriate, b) the person needs further training, or c) based on his/her skills the person belongs to another occupation category. In this case, he/she has to start the validation process again. For professionals, there is also an assessment to proof their expertise and ability in their respective professions. Within the health track for example, there are 21 different certificates, and their granting depend on different collective agreements and public standards.

Assessment often takes place within work placements, which are subsidised and can last for three weeks. If there is a need for complementation of skills, this is suggested

and the person in question is referred to the appropriate training provider. In the fast-track programme, work experience is highly valued. Newly arrived migrants in the programme engage in work placements designed in collaboration with employers' organisations in an actual workplace. In this favourable work environment, they can strengthen the skills they bring with them, and develop new ones such as learning the Swedish language. Moreover, they can also start positioning themselves in labour market networks.

The fast-track scheme is concerned in the validation and upgrade of certifications and skills. Therefore, it does not per se guarantee a job to its participants. After the successful participation in one of the fast-tracks, third-country nationals either apply directly for jobs themselves, or are mainstreamed into the available labour market support measures offered mainly at the municipal level by PES offices (one in each municipality).

Figure 1. The Swedish fast-track scheme



The Arbetsförmedlingen, i.e. the national employment service office, follows up and monitors on a monthly basis the activity of each of the fast tracks offered, and provides biannual reports with summary statistics. Based on official data for September 2017, in the period between January 2016 and September 2017, 5,080 newly arrived men and women took part in one of the available fast-track schemes. In the relatively short period of time for which the programme has been running, the number of participants has increased exponentially. So far, the three most demanded schemes are (10) Social scientists (including economists and lawyers), (9) Teachers and preschool teachers, and (5) Health care sector; while the three least demanded are (12) Animal nurses, (11) Social work, and (6) Painters. Tracks 11 and 12 were, however,

incorporated significantly later. Absolute figures reported in *Table 2* also indicate that the majority of participants are men, and that there is a clear gender division within some occupations.

*Table 2. Total number of participants per fast track divided by gender. January 2016 - September 2017.*

Sector/profession	Starting month	Gender		Total
		Women	Men	
1 Cooks	Jan. 2016	31	178	209
2 Food industry	Jan. 2016	21	215	236
3 Energy and electrical engineers*	Jan. 2016	13	280	293
4 Real estate business	Jan. 2016	11	326	337
5 Health care sector	Jan. 2016	257	479	736
6 Painters	Jan. 2016	–	166	166
7 Officials in the construction sector	Jan. 2016	99	276	375
8 Transport – truck drivers	Jan. 2016	–	155	155
9 Teachers and preschool teachers	Feb. 2016	638	403	1,041
10 Social scientists	May 2016	381	727	1,108
11 Social work	Jun. 2016	23	15	38
12 Animal nurses	Sept. 2016	6	41	47
13 Wood industry	Jan. 2017	33	306	339
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,513</b>	<b>3,567</b>	<b>5,080</b>

Note: Energy and electrical engineers counted together in the figures available.

Source: Arbetsförmedlingens datalager.

The monitoring and evaluation of the fast-track scheme, as many other policy initiatives directed to the labour market insertion of PSBs, is complex for at least three main reasons. First, the selected fast-tracks involve drastically different professions requiring very different credentials/skills and integration times. Each track should therefore be evaluated individually, and can only be compared with tracks with similar characteristics. The second obstacle for the proper evaluation of the fast-track scheme, relates to the self-selection of the participants, and the lack of a valid control group. Third, because the performance of PSBs cannot be differentiated from that of other newly arrived migrants as the data collected do not differentiate for reason for migration. However, one way to address this third obstacle is to cross, if possible and privacy regulations permitting, administrative data between the employment service and the migration office, as the latter have register data that differentiate between categories of immigrants.

