Labour Market Integration of Refugee Women in Germany

Raluca-Marilena MIHĂLCIOIU
Spiru Haret University, 13 Ion Ghica Street, Bucharest, 030045, Romania
Tel: +40213169793, Fax: +40213169793, Email: raluca@spiruharet.ro

Abstract: The year 2015 was defined by historically high refugee immigration to Europe. In Germany 1.1 million refugees have been registered. Also in 2016 continue to travel refugees to Germany, although the influx numbers are currently declining. It can be assumed that about 50 per cent of asylum seekers are granted the right in Germany. Most of the refugees were young men but the women represent a very important group. The integration of these people into German society and in the labor market is crucial for the success of the German refugee policy and social cohesion in the country. To work is not only a condition of economic success, but central to independent living and integration into German society. The requirements of a successful labor market, integration are favorable due to the positive employment situation. However, women particularly meet high barriers to German labor market access, even if they are qualified or have work experience in their origin country. Some time ago only 50 percent of refugees in Germany manage to find employment after five years of residence. So Germany is facing the great challenge to enable hundreds of thousands of vulnerable people to step into the labor market.

Keywords: refugees, labour market, employment, integration, gender

JEL classification: J16, J61, D63

Introduction
Hundreds of thousands of so-called refugees fleeing the civil war in Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia, an from military regime rule in Eritrea. 330 000 dead, a million wounded, more than 11.6 million people fleeing: this is the result of the Syrian civil war in the fifth year. What began as a peaceful protest against the regime of Bashar al-Assad in March 2011, has evolved to the worst refugee disaster since the genocide in Rwanda, according to UN figures. The conflict between government forces and various armed groups is unclear. Fighters of the Islamic State (IS) now control one-third of the country and commit, according to Amnesty International war crimes and serious human rights violations, as well as allied with al-Qaeda jihadist Al-Nusra Front, which is regarded as the third strongest party in the civil war.
All this facts conduct to a migration process to Europe. The fact that between the European Union countries does not exist borders controls, permitted the refugees to
arrive Germany without the necessary documentation. German society was not financially prepared to face this massive refugee’s crises. Even if hundreds of people embrace a “refugee welcome” culture, the integration of these refugees is difficult. A very important part of this integration is played by the access of women on German labor market. Inspite all expectations, many women have studied or worked in their origin country.

1. Refugees in Germany – Facts

The exact number of Refugees in Germany is unknown. Major news portals as Stern, der Spiegel or Focus Online release regularly new figures. In September 2015 163,000 refugees were registered in Germany. More than half the people of the current refugee crisis are Syrian nationals. An estimation of how many people are looking for protection in Germany in the current year can help the local authorities to enhance their absorption capacity. Some people were registered more than once, or others leave Germany without applying for asylum here, or they wait months till they are registered.

According to the Ministry of Interior, the number of in Germany asylum seekers in the first half 2016 decline compared to the previous year. In January 2016 came more than 2,000 refugees/day, in August 2016 were about 100 Refugees/Day. Total 222,264 new arrivals were registered by the end of June this year in the EASY system, as Interior Minister Thomas de Maizière (CDU) told.

Most of these asylum seekers are war refugees from Syria. In second place and three countries of origin are Afghanistan and Iraq, followed by the countries of Iran, Russian Federation, Eritrea, Somalia, Pakistan, Nigeria and Morocco.

Among the applicants in 2016 there are more and more women and children registered compared to 2015, when most of the refugees were young men.

In June 2016, about 16,335 asylum seekers were newly detected. This is a slight increase over the two previous months, but drastically less than at the beginning of the year (Mai: 16,281 April: 15,941, March 20 608 February 2016: 61 428 January 2016: 91,671).

2. Refugee Integration on German Labour Market

In the recent months the focus in the German refugee policy was to meet the challenge of accommodation and registration. But, the most important challenge is refugee’s integration in the German society. A successful integration begins with learning the language and find a job. A lot of the refugees will remain permanently or will be at least temporarily tolerated. Few will find quick access to the labour market. If the integration policy will not be changed than hundreds of thousands of high qualified and high-willing people only benefit from the social systems, without being able to help themselves. Their acquired qualifications in country of origin will be lost.

