



MATILDE

Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance
Integration and Local Development in
European Rural and Mountain Regions

THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC POLICIES ON MIGRANTS IN EUROPE



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Authors:

Austria: Ingrid Machold, Lisa Bauchinger, Thomas Dax, Marika Gruber, Christina Lobnig, Jessica Pöcher

Bulgaria: Anna Krasteva

Finland: Olga Davydova-Minguet, Lauri Havukainen, Jussi Laine, Pirjo Pöllänen

Germany: Stefan Kordel and Tobias Weidinger with support from David Spenger, Dominic Sauerbrey, Anne Güller-Frey

Italy: Marzia Bona, Andrea Membretti And Daniele Tonelli

Norway: Maria Røhnebæk, Nora Warhuus Samuelsen, Per Olav Lund

Spain: Raúl Lardiés, Nuria del Olmo

Sweden: Micheline van Riemsdijk, Susanne Stenbacka, Ulf Hansson, Anna Klerby, Tina Mathisen

Turkey: Koray Akay, Kübra Doğan-Yenisey, Pinar Uyan-Semerçi, Fatma Yılmaz-Elmas

United Kingdom: Maria Luisa Caputo, Simone Baglioni



Editors: Simone Baglioni, Maria Luisa Caputo, Jussi Laine and Andrea Membretti (eds.)

Design: Support to Life / supporttolife.org

Cover: Paolo Maitre Libertini

Approved by Work Package Manager of WP3 and WP4: Jussi Laine, University of Eastern Finland (FINLAND); Simone Baglioni and Maria Luisa Caputo, University of Parma (ITALY) on January 29th, 2021

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

COVID-19 - Coronavirus Disease

CS - Case Study

IT - Information Technology

LAU - Local administrative unit

NUTS - Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques

MATILDE - Migration Impact Assessment to Enhance Integration and Local Development in European Rural and Mountain Regions

TCN - Third Country National

WP - Working Package

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY BRIEFS

This document presents the impact assessments of a range of policies on migrants' interaction with the social and economic structure of the remote and rural areas in the MATILDE countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and in the United Kingdom.

Each report includes firstly a systematic gathering of information on existing policies that have a direct/indirect impact on migrants' interaction with the social economic structure of remote and rural areas. This includes also those policies that were not designed for this purpose but nonetheless contribute to shape such an interaction. The information for this task has been collected by means of desk research and informants' interviews.

Secondly, for each country we carried out a meta-analysis/literature review on the existing literature/research that has focused on assessing traditional and foundational economics as well as social migrants' impact in rural and remote areas in their country of settlement. The overall purpose of the meta-analysis was to pick up those elements that extant studies have indicated as drivers or barriers to social/economic integration and development. This review focuses on recent research – notably those produced in the last 10years – however it may include relevant research produced outside that period.

Thirdly, each report includes an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the policies and services explored through semi-structured interviews. A range of stakeholders has been consulted in gathering this information on the migration-related policies and governance in the socio-economic realm – policy makers and public officers, public service providers, practitioners and organizations working on migration related fields, social policies and territorial planning, experts/scholars, (social) entrepreneurs (both TCN and native) and other relevant stakeholder (e.g. unions' representatives, employers' organization leaders, etc.).

Finally, each country report includes two separate conclusions, describing if and how policy related factors act on the one side on the migrants' impact into the country economy and on the other on their social inclusion/impact. This final section also includes an inventory of good practices.



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2. AUSTRIA

Country: Austria

Research Team Members:

BAB (Ingrid Machold, Lisa Bauchinger, Thomas Dax)

CUAS (Marika Gruber, Christina Lobnig, Jessica Pöcher)

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1.1 OVERVIEW OF EXISTING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RELATED POLICIES REGARDING TCNS INTEGRATION AND IMPACT IN THE COUNTRY AND ITS SELECTED REMOTE AREA(S)

To give a thorough overview of the most relevant policies regarding TCN integration and impact in the country this description focusses on four main policy areas in Austria: i) residence & asylum, ii) integration (with a focus on language support) iii) labour market, and iv) social welfare (social protection, housing, health).

RESIDENCE & ASYLUM

IMMIGRATION AND RESIDENCE

Entry into Austria is regulated by the **Aliens Police Act** (FPG 2005¹). The **Security Police Act** (SPG²) includes i.e. the passport system and the surveillance of entry into/exit from Austria. If TCNs aim to stay in Austria for more than six months, they require a residence permit (**NAG**³). For their initial application, they have to give proof of elementary German language skills at the simplest level in the form of a language diploma (speaking German before immigrating to Austria) (§21a para. 1 NAG) (comparable with A1-level of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR; this proof is according to §21 para. 3 NAG not required for artists in certain fields of art). The possibilities of immigration to Austria are precisely regulated and very limited. A temporary residence permit (the first residence permit is issued only for a certain time) is issued basically for reasons of

¹ BGBl. I Nr. 100/2005.

² BGBl. Nr. 566/1991.

³ BGBl. I Nr. 100/2005.

labour migration (employed or self-employed activities, for artists and researchers) or family reunion (§ 8 par. 1 NAG). In addition, there is also the possibility of obtaining a residence permit as a pupil or student (§ 63 and § 64 NAG). In Austria, the first issue of a residence permit is regulated by a quota system. A residence permit (Red-White-Red - Card) will only be issued if the following conditions are met: proof of income in the amount of (according to the equalisation supplement reference rates since 1.1.2021) € 1,000.48 for single persons and € 1,578.36 for married couples, health insurance, accommodation, proof of no threat to public order or security. In order to be able to apply for a Red-White-Red - Card as a "skilled worker in a shortage profession", a binding job offer in Austria must already be presented; as a "particularly highly qualified person", a TCN can enter Austria for the purpose of seeking work by means of a visa; as soon as a suitable job has been found, the Red-White-Red - Card can be applied for (migration.gv.at 2021a). In the case of labour market migration by the mean of a so-called Red-White-Red - Card, a positive statement of the regional labour market service is required (§41 par. 1 NAG). Immigration as a skilled worker in a shortage profession (for the list of shortage professions that addresses regional labour market needs, see Skilled Workers Directive 2021⁴) is one of the few possibilities for non-highly qualified persons to migrate legally to Austria. Moreover, immigration regulations have been repeatedly tightened over the years (see the act amending the law on aliens, **FräG2018**⁵), Asylum & asylum procedure

The granting or withdrawal of asylum is regulated by the **Asylum Act**, the asylum procedure by the **BFA-VG**⁶. Court of Appeal is the Federal Administrative Court (**BVwGG**⁷), which replaced the Asylum Court (**AsylGHG**, **Asylgerichtshof-Einrichtungsgesetz**⁸). Over the years, the Asylum Acts have been tightened: **Asylum Act**

⁴ BGBl. II Nr. 595/2020.