Acknowledging some of these problematic issues, the Swedish public employment service provides a detailed evaluation in its May 2017 report, and in the data for the forthcoming report made available to the author. It provides the share of employment (measured in late March 2017) by type of fast track and time the person has participated in it (see *table 2*). For the evaluation, the Swedish PES differentiates between two main types: those that do not require advanced or professional credentials, and those that do. In both cases, the share of employment increases with time in the fast track. This indicates that the fast-track programme in place would be having a positive effect. As one could expect, employment increases however faster for fast-tracks that do not require advanced credentials. In more advanced fast-tracks, the progress is slower as migrants need to first prove their credentials and then go through different national exams offered in Swedish to test the minimum required abilities.

*Table 3. Progression (share in work) over time until September 2017 of participants who are or have participated in a fast track*

Track	Status	Number of months since the start of the fast track						
		1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21
All fast tracks	Work	4%	16%	26%	29%	30%	40%	44%
	Program	81%	55%	42%	37%	39%	34%	33%
	Unemployment	15%	26%	27%	26%	23%	15%	13%
	Other	1%	3%	5%	9%	7%	10%	9%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>797</b>	<b>737</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>656</b>	<b>822</b>	<b>614</b>
Fast-track (no credentials required)	Work	4%	17%	27%	30%	31%	41%	52%
	Program	80%	55%	43%	36%	39%	35%	29%
	Unemployment	15%	26%	26%	26%	23%	14%	12%
	Other	0%	2%	4%	8%	7%	9%	8%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>734</b>	<b>637</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>573</b>	<b>672</b>	<b>421</b>
Fast-track (credentials required)	Work	0%	10%	21%	22%	27%	33%	29%
	Program	89%	52%	40%	39%	42%	33%	42%
	Unemployment	8%	30%	29%	25%	23%	20%	17%
	Other	3%	8%	10%	14%	8%	15%	12%
	<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>193</b>

Source: Arbetsförmedlingens datalager.

There is however another statistical challenge referring to the extent to which the skills of the participants are used in the context of the fast track in which they are in. As the Swedish national PES indicates in its evaluation report, there is currently no way of checking whether people who participated in fast track receive a job that is in line with their skills, and are therefore in a profession included in the fast track. As in many other

*Table 4. Summary table of the fast-track initiative (Sweden)*

Period	October 2015-present
Target group	Third-country nationals, 20-64 years, received first residence permit ≤36 months, work experience/education connected to a sector with labour shortage
Key actors	Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), Sectorial employers' organisations, Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), Swedish Public Employment Service (PES), Swedish government
Social partners involvement	Design and implementation

labour market integration programmes, there is a need to find methods for making a more qualitative follow-up of the participants in each fast track.

### **3.3 The skills recognition support programme in Spain**

#### *Context and description of the initiative*

Spain has a highly centralised and poorly coordinated asylum system. In this context, some trade unions at the regional and local levels complement and improve the support the central government offers to PSBs. This is the case of the practice driven by AMIC-UGT (standing for “Associació d'Ajuda Mútua d'Immigrants a Catalunya” - “Unió General de Treballadors de Catalunya”). This Catalan trade union is specialised on migration and works towards the full labour market, social and political integration of migrants in Catalonia, Spain. One of its main pillars is the insertion of migrants into the labour market fostering the broader principles of equal treatment and improvement of labour rights.

AMIC-UGT, in collaboration with the local government agency ‘Attention Service for Immigrants, Foreigners, and Refugees (SAIER)’, assists third-country nationals (including PSBs) through a bottom-up initiative that seeks to strengthen their labour market position by a recertification of their qualifications acquired outside Spain.<sup>23</sup> In Spain, the recertification process is long and arduous. Migrants often perceive this process as bureaucratic and opaque. Unrecognised qualifications are however a great obstacle to the social inclusion and mobility of immigrants, and a waste of human capital for labour markets and hosting societies more generally. Immigrants often abandon the recertification process, as their main priority is to find a job to sustain themselves. The latter is even more the case for PSBs, as they are less likely than non-humanitarian immigrants to have the support of social networks at destination (Perino and Eve 2017).

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.bcn.cat/novaciutadania/pdf/saier/SAIER.fullet.ca-en.pdf>.