The labour market economist Holger Bonin has recently estimated the realistically expected long-term cost of the recording of a million refugees to 110-220 billion euros. Costs for refugees should be minimized. These attempts can be made to save resources on the expenditure side or tap on the income side paths, so that the refugees are able to work for himself and for the community he lives in.
From a sociological perspective, it is anticipated that a persistent inaction of refugees impacts negatively on their integration and employability. Persistent involuntary inactivity negatively affects the mental and physical health of those affected and causes resignation effects. Recent psychological studies also show significant effects on personality changes that may preclude future employment. The minimum social security in Germany’s System ensures the economic existence of unemployment affected largely. Germany is wealthy enough to guarantee this basic security to all who live here and are in need of help. Discussed here is the idea of "integration work": it offers employable refugees a wide range of activities, opens them immediately meaningful and inclusive labour. Since the activities of the integration work in the worst case should be cost neutral for public budgets and at best even generate savings or revenue, all able-bodied refugees are to participate in such measures. In essence, it’s about to support refugees to activities in which a value can be created, for which there is also a willingness of people.

The refugees develop work skills through their stakes in integration that can help them with a subsequent integration into the regular labor market. They learn to find their way into the local labor market, learn about typical ways of working and usual demands to know. Besides, they improve the contact with German colleagues and clients, they improve also their language skills. They also socialize outside the group of refugees and thus begin to integrate into the society. Above all, they have the opportunity to finish the gruelling and debilitating period of the idle biding.

3. Women Refugee’s Access to German Labour Market

The refugee immigration of 2015 was heavily male influenced with an estimated share of 70 percent. But Refugee women play a crucial potential for the labour market. Social services (hospitals, elderly homes and elderly care, nursery etc.) need a lot women human capital.

In fact, women refugees often remain invisible and are reduced to the stereotype of the wife and mother. But, most of the women refugees have attended school for than nine years, and in a third of cases they have professional experience in the country of origin. Also, they succeeded better than men in their professional experience on labour market. It is therefore important to take women as a target for potential labour market participants. Required basic condition is an adequate accompanying childcare and a work-life balance.

Women from the Middle Eastern countries of origin are often culturally distanced from the labour market and amazed what terms of employment are in Germany available.

Men use the counselling services far more common and women come to the appointment usually accompanied by a man. Traditional gender roles are still clearly anchored. But just for Syrian refugees Women can we observe a strong desire to adapt to the social circumstances, when they take part to a labour consulting service. There is a good chance that women change their settings brought.

In the labour market integration for refugee women, stronger measures are required for a successful integration process. Even the German Federal Agency for Work one sees the need to support the labour market activation of women. While refugee men enter relatively quickly in language and vocational support measures, married women stay at
home and take care of the children. In a first step, it requires targeted information strategy for women to educate them about the opportunities available for them on market entry. Furthermore, labour market promotional activities for women should increase the part-time jobs for women and support the childcare facilities. Federal and state governments need to clarify the issue of an appropriate quickly reimbursement. Existing measures have to be opened for refugee women and tailored to them: for example, the program "Stark on the job" for mothers with an immigrant background. The program "Perspective comeback" supports women after parental leave in the return to work. Even refugee women should take part in these programs.

**Conclusion**

Nobody can expect from the refugees to have a “German or an European behaviour” after taking part in an integration course, as many Germans wish to. Most of the refugees are Muslims and this means a completely different life rules. Islam is not a religion like Christianity, Islam is a life model. For many refugee women Islam is the high barrier to access the labour market and to live independent. One of the most compelling challenges currently faced is the need to establish consistent procedures for recognizing qualifications and assessing skills that include informally and non-formally acquired skills for women refugee. The current shortage in the supply of qualified refugees is attributed to the presumed overall lower qualification level among incoming refugees, who require new forms of vocational partial qualification. In order to effectively integrate the large inflow of individuals expected in the short and medium term, protocols for skills assessment, vocational guidance, probation periods and qualification will need to be designed with the rapid facilitation of substantial numbers of participants in mind. This requires testing and implementing new approaches to skills assessment, partial qualification and certification. And this, in turn, entails increasing the capacity of authorities tasked with supporting the labour market by expanding their staff and qualifications.

Establishing a low threshold for refugees women that are seeking employment is a further key aspect of effective labour market integration. In the context of a social labour market, employment opportunities accompanied by language and vocational training should be provided. Formal vocational training for refugees’ women should be facilitated through offerings such as partial qualification opportunities and flexible training modules. It must find a work – life balance, as many women are also mothers and wives. In addition, it must be developed other offerings such as those targeting a career start or entry simulations for women: part-time jobs, facilities for children, flexible work-time.

**References**