⁵ BGBl. I Nr. 56/2018.

⁶ BGBl. I Nr. 87/2012.

⁷ BGBl. I Nr. 10/2013.

⁸ BGBl. I Nr. 4/2008.

1991⁹ made reception more difficult, **Asylum Act 1997**¹⁰ introduced rapid asylum procedures (within ~5 working days) to sort out where it is clear that the application has to be rejected, **Asylum Act amendment 2003**¹¹ implemented the "prohibition of new information" in a later interview or the possibility of refoulement at the border, if entering from a secure country. Further tightening was made in 2005¹² (**Aliens Law Package 2005**, representing the most comprehensive reform of foreigners' law since 1945; Schumacher 2005, 2), 2014 and **2016**¹³: now, asylum status is granted only for three years. If the evaluation of the political situation in the country of origin shows a positive change, a procedure to withdraw the right to asylum is initiated, otherwise the asylum title becomes indefinite.

The provision of basic care during the asylum procedure is regulated by the Federal Law on Basic Services (**GVG-B 2005**¹⁴). Moreover, the agreement between Federal Government and Federal States (**Grundversorgungsvereinbarung – Art. 15a B-VG**¹⁵) secure a nationwide uniform basic care provision and should avoid regional overloading (considering the relation of asylum seekers to the resident population). Each Federal State has a separate basic care provision law (e.g. **Kärntner Grundversorgungsgesetz**¹⁶; **Art. 15a B-VG – Grundversorgungsvereinbarung Vorarlberg**¹⁷). 2015-2018 the **Federal Constitutional Law on the**

⁹ BGBl. Nr. 8/1992.

¹⁰ BGBl. I Nr. 76/1997.

¹¹ BGBl. I Nr. 101/2003.

¹² BGBl. I Nr. 100/2005.

¹³ BGBl. I Nr. 70/2015.

¹⁴ BGBl. Nr. 405/1991.

¹⁵ BGBl. I Nr. 80/2004.

¹⁶ LGBl Nr 43/2006.

¹⁷ LGBl.Nr. 39/2004.

Accommodation and Distribution of Foreigners in Need of Assistance and Protection¹⁸ was in force obliging municipalities (districts) to accommodate asylum seekers in the amount of 1.5% of the resident population.

With the Federal Act on the Establishment of the Federal Agency for Care and Support Services (Bundesagentur für Betreuungs- und Unterstützungsleistungen GmbH, **BBU-G**¹⁹) which is assigned to the Ministry of the Interior, from 2020 onwards the agency took over the basic care for foreigners in need of help and protection, as well as starting by 2021, the legal advice, return counselling and return assistance, the provision of human rights observers to monitor deportations and, the provision of interpreters in proceedings. So far, legal and return counselling for asylum seekers has been provided by external service providers, primarily non-profit organizations, and the initial care of refugees by private companies in federal institutions. Under this law, both areas are provided by a state agency. Following nationalization, opposition parties (Republik Österreich 2019a) and NGOs (ORF 2020) have questioned the independence of legal counselling. However, the law states that the legal advisers can work independently and without being bound by instructions.

INTEGRATION

The legal basis for integration policies is the **Integration Act** (IntG²⁰), introduced in 2017. The Integration Act regulates the central framework conditions for the integration of persons entitled to asylum, subsidiary protection and legally settled TCNs, in the areas of language and orientation. The attendance and participation in German language courses and “values and orientation” courses (WOK) are mandatory and non-attendance is sanctioned. Either a “declaration of integration” (persons entitled to asylum, subsidiary protection) or an

¹⁸ BGBl. I Nr. 120/2015.

¹⁹ BGBl. I Nr. 53/2019.

²⁰ BGBl. I Nr. 68/2017.

“integration agreement”_(TCNs) is signed. The **implementing regulation** of the Integration Act (IntDV) (Durchführungsverordnung²¹) regulates the uniform quality standards.

For young people of more than 15 years of age (end of compulsory school age) up to 18 years of age the **“Mandatory Training Act”** (Ausbildungspflichtgesetz²²) has been implemented in 2016, which demands compulsory training up to the age of 18. Another important education and training opportunity for teenagers and adults involves the “lifelong learning initiative” which is already in its third period (2018-2021). It focusses on two main program areas: basic education and basic skills training for educationally disadvantaged adults (starting at the age of 16) and the catch up of the compulsory school leaving certificate.

Language training in compulsory education in schools is regulated in the **Education Reform Act** (Bildungsreformgesetz²³), which came into effect in 2017. Since the beginning of the school year 2018/19 pupils in compulsory schools (primary and lower secondary level) who are classified as ‘extraordinary pupils’ due to a lack of knowledge of the teaching language have been taught in German support classes and German training courses.

LABOUR MARKET

The Aliens Employment Act (**AuslBG**²⁴) regulates the employment of foreigners who only can be employed if the employer has obtained an employment permit (valid for one year or the apprenticeship duration). The foreign employees must not be treated worse than domestic employees (wages, working conditions).

Austria has introduced a system of criteria-based labour immigration for TCNs, which supports the immigration of highly qualified TCNs and professionals in professions with a shortage of skilled workers in order to cover

²¹ BGBl. II Nr. 286/2019.

²² BGBl. I Nr. 62/2016.

²³ BGBl. I Nr. 138/2017.