The geographical scope of the AMIC-UGT programme is the local level, i.e. the city of Barcelona, and it is financed by the city council. In principle, it is open to all citizens, although the main target group are third-country nationals with or without a residence permit. The fact that the policy is open to both documented and undocumented immigrants is important given the Spanish policy context. In Spain, immigrants can regularise their migratory situation, under certain conditions, but only if they have a job.

The initiative is a good example of both a multi-level and multi-stakeholder labour market support measure. It is based on the principle of collaboration between the local administration and social partners (in this case a trade union), and at the same time it also seeks to enhance vertical coordination with decision-making government bodies at the central level. The collaboration with the local administration legitimises, in front of third parties, the service offered. It makes it more visible to users, entities and companies, which could potentially be interested in teaming up.

### *Objectives*

The labour market support measure offered by AMIC-UGT and operationalised through SAIER in Barcelona belongs to the category 'recognition of skills and qualifications' described in section 2.2, and has several specific objectives. First, it aims at supporting migrants (including PSBs) in the recognition of foreign titles and diplomas, when they perceive the central government is not doing enough. It covers the homologation and validation of basic, vocational, and university degrees. Second, it promotes a more integrated and multi-level skill recognition support. Third, it deals with overqualified profiles of migrants, paying specific attention to women, as they tend to be more overqualified. Fifth, it operationalises the legal framework on foreign qualifications through active labour market policies that expedite this process and ultimately make it happen. Sixth, it promotes coordination between key actors in the recertification network such as universities, consulates, central and regional governments, and the local administration.

### *Actions*

In 2015, the AMIC-UGT programme attended 1,431 users who were seeking advice on homologation and validation of titles, as well as on job orientation. On average, the programme provided assistance to 119 people per month. People either present themselves or are referred from other authorities to SAIER. Once there, those in need of a personalised assistance with the homologation of their educational credentials are assisted by a representative of AMIC-UGT.

More concretely, based on its specific objectives, the AMIC-UGT programme, in collaboration with SAIER, puts in place several actions. First, it provides tailor-made advice on whether a process for homologation or validation is feasible. Second, it identifies which Spanish titles correspond to the academic experience of the person. Third, it advises on how to actually homologate foreign diplomas, and offers guidance on which documents are needed and in which form (i.e. certified translations etc.). Fourth, it provides support, in dialogue with the competent administration, if problems arise in the process. Fifth, it follows up with users after a formal decision has been taken on their demand. Sixth, it submits applications on behalf of users, when they are in particular need of support. Seventh, it refers users to other services within SAIER, the municipality, or beyond when they cannot offer any further solution.

*Table 5. Summary table of the skills recognition support programme (Spain)*

Period	1989-present
Target group	Open to all citizens, focus on third-country nationals with or without a residence permit
Key actors	Trade Union AMIC-UGT, local government agency Attention Service for Immigrants, Foreigners, and Refugees (SAIER), local government
Social partners involvement	Design and implementation

### **3.4 The Anabasi project in Italy**

#### *Context and description*

Italy is one of the EU countries most affected by the recent upsurge in migration flows. Since 2011, and particularly after 2015, it has witnessed an unprecedented increase in the number of asylum claims, and is currently one of the few EU countries where the figures are still on the rise. At the same time, Italy has so far little experience with asylum policy, including specific labour market integration policies for PSBs. Over the past years, much effort has been devoted in setting up a functioning reception system. This is however still based to a large extent on reception policies, and focuses mostly on the provision of basic services. In the absence of a centralised and comprehensive integration policy, the socio-economic inclusion of PSBs is largely developed at regional and local level, building upon grassroots initiatives developed by civil society

organisations, including social partners, with support from regional and local authorities. In this context, interesting practices are being developed at local level. A good example of this is the Anabasi project, implemented in the metropolitan area of Turin between February 2016 and February 2017. 'Anabasi' is an ancient Greek word that means "long and difficult journey". It has been chosen for naming this interesting pilot project which aims at fostering the labour inclusion of recently arrived PSBs through active labour market measures, specialising in vocational training, civic education, and job placement.

