

Programs promoting country-specific skills help the economic integration of refugees and reduce poverty and societal cost

A timely report, which is being published tomorrow, Tuesday (24th May), on [IZA World of Labor](#) shows that country-specific skills like language proficiency and knowledge of the new labor market are important in enabling refugees to economically succeed in the host country

Tomorrow the German government is set to pass their first integration law which will oblige refugees to take part in language as well as introductory courses to German law and culture. According to the German chancellor, Angela Merkel, the aim of the law is to make it easier for asylum seekers to gain access to the German labor market.

In a new paper economist Pieter Bevelander of the University of Malmoe argues in favor of such programs. While refugees in comparison to other immigrant categories have a slower start into the labor market and earn less they subsequently “catch up” with other entry categories such as family reunion migrants or labor migrants. The right integration policies can help to speed up this process and reduce poverty and societal cost. Bevelander cites a number of recent studies which show that refugee integration into the labor market depends mostly on individual human capital, investment in schooling and education (both in the source and host country), and labor market experience in the host country. In these studies host-country-specific education, work experience, language proficiency, and contacts with natives were positively related to chances of employment and occupational status.

Although further research is needed to suggest a definite best practice for integrating refugees, Bevelander encourages policymakers to adopt integration methods that have so far proven to be beneficial for inducing faster economic integration of immigrants; one such example is to offer early introduction assistance packages such as the one the German government is now making obligatory for asylum seekers.

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Notes for editors:

- IZA World of Labor (<http://wol.iza.org>) is a global, freely available online resource that provides policy makers, academics, journalists, and researchers, with clear, concise and evidence-based knowledge on labor economics issues worldwide.
- The site offers relevant and succinct information on topics including diversity, migration, minimum wage, youth unemployment, employment protection, development, education, gender balance, labor mobility and flexibility among others.
- Established in 1998, the Institute for the Study of Labor (www.iza.org) is an independent economic research institute focused on the analysis of global labour markets. Based in Bonn, it operates an international network of about 1,300 economists and researchers spanning more than 45 countries.