²⁴ BGBl. Nr. 218/1975.

domestic labour requirements. Depending on the group of persons willing to immigrate, there are different criteria that must be fulfilled. For the groups mentioned below, which are particularly needed on the labour market, the criteria-based, transparent system is intended to facilitate immigration for these groups of persons: particularly highly qualified persons, skilled workers in shortage professions, other key professionals, graduates of an Austrian university, self-employed key professionals, and start-up founders (migration.gv.at 2020). For each of these groups of labour migrants, criteria have been defined which, depending on the extent to which they are met, increase the chance of immigration opportunities. The fulfilment of the criteria is assessed with points. Every person willing to immigrate can use this points calculator (scoring system) available online to find out how many points he/she would receive and whether an application for immigration could be successful. The following criteria, among others, are assessed (based on the example of skilled workers in shortage professions): qualification (completed vocational training in the shortage profession, qualification for university entrance, graduation at Bachelor level), years of adequate work experience (also in Austria), German language skills (5 points for A1-level, 10 points for A2-level, 15 points for B1-level), English language skills (5 points for A2-level, 10 points for B1-level), and age of person (15 points for under 30 years-old, 10 points for over 30 years-old). The person has to reach at least 55 out of 90 points (migration.gv.at 2021b).

ACCREDITATION OF QUALIFICATIONS

The Recognition and Assessment Act (**AuBG**²⁵) aims to simplify and regulate procedures for the recognition of foreign educations or professions and set up counselling centres.

VOLUNTARY INTEGRATION YEAR

For people granted asylum and subsidiary protection the entry to the labour market is often very difficult. In order to promote the integration of refugees and subsidiary protection beneficiaries, the voluntary integration

²⁵ BGBl. I Nr. 55/2016.

year was established to strengthen the inclusion in social life, to foster the learning of “Austrian values” as well as the German language by gaining first work experience. Furthermore, it should help to provide career orientation and deepen previous educational skills, promote personality development, the expansion and application of knowledge for various occupational fields, the strengthening of social and intercultural skills and the social commitment of the participants (§27c **FreiwG**²⁶). Through the work in public welfare and non-profit organizations (§27d para. 1 **FreiwG**) during the voluntary integration year the people granted asylum and subsidiary protection gain not only work experience and improve their German language skills, but also get in contact with colleagues and natives and perhaps even make friends.

INTEGRATION YEAR BASED ON THE INTEGRATION YEAR ACT

The integration year based on the Integration Year Act (IJG²⁷) aims to accelerate the labour market integration of recognized refugees, people entitles to subsidiary protection and asylum seekers who, according to experience, are very likely to be granted asylum, by offering measures that foster the acquisition of German language skills and improve the chances of sustainable integration into the labour market. The target group, mentioned above, who have been in Austria since 31 December 2014 and are still registered as unemployed can participate in the integration year. The measures provided by the public employment service (AMS) include competence clearing, German language courses (beginning at A2-level), clarification and support in the recognition of qualifications and certificates, values and orientation courses in cooperation with the Austrian Integration Fund, vocational orientation and job application training, job preparation measures, and work trainings (§5 para. 3 IJG). During the one-year training, refugees and people entitles to subsidiary protection get an allowance to cover living expenses and to cover course costs, asylum seekers are further provided by basic care (AMS 2020a).

²⁶ BGBl. I Nr. 17/2012.

²⁷ BGBl. I Nr. 75/2017.

EMPLOYMENT OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

During the first three months of the asylum procedure there is an absolute ban on employment. Afterwards, asylum seekers can be employed as seasonal workers (in agriculture or in tourism) for a maximum of six months (“**Bartenstein-Erlass**”²⁸), for domestic services in private households (e.g. cleaning, mowing the lawn, supervising children) or become self-employed. In order not to lose basic care (i.a. accommodation, food, clothing, 40 € monthly pocket money, health care, information on orientation in Austria and voluntary return, costs of school attendance for children, costs for structuring of the daily routine (Art. 6 para. 1 Grundversorgungsvereinbarung – Art. 15a B-VG), asylum seekers are not allowed to earn more than €110/month (AMS 2020b; Fonds Soziales Wien 2020). Furthermore, they can become volunteers to expand knowledge and skills, carry out charitable work for public authorities (e.g. maintenance of parks and sports facilities for a low recognition fee) or support activities directly related to their accommodation (e.g. cleaning, kitchen operations, maintenance) (GVG-B 2005²⁹).

APPRENTICESHIPS FOR YOUNG ASYLUM SEEKERS

A decree in 2012³⁰ made it possible for asylum seekers up to the age of 18 years to start an apprenticeship during their asylum procedure. With the decree in 2013³¹ the age limit was raised up to 25 years for starting an apprenticeship. With decree of the year 2015³² apprenticeships are possible in all professions recorded in the

²⁸ GZ 435.006/6-II/7/2004.

²⁹ BGBl. I Nr. 100/2005.

³⁰ GZ: BMASK-435.006/0005-VI/AMR/7/2012.

³¹ GZ: BMASK-435.006/0005-VI/B/7/2013.

³² GZ: BMASK-435.006/0009-VI/B/7/2015.

list of shortage professions. In 2018³³, the decree from 2015, covering also the regulations of 2013, was repealed, argued by the large number of domestic and foreign young people looking for a job. Hence, since autumn 2018, young asylum seekers are not allowed to start an apprenticeship any longer.

SOCIAL WELFARE

In the policy area of social welfare, the focus is on the legal basis of minimum income and housing. Starting with the **needs-based minimum benefit** (Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung, BMS) this social welfare scheme instrument was introduced in September 2010 by means of a Federal-State Agreement between the Federal Government and the Federal States throughout the country³⁴. It has replaced the social welfare regulations that previously were decided by each Federal State. The BMS serves to support subsistence and housing cost and also covers access to health care provision. The agreement expired at the end of 2016 and since then it has been referred back to the Federal States as the responsible administrative scale. In order to change this situation, a basic federal law was created, which came into force on 1 June 2019. The implementation of the **Basic Act on Social Assistance** (Sozialhilfe-Grundsatzgesetz 2019³⁵) under Article 12 of the Federal Constitution (B-VG) includes a binding framework as well as a number of so-called "optional provisions". Implementation of the Basic Act on Social Assistance has not yet taken place in all Federal States, in the Austrian MATILDE regions the **law on guaranteed minimum income** in Vorarlberg and in Carinthia is still in force (until 2021).

Housing policy lies by constitution with the **competence of the Federal States**. Here we will focus on the legal approach for Vorarlberg that includes also TCNs and persons of asylum or subsidiary protection in its welfare

³³ GZ: BMASGK-435.006/0013-VI/B/7/2018.

³⁴ Federal state laws based on agreement between Federal government and Federal states (Art. 15a B-VG).