The project is an initiative of Quanta SPA, a temporary employment agency with several local branches across the country. Quanta SPA is specialised in human resource management and placement in high profile sectors such as aerospace, aviation and defence industry, ICT, energy, and utilities and infrastructures or the ship-building industry. The latter has been identified as an economic sector with important labour and skill shortages. In this context, it was decided to fill these gaps by activating and training recently arrived PSBs in Settimo Torinese, a small city in the metropolitan area of Turin. A partnership with local NGOs, local authorities, and training institutions was set up with a Memorandum of Understanding defining the roles and attributions of the partners. These include Quanta SPA as the project leader and coordinator, the local branch of Caritas, the municipality of Settimo Torinese, and the vocational training institute CNOS-FAP. Anabasi was fully funded with resources allocated by Forma-temp, a bilateral fund jointly managed by the confederations of the temporary work agencies Assolavoro and Assosomm, and the trade unions representing agency workers FeISA-CISL, NIDIL-CGIL, and UILTem.p@, whose mission is to finance active and passive labour market policies for agency workers. Forma-temp is funded through contributions provided by both employers (i.e. the temporary agencies) and workers. Therefore, the Anabasi project was made possible by a close collaboration between social partners, although the initiative was taken by a single business actor.

### *Objectives*

The Anabasi project was aimed at fostering the active inclusion of PSBs, through vocational training and professional job orientation services. The main assumption behind the development of the project has been that the Italian official reception system for PSBs is unable to set up pathways towards autonomy, as it is mainly centred upon the provision of basic services. In this framework, PSBs are seen as mainly passive subjects rather than actors with their own resources and abilities. Anabasi tried to revert this logic by providing beneficiaries with tools and skills that could be used to accompany them towards a full and fair inclusion into the labour market. In doing this, the project



addressed the challenge of the difficult labour market integration of recent migrants in Italy by enhancing their skills and employability. In fact, recently arrived migrants often lack the specific skills needed in the local labour markets, especially in the industrial sector, and there is a need for specialised support to fill such gaps. The project was designed in a comprehensive way by conceiving actions along the several steps of the integration process: from assessment of skills and qualifications — including a balance of competences — to specialised vocational training, professional orientation and job placement.

The specific goal of the Anabasi project was to train and find jobs for 80 PSBs hosted in the local reception centre of Settimo Torinese, managed by the local Caritas. However, in the intentions of the partners, the project was also a first experimentation of a new approach to inform future interventions in the area of PSBs' labour market integration. In fact, Anabasi was explicitly designed as a pilot project with the potential of being replicated in other territorial areas of the country through innovative partnerships between the private business sector, training institutions, and voluntary organizations managing the reception of asylum seekers.

### *Actions*

The actions of the Anabasi project were articulated into four main phases. First, all selected candidates were offered a short course on the rights and duties of citizens and workers (14 hours), and their level of Italian proficiency was tested. Candidates that did not reach at least the A2 level were offered further training to allow them to pass the test and acquire the necessary certification. Second, all selected candidates received specialized labour guidance services aimed at assessing their skills and motivations. Candidates were assisted by a team jointly composed by professional cultural mediators and job counsellors. For each candidate, an individual plan for ad hoc vocational training was designed, with the aim of better orienting the choice in terms of the specific vocational training needed. Third, all selected candidates participated in vocational courses for specific occupations in the industrial shipbuilding sector. Specific traineeships for occupations of electrician, welder, carpenter, or pipe-fitter were offered. These specific occupations were selected after a preliminary assessment of the labour and skills needs in the local labour market carried out by Quanta Risorse Umane. Vocational training courses had a variable duration of 160 to 240 hours. Fourth, at the end of the training courses, and after acquisition of the related certifications, candidates were offered individualized job placement services, including orientation on how to prepare their CVs. Job posts were offered based on contacts and agreements with

businesses previously arranged by Quanta Risorse Umane. Financial and other type of incentives were offered to final employers to support them in the hiring process, and to support the case for employing skilled refugees.