³⁵ BGBl. I Nr. 41/2019.

schemes. The **Housing Subsidy Act** (Wohnbauförderungsgesetz³⁶) of 1989 regulates the promotion of the construction and renewal of housing and the granting of housing assistance in Vorarlberg. In 2014, the provincial government of Vorarlberg adopted the **provincial Housing Allocation/Procurement Directive** (Wohnungsvergaberichtlinie³⁷), which is the first binding provincial directive. It regulates the target groups who can register for a rented flat or for "assisted living" and how housing supply is allocated to applicants via the municipalities. Persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection are also eligible. While the **New Building Subsidies Directive for public housing 2020/2021** (Neubauförderungsrichtlinien für den privaten/öffentlichen Wohnbau³⁸) regulates how the housing subsidy is awarded and calculated (Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung 2020b), the **Directive for Housing Allowance (Wohnbeihilferichtlinie 2019)**³⁹ supports the cost of housing. Apart from other groups it is eligible for long-term TCNs and beneficiaries of asylum and subsidiary protection.

³⁶ LGBl.Nr. 31/1989.

³⁷ Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung, Wohnungsvergaberichtlinie 2015.

³⁸ Vorarlberger Landesregierung, Neubauförderungsrichtlinie 2020/2021 für den privaten Wohnbau, 6.11.2019.

³⁹ Vorarlberger Landesregierung, Wohnbeihilferichtlinie 2019, 20.11.2018.

1.2 OVERVIEW ON EXISTING ANALYSES AND ASSESSMENTS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL POLICIES

RESIDENCE & ASYLUM

Residency and citizenship, the necessary permits and the associated legal and administrative framework and their development and impact have been the main focus of previous research efforts in connection with migration policy in Austria. The efforts have been conducted by various actors, including public authorities, academic institutions, private research actors and NGOs. The National Contact Point Austria in the European Migration Network, which is the country office of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), can be mentioned as a particularly active research actor.

The distinction between temporary residence and long-term settlement in Austria takes the form of various residence permits and the associated rights and obligations represent an important aspect of Austrian migration policy (Kratzmann et al. 2011, p. 62). Special focus was often placed on the group of TCNs who came to Austria as asylum seekers, especially from 2015 onwards. The attempt to assess and further forecast the economic impact of this immigration has also resulted in the recognition that there is a need for better intersection management, since the basic care, which includes the accommodation of asylum seekers, is a complex system that requires the cooperation of many actors (Berger et al. 2016).

This interplay of actors was also critically reviewed with a focus on residence permits, as the often long processing times are considered as a hindrance for TCNs aiming at studying at an Austrian University (Bassermann 2019). Differences per Federal State in the official procedures for citizenship were found not only in terms of the duration of the procedures, but also in terms of the documents that are accepted as proof of the many requirements. Furthermore, knowledge of the German language, in particular, increased in importance in policies over time. While in 1985 a mere "knowledge of the German language" was still considered as a prerequisite to acquire citizenship, actually, level B1 was set according to the European standard (Stiller 2019).

In order to support start-up founders to establish their company in Austria, a separate residence permit (Red-White-Red - Card for start-up founders) was created, which is, however, difficult to obtain due to the underlying criteria-based scoring system (Spiegelfeld 2019).

INTEGRATION (INCLUDING EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE TRAINING)

The Integration Act (IntG), introduced in 2017, is for the first time a nationwide uniform basis for integration efforts in the direction of values and orientation, and language training. The target group of the act are persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection from the age of 15, attendance and participation in German language course and values and orientation courses (WOK) are mandatory. Asylum seekers, “with a high probability to stay”, (which is not clearly defined) are eligible to participate in language courses. The obligation of the attendance to values and orientation courses is seen to be two-fold: although, it might be important to teach and “learn” the values, which is appreciated by most of the course participants as an evaluation confirms (Güngör 2017) critique goes, that “values are not teachable, but are the nonenforceable result of the reflection process of personal experience” (Friesl et al. 2009, 33). It is the acceptance of the values, that is crucial to create a link to a community. A stereotypical exam on values is not considered helpful for achieving community (Fritz 2017) and deploys a “conviction that our values and institutions are superior to others’, and may, or even should, be imposed on them to their benefit” (Hobsbawm 2007: 77). It is doubted whether a test can shed light on this (Hofer-Robinson 2018). Moreover, the discourse about values evokes the image of a homogenous community that agrees on a concerted set of values to organise everyday life, different from those of immigrants (Hofer 2016) and presenting a stereotypical image of the Austrian society (Boeckmann 2018).

The **Education Reform Act** came into effect in **2017** and focuses in particular on language training in compulsory education in schools. Since the beginning of the school year 2018/19 pupils in compulsory schools (primary and lower secondary level) who are classified as extraordinary pupils due to a lack of knowledge of the teaching language have been taught in **German support classes and German training courses**. This separation in specific German learning classes is justified by the government with the argument that the knowledge of teaching language is a prerequisite for integration. German support classes are contested by language experts (Rosenberger and Gruber 2020, SOS Mitmensch 2018) who argue that peer to peer German language learning is aggravated, a sufficient scope of action for schools and regions is missing, and threat of

discrimination and segregation increases. Ableidinger (2019) concludes that the model is only partially integrative and advocates the need to achieve the fastest possible transition from separated German classes to regular classes. Teaching in separate classes furthers a vague role attribution and unclear feelings of belonging of the eligible pupils. According to tests at the end of each term (DerStandard 2020) about half of the pupils in German support classes improved their German skills moderately which implies that they change to regular classes albeit still as pupils who are not included into the regular grading system and with additional German language learning support needs (6 hours per week). About one third improved considerably, they are enabled to change to regular classes and achieve the status of regular pupils, however 16% of the pupils did not improve sufficiently and have to stay for another term in the German support classes.

The knowledge of German has also been demanded as a precondition for school readiness. In order to qualify for school entrance children need not only the physical and mental requirements, but also the (tested) knowledge of the German teaching language (Bundesministerium für Bildung, Wissenschaft und Forschung 2018) despite wide-spread contrasting expert findings on the need to keep “low-performing” and children with language weaknesses in mainstream education (Herzog-Punzenberger 2017). Gomolla (2013) argues that linking school readiness with the knowledge of the teaching language constitutes indirect discrimination. Further, the sufficient knowledge of German as a criterion for school readiness may result in denying these children a school education appropriate to their age and development (Netzwerk Sprachen Rechte 2018). With the introduction of the German support classes the knowledge of German is officially no longer a criterion for school readiness (Österreichs digitales Amt, 2021).

Other regulations, not focused explicitly on persons entitled to asylum or subsidiary protection are reported to have positive effects, like the “Mandatory Training Act” (Ausbildungspflichtgesetz) (Steiner et al. 2019), or education and training for teenagers and adults within the “lifelong learning initiative” with two main program areas: basic education and basic skills training for educationally disadvantaged adults (starting at the age of 16) and the catch up of compulsory school leaving certificate (Jenewein 2018).

LABOUR MARKET

A study by Biffi (2011) showed to what extent migrants from EU and third countries contribute to meet the labour demand since 2004. Different qualification levels are considered. It is explained that a reorientation of migration policy towards highly qualified people is expected to reduce the pressure on the public budget, which is burdened by an ageing population.

That the focus on highly qualified migrants, as in Biffi (2011), leaves out a significant group of migrants is possibly shown by the study by Bock-Schappelwein and Huber (2016). In their contribution they explain that in Austria, in line with international studies, even after taking into account other factors important for labour market integration, a worse labour market integration success of asylum seekers who have only been in Austria for a short time and a particular disadvantage of asylum-seeking women is shown.

The international literature shows, “depending on the institutional circumstances of the respective recipient country, a combination of particularly unfavourable migration conditions (hasty and traumatising departure from the home country) with particular problems of recognition of formal training (lack of documents), long periods outside the labour market during the asylum procedure and settlement during the asylum procedure in regions where their specific qualifications are not in demand on the labour market” (ibid: 167).

The importance of employees with foreign citizenship in the Austrian labour market, especially for tourism, was analyzed by Walch et al. (2012). The experts interviewed in this study emphasized the diversity of employment opportunities for people with a migration background in tourism.

Taking this up, TourIK pilot project, analyzed by Gruber et al. (2019) aimed the pre-training and labour market integration of 30 young asylum seekers in tourist professions. For the hotel and gastronomy companies participating in the project the trainees and later apprentices represented an important personnel bridging aid because of the lack of skilled workers.

Furthermore, the study by Ortlieb et al. (2020) investigates two programs aimed at integrating refugees into the Austrian labour market – a short-term skills assessment and the integration year, which includes internship and training. The integration year, on the other hand, has a positive effect on employment, but this effect was

only shown by refugee women. The study emphasizes that cultural and social capital must be made available for successful integration programs.

SOCIAL WELFARE

In Austria the social welfare scheme has been reoriented towards a system of “**needs-based minimum benefit**” (Bedarfsorientierte Mindestsicherung - BMS) which was introduced in 2010 and at that time replaced the previous, more comprehensive “social assistance” scheme, which was regulated regionally by the provinces. Therefore, the intention of the BMS was to harmonize the benefits nation-wide. Furthermore, people should be ensured a certain quality of life in order to prevent marginalization in society (Pfeil & Wöss 2016). At federal level a minimum rate of monetary benefits has been set. In 2014, the minimum rate for persons living alone or single parents was € 814 per month (Statistik Austria 2015), which is the highest total amount of the needs based minimum benefit. Other groups of persons get only a certain percentage of this amount (e.g. adults living together in the same household obtain only 75%). The agreement expired at the end of 2016 and since then the implementation of a minimum benefit has been referred back to the Federal States. Particularly after 2015 the uptake of BMS was particularly high by persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection and people with migration background (up to 60%) (DerStandard 2018), which led to a tightening of access to BMS in several provinces.

In 2019 a basic federal law (**Basic Act on Social Assistance**) came into force in order to recreate national equal standards. It comes into effect either in 2020 or 2021, depending on the implementing regulations by provinces. The new law provides maximum rates of benefits instead of minimum standards. Further, the allocation of social assistance will increasingly take place in the form of benefits in kind (e.g. housing benefits) (Bundesministerium für Soziales, Gesundheit, Pflege und Konsumentenschutz 2019). Even if this “retrenchment of the welfare state” was criticized by some policy groups and NGOs, observers analyse that contesting activities against this trend and mobilization for justice and respective discourses was rather weak in Austria (Meier and Tiefenbacher 2019). This can be accounted to a strong tendency towards right-wing parties and policy convictions that were originally inspired directly from the dominant (and steadily increasing) national

right-wing party in the country (Wodak 2018) but have then been adopted by the Austrian People's Party (Gruber 2017; Liebhart 2020).

In the original version of the Basic Act of Social Assistance the full entitlement to benefits for immigrants was linked to a monetary “incentive” to improve language level of German. Sufficient language skills (level B1 of German or C1 of English) and the “completion of vocational qualification measures” were the prerequisites for employability on the Austrian labour market and simultaneously requested as precondition for full entitlement to the minimum benefit. Only if those prerequisites were met, immigrants should receive 100% of the BMS (Stelzer-Orthofer & Woltran 2019).

This law was passed by center-right coalition of the Austrian People's Party and the Austrian Freedom Party and reflects its social policy, which is mainly oriented towards performance and focused on Austrian citizens (Atzmüller 2019). On 12th December 2019 the Constitutional Court declared this part of the **Basic Act on Social Assistance** as unconstitutional and repealed it.

HOUSING

In Austria, Housing Subsidy (Wohnbauförderung) plays a key role in housing policy as well as housing construction policy, which are characterized by rent control in subsidized multi-floor residential buildings and in the historic housing stock (built before 1953 according to the rent law⁴⁰ and by allocating contracts to non-profit developers (Matznetter 2002). Direct subsidies, like Housing Assistance (Wohnbeihilfe), which support rent cost can be requested by eligible persons (Wenk 2017). Since 1988 the Housing Subsidy is regulated at Federal State level and is a crucial policy instrument in terms of social, economic and environmental policy (Matznetter 2020). In Vorarlberg, an annual amendment of the regulations enables the government to react to current challenges and to sharpen the instruments (Amann & Oberhuber 2019). The decentralization of Housing Subsidy has led to a wide range of different regional laws by pursuing separate priorities in each of the

⁴⁰ BGBl. Nr. 520/1981.

provinces (Amann & Oberhuber 2019), which has, according to a study of Amann & Mundt (2017) positive effects in the area of competition well-designed and effective funding models.