As described above, out of the initial 80 preselected candidates, 58 have been already involved in the first two steps. Among them, 57 have started the five vocational training courses offered, and only 4 did not pass the final test to acquire the skills certification. However, 10 dropped out because of a change in their legal situation, as their asylum request was rejected and their permit for staying in Italy withdrawn. Among those who participated in the courses, 18 have been trained as welders, 11 as electricians, 8 as pipe-fitters, and 6 as carpenters. All of them received a valid certificate attesting their skills. The 43 successful candidates were given access to job placement services, and 37 (86 %) are currently employed, either under temporary agency contracts (32) or direct employment with a private company.

*Table 6. Summary table of the ANABASI project (Italy)*

Period	February 2016- February 2017
Target group	PSBs in the local reception centre of Settimo Torinese
Key actors	Quanta SPA temporary employment agency, Caritas, vocational training institute CNOS-FAP, confederations of the temporary work agencies Assolavoro and Assosomm, trade unions representing agency workers FeISA-CISL, NIDIL-CGIL, and UILTem.p@, local government
Social partners involvement	Funding, design, implementation, and monitoring

#### 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The inclusion prospects of PSBs in host societies depend to a large extent on the conditions under which they access the labour market. To set the framework of analysis, this report has emphasised as a departing point the need for a stronger EU legal framework regulating PSBs' swift and effective access to the labour market with a set of minimum labour rights based on equal treatment with nationals.

As mentioned at the beginning of the report, one of the main aims was to assess key features and success factors of labour market integration policy measures involving social partners in different European countries. It has been stressed however that we cannot expect a similar benchmark for comparison across countries due to the diversity of political and institutional contexts. While for some countries there is a longstanding tradition of social partners' involvement in labour market governance, in other countries this is not the case. For the latter, the current migration crisis might however represent an opportunity to build a capacity in this direction.

For the involvement of social partners in labour market governance, the existence of a conducive institutional environment is a necessary condition. While on one hand, governments should devote their resources to both inform and involve social partners; on the other, they should also promote a stabilised institutional environment tackling administrative/legal (e.g. lengthy recognition procedures and labour market access), cultural (e.g. negative perceptions of native workers), institutional (e.g. low trade union density), and economic (e.g. level of unemployment) obstacles preventing the participation of social partners.

Acknowledging the cross-country political and institutional diversity, and in front of extensive evidence pointing to the generalised existence of significant PSBs-natives/other migrants' employment gaps, the report has highlighted important changes in the policy paradigm at the national level. In a few countries, multi-stage integration strategies are moving from compartmentalisation to increasing simultaneity in the programmes and services offered to PSBs, with support measures overlapping and/or complementing each other. This renewed paradigm advocates for early intervention as a key for the labour market integration of PSBs. It requires more employment-oriented policies upon PSBs' arrival, which are primarily concerned with the education and skills upgrading of this population.

In this change of policy paradigm, the role of social partners — both in their technical and societal functions — is crucial. Compared to other stakeholders, employers' organisations and trade unions are in a unique position to inform labour

market integration policy, and identify labour market shortages in different economic sectors. Social partners' expertise and agreements should therefore guide governments' policy on the labour market integration of PSBs. Moreover, both the decentralised, but at the same time coordinated, structure of social partners at the local, regional, national, and supranational levels enables a more effective governance of labour market integration, in particular when it comes to fostering employment-related mobility, and matching education and credentials with existing evidence on labour market shortages.

Finally, the description of selected cases of social partners' active involvement in integration strategies in the last section confirmed the importance of tripartism in dealing with labour market integration. It demonstrated that —despite important cross-country differences in the level of involvement of social partners in the design and implementation of labour market support measures for PSBs— existing top-down and bottom-up approaches in different national contexts can help redress obstacles and deliver innovative solutions to the pressing issue of the labour market integration of PSBs. As far as the author is aware, this report is one of the first to address this issue in a systematic manner. Further research on the role of social partners on the labour market integration of PSBs is however needed. Future evaluations of current integration programmes in place, such as the ones described in section 3, will shed new light on whether and to what extent a multi-stake holder approach improves labour market integration outcomes. The evidence we have so far, especially for the cases of Sweden and Denmark, points to this direction, although it is still early to draw any final conclusion.

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