However, there are also significant differences in terms of eligibility conditions and requirements between Federal States, with some applying stricter requirements than others. While people with an EU, EEA or Swiss citizenship are treated on an equal footing with Austrians other TCNs are treated very different in different provinces. In terms of Housing Assistance asylum seekers are equal to nationals in all Federal States except in Upper Austria. By contrast, people entitled to subsidiary protection are only given equal access in six Federal States, including Vorarlberg and Carinthia. Further, TCNs require a certain time of main residence in Austria and in some Federal States, such as Upper Austria and Vorarlberg, TCNs need a regular minimum income in order to allocate Housing Assistance (Amann & Oberhuber 2019).

1.3 ASSESSMENT OF THE STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF POLICIES THROUGH SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

Although the long tradition of immigration in Austria has been evident since the 1970s, based on the statistical evidence, Austria can be viewed and is termed as a “reluctant immigration country” that either passively or actively confronts newcomers with various sets of conditions, legal restrictions and requirements (Heiss and Rathkolb 1995). In 2010, a more active approach with the “national action plan for integration” has been introduced which represents a balanced representation of the positive and negative aspects of migration. It is deemed as founding document for the Austrian integration policy (Rosenberger & Gruber 2020). To accompany and advise integration policy, an Expert Board for Integration has been established with the aim to discuss and summarize main issues of integration in the annual integration reports, starting with a first integration report in 2011 (Expertenrat für Integration 2019), and to critically reflect on the integration monitoring (e.g. Statistik Austria & BMEIA 2019). In the past 20 years the instrument of “**integration monitoring**” has been a valuable and reliable outcome of the Expert Board, who has “only an advisory and suggesting role” (as mentioned by an expert on migration and integration, WP3WP4AT002).

Experts confirmed the shift from a pronounced cultural perspective, which was increasingly dominated by catchphrases and valuations of the right-wing party, to the narrative of “integration by performance” with the establishment of the State-Secretary for Integration in 2011. This narrative is still in place and has acquired a dominant role in the current government program (Austrian People’s Party and Green Party) and in public discourse as well. The current policy concept is characterized by the principles of “promoting (migrants) and demanding (integration)” and is directed primarily towards migrants. The general understanding described by experts goes that the Federal Government enables integration while it simultaneously demands an active contribution from the newcomers. Sufficient knowledge of the German language is seen as key for successful integration that would eventually “achieve” labour market integration in the long run.

Integration as a two-way process is presented as the main principle of the Integration Act in 2017, which, however, unilaterally focusses on **mandatory orientation and language courses** for TCNs and persons entitled for asylum and subsidiary protection. Language development (Sprachförderung) through language courses provided through a national-wide effort and achievement of a minimum standardised level by the Austrian

Integration Fund (ÖIF) is now at the foreground of integration activities. However, funding for activities in a broader and more holistic, integrative way on a regional level are less valued and were subsequently curtailed. In contrast to the promotion of local and municipal integration competence as a priority measure in the field of integration policy in the first integration report of 2011 (Expertenrat für Integration 2011) interviewed experts (WP3WP4AT002, WP3WP4AT003) perceive a **centralisation of integration measures**, which is seen either as a logic consequence of the current organization of integration policy or as on-going considerable loss of local community action. As civil society had a very active role in the reception and care of asylum seekers and refugees as well as in support with language learning at a very low threshold in 2015 and the immediate period thereafter, the later centralization of language course provision and concentration on language training induced narrowing the many ways of integration at the local level. This is particularly true for a lot (not all) of rural areas, which had been successful in welcoming asylum seekers and other newcomers, giving them a new home, where they intended to stay, also in a longer perspective (WP3WP4AT002). A regional expert describes the reaction of the Federal State in the situation of the increased refugee movement in 2015:

“Here in Vorarlberg, the aim was that all 96 municipalities should take in asylum seekers. [...] Of course, he [the regional minister] made the mayors very aware of their responsibilities. This has led to an increased focus on this target group [asylum seekers] in society. So it is also important that society supports this integration process and resources are provided to do so. [...] The broad support of civil society has resulted in people still living in these municipalities where they first arrived. I also heard that people moved to the city, but came back after a short time.” (WP3WP4ATV002)

A strong focus on language training is also revealed through the Education Reform Act (2017) (WP3WP4AT001) concentrating on **German support classes** where pupils who are classified as pupils who are not included in the regular grading system of schools due to a lack of knowledge of the teaching language German. They are taught in separate classes during most lessons. One of the main points of critique, which has been expressed by various statements of language teaching experts (SOS Mitmensch 2018), was the missing integrative element of the peer group, when pupils with extraordinary status are assembled in separate classes with defined German language thresholds and examinations. An evaluation of this new approach is planned only for 2023.

Additionally, many measures financed by the Federal Government, with a previously more integrative focus have been adapted or eliminated. In particular the following measures have been mentioned by the expert from the Ministry of Education (WP3WP4AT001), which would have considerable positive impact, not only for the respective pupils, but also for parents, schoolteachers as well as the actual school location: a doubling of permanent posts for teachers dedicated to teaching extraordinary pupils in compulsory education with a special focus on language training. The creation of additional permanent posts for so called “**Mobile Intercultural Teams**” consisting typically of a psychologist, a social worker and a social pedagogue, who should also speak the language of the respective children. These teams would work on the interface of schooling psychologists and the teachers and focus on children with experience in displacement, to help them find their way into a positive schooling experience. Experts referred also to the recently established option of a “**transition training for young refugees** who are above compulsory school age” through which particularly unaccompanied minor refugees got a chance to enter the Austrian school system or later on the vocational system, including a focus on German language training.

However, the **German support classes** have been quite well received by pupils and teachers as the regional education expert in Vorarlberg argued (WP3WP4ATV003). As these classes have only started two years ago no valid evaluation is available yet. The main challenge, though, is seen in the transition from German support classes to regular classes, which will need to be accompanied by further support from the Federal state authorities in the case of Vorarlberg. A transfer of subsidies to schools “more in need of additional resources than others” (Brennpunktschulen) with many children with a mother tongue other than German is planned.

Integration into the labour market is also a major area where recent policy reforms had specific impact, either through creating targeted support for TCNs or increasing already existing obstacles. Refugees often find themselves confronted with the need to prove availability of financial resources and the need to find employment quickly in order to secure their own livelihood and that of their family members, since often **debts** exist already at the time a residence permit is granted. The debts occur, for example, due to money loaned to carry out the escape from their country of origin (WP3WP4ATK002). This burden, together with the fact that Austria has high standards of formal proof for the recognition of education or other qualifications forces many of this group of TCNs into the **low wage sector**, since needed documents to pursue certain professions and/or training and education are oftentimes not sufficiently notarized or translated or, especially in the case of

refugees, no longer available to them (WP3WP4ATK002). A particularly vulnerable group is that of 15–18-year-olds refugees, who have no vocational training. They are particularly exposed to exploitation and poor pay (WP3WP4ATK002). Doing auxiliary work and pursuing a career in the tourism and gastronomy sector are very prevalent occupational activities, which not only have a low wage level, but are also not valued very highly by the population (WP3WP4ATK002). Important employers in the case study region Villach are the IT-sector with its suppliers, the regional hospital, the Austrian Federal Railways (ÖBB) and also tourism and gastronomy (WP3WP4ATK003). Similarly, for the other case study region Vorarlberg big enterprises, partly with global networks (e.g. in tool production, tourism infrastructure, construction and food systems) as well as small and medium commercial operations at regional scale, play a significant role in labour market integration processes (WP3WP4ATV002).

Policy measures to counteract this trend were, for example, the **“voluntary integration year”**, which was introduced in 2016 as a deliberate measure to raise integration chances of young migrants. Although participants and experts analysed it as a successful measure (de Silva 2018) because it both offered young jobseekers the opportunity to participate, show and refine their own skills and opened employers up to this group of potential employees (WP3WP4ATK002, WP3WP4ATK003) it was not extended. On the contrary, despite the positive uptake and findings funds for this scheme were soon curtailed and, in 2019, discontinued. Other support made available by the Integration Fund, which comprise training offers and further education through various Austrian institutions for TCNs, which was also very well received nationwide (WP3WP4AT001, WP3WP4ATK002, WP3WP4ATK003). However, according to the experts, both measures are no longer actively pursued. The **“cancellation of the apprenticeship possibility for asylum seekers”** was perceived particularly negatively (WP3WP4ATK002). In recent years, the so-called **“Initiative 20,000”** was in force, which offered older, unemployed workers or workers who were difficult to place on the labour market, the opportunity to integrate into the primary labour market. Refugees and other TCNs have also benefited from this initiative (WP3WP4ATK002). The last centre-right oriented Federal Government abolished this initiative [initially, it was suspended as of 31.12.2017 (Republik Österreich 2018) and then expired completely at the end of June 2019 (APA-OTS 2019)] under heavy criticism, but additional funds for unemployed people over 50 years were later decided by an interim government (Republik Österreich 2019b).

The discontinuation of these support measures means that individual initiatives will have to be launched. As an exemplary initiative, one of the interviewed experts mentioned the project where **farmers opened their farms** to give interested TCNs an insight into the work and could hire them for harvest work (WP3WP4AT003). In general, the creation of such opportunities for exchange supports a first meeting and prevents the emergence of fears, which are often stirred up by the media or members of right-wing political movements. As the interviewee argues: "Wherever there are opportunities for interaction with other cultures, there is less fear of the foreigners". Hence, this project not only supports integration into the labour market, but also fosters interaction with natives and thereby integration into society, as well as provides new impulses which, as experience shows, enrich social life (WP3WP4ATK002).

Self-employment plays only a marginal role for TCNs in Carinthia, even though the opening of stores, hairdressers or restaurants is increasing in frequency and there is a demand for it especially in certain communities. As the interviews with experts in this area show, TCNs in Austria are often confronted with the fulfilment of the general strict criteria and guidelines (which apply to all people interested in setting up and running a business) if the step into self-employment is to be dared. Information regarding official procedures, necessary permits and the duration of procedures to be followed is often not available in a low-threshold form, which makes the process of founding and self-employment in the particularly bureaucratic administrative system in Austria even more difficult (WP3WP4ATK002).

Global political events such as disputes and armed conflicts are often provided as reasons why TCNs migrate to Europe and thus also to Austria. Their occurrence therefore influences which groups apply for asylum in Austria. Often, asylum seekers do not specifically plan to migrate to Austria, but has been stopped in Austria during their journey. Others may have heard about Austria as a welfare state. Arrived in Austria, asylum seekers cannot choose the place they will come to. They are often assigned to asylum shelters in rural areas. However, they then often get to know the rural area as a place that offers peace and quiet, a high level of security and good living and educational conditions for themselves and their children (Gruber 2014).

But, one expert interviewed noted that not only conflicts can be the trigger for flight, but that existential hardship can be so severe (e.g. in economically weak regions) that people have to leave their homes. This type of migration, as well as that influenced by climate change, is estimated to be the most prominent in the future

(WP3WP4ATK002). Many of the refugees do not stay in the rural areas but move to cities, in particular to the capital Vienna, as in some cases the urban environment is more similar to what they are accustomed to from their home country, or they already have friends and family or at least a community there that makes it easier for them to connect with social life (WP3WP4ATK002).

In the community of asylum experts, there is particular criticism in connection with **basic care and social benefits** indicating that, following the reform of the needs-based minimum protection scheme, beneficiaries of subsidiary protection will in future only receive financial benefits at the level of basic care, which will signify for people major difficulties to meet basic needs, e.g., in terms of financing housing. Further wide-spread critique concerns the unequal treatment of unaccompanied minors. Under the slogan "There are no half children", SOS Kinderdorf (2020; WP3WP4ATK002) and many other NGOs and welfare organizations demand that unaccompanied minors have the same right to education, health care and welfare as other children who grow up without parents. This is not the case due to restrictive regulations of the provided basic care services, as there is often a lack of psychological care and therapy places for trauma. Furthermore, experts pick at the constant tightening of asylum law. The **time limit for asylum status** was also viewed very critically by one expert interviewee, as it makes integration more difficult (WP3WP4ATK002).

With regard to the COVID-19 pandemic, it could be soon observed that those areas in which TCNs are often professionally active are particularly hard hit by the economic effects and there are comparatively more job cuts for this population group (WP3WP4ATK002, WP3WP4ATK003). In this sphere, the example of positive action is particularly useful, but largely dependent on individuals and institutions favourable to such an approach. For example, the municipal government of the Carinthian City of Villach, which has a politically unanimously agreed integration program since 2012, has adopted already the fourth "**CORONA Aid Package**" to support the city's economy: The program also bolsters pupils by offering laptops for free, provides assistance to affected families by paying a deposit for a flat (incl. deferral of rents; no evictions) and has reduced kindergarten fees in the crisis (Stadt Villach 2020a). In addition, the municipality has increased the budget for social assistance (BMS) (WP3WP4ATK003). In Vorarlberg **Corona Emergency Funds** have been introduced. They are aimed at supporting employees and businesses facing serious economic difficulties due to the pandemic. However, despite all the aid measures, there are social restrictions which have complicated the situation for many people. There is concern that especially refugees who are newcomers to the region and are

in need of urgent assistance are finding it difficult to obtain information. Due to the restrictions, social contacts and low-threshold services at community level no longer function as they used to (WP3WP4ATV001).

“My colleague told me that before the pandemic, the refugees just came to see her at the town hall if they needed support or information, but now it’s not possible.” (WP3WP4ATV001).

During the first lockdown, the refugees could only be advised via telephone and received homework to study German. However, in the second lockdown mandatory courses such as German language and “values and orientation” courses may also be held in person under protective measures (WP3WP4ATV002).

1.4 CONCLUSION

SOCIAL POLICY-INTEGRATION CONCLUSION. POLICY RELATED FACTORS ON THE MIGRANTS' INCLUSION

A host of policies imply profound effects on the opportunities for socio-structural and socio-cultural integration and their opportunities to be included in societal institutions of all kinds. In 2015/2016 with the sudden increase of asylum seekers migration, integration issues have dominated many political debates and led to a heightened awareness for the issue and, later, a general change of attitudes towards newcomers. This included enhanced considerations on opportunities for migrants in rural regions, discussions of local development action focusing on “integration” and community engagement extending towards newcomers, and reflection of the beneficial effects in cultural and economic terms of increasing levels of migrants in small remote municipalities, including mountain valleys. Albeit the general feeling towards asylum seekers was considered friendly and welcoming at the beginning of that ‘migration peak’, the atmosphere changed to a restrictive narrative advancing hostile arguments against immigration processes, nourished by conservative and right-wing policy discourses and media amplification. It was postulated that the increasing number of migrants would lead to rising challenges of accommodation and care, fuelling a more hostile attitude with a growing general scepticism against integration (Rosenberger & Gruber 2020, 79). Although perspectives on community life probably did not alter so promptly among individuals, political discussion, media coverage and available support drifted gradually towards more conservative and stereotypical views of ideological preservation of hegemonic (right-wing) views. These changing attitudes showed themselves up in a massive rise of the right-wing party in Austria, and their subsequent participation in government (starting from the end of 2017) together with a conservative party that had already incorporated and was boasting itself of the realization of a restrictive migration and integration policy as their main political achievement.

The amendment of the Aliens Act in 2018 (FräG2018⁴¹) can be seen as one expression of mainstreaming and tightening of migration regulation. This policy amendment particularly aimed at extending the possibility of implementing a fast-track procedure for withdrawing the granted asylum status from refugees in the event of voluntary recourse to protection in their country of origin or acquisition of lost nationality. However, the history of the aggravation of immigration regulation can be dated back much further, also in 1991 the Asylum Act was largely adopted. A major novelty at that time was the introduction of the “third country-clause”, under which an asylum seeker entering Austria from a safe third country is not granted asylum. Major amendments increased restrictions, in particular through the entering into force of the Dublin Convention in 1997, the amendment of 2003 addressing the increasing number of asylum seekers by streamlining and simplifying procedures, legal adjustments in 2005 because parts of the 2003 amendments were repealed as being unconstitutional and the most recent amendment of 2016 by introducing a time limit for asylum entitlement. Since then, granted asylum status is in the first instance only valid for three years and is extended for an indefinite period if there has been no lasting change in the political situation of the state of origin. Concerning this tightening, experts on foreigners’ law and human rights activists warned against the difficulties for refugees in the labour market integration or in finding accommodation. It was also feared that this law will make it more difficult for refugees to integrate (Republik Österreich 2016). This process encompassed all aspects of policy and social life and severely hampered any endeavour for working towards community integration so that analysts speak of a “politics of fear” (Wodak 2020). The empirical research study by Ratheiser et al. (2019) on the integration process of recognized refugees and persons entitled for subsidiary protection show in different interviews with integration experts, migrant counselling organisations and refugees i.a. the strong negative psychological effects of the temporary nature of the protection title and the possible reopening of the asylum procedure, which puts a lot of stress on people and thus also hinders them in the integration process.

In 2019 a strong, more symbolic signal of re-naming the “reception centres” into “departure centres” showed the intention of the right-wing party being in governmental responsibility at that time to prove immigration in Austria as very difficult (DerStandard 2019). Main aim was to stem against entry of possible asylum seekers and

⁴¹ BGBl. I Nr. 56/2018.

not show any sign of pull incentives. With the new conservative-green government the term was removed again.

In the past few years, in certain areas of integration an increase of duties for TCNs and a focus on sanctions, if duties are not fulfilled, can be observed. This notion is (theoretically) connected with the perception of integration as a two-way process. In the Integration Act of 2017 (§2 para. 1 IntG) “integration” is defined as a process whose success depends on the participation of all people living in Austria and is based on personal interaction. It states that in particular, integration requires that immigrants actively participate in this process, take advantage of the integration measures offered and recognize and respect the values of a European democratic states. The Integration Act foresees for TCNs the obligatory signing of an integration agreement comprising two modules, including mandatory orientation and language courses for TCNs and persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection. If the integration agreement and its obligation for language and orientation courses (which is a necessary proof for the prolongation of the residence permit) is not fulfilled within two years, a financial penalty of 500€ or a prison sentence for two weeks at the most is the consequence (§23 para. 1 IntG).

With the Education Reform Act the pressure on successfully and fast language learning for pupils with a lack of knowledge of the teaching language German has been intensified. Only with a positive result in the language test they are allowed to proceed in regular classes. Otherwise, they are obliged to continue in the German support classes. After two years of particular school courses the transfer to regular classes is obligatory, however further language training for pupils in need is not foreseen in the national proposal but has to be provided by the federal states on a voluntary basis.

A centralization of integration measures is recognized as dominant and adverse trend within the implementation of integration measures. While accommodation and care for asylum seekers as well as language and orientation courses for all newcomers have been provided at a regional and local level before, often through low-threshold activities, the provision of language and orientation courses has to be (according to legal prescriptions) provided by the Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF) since the Integration Act in 2017. The ÖIF implements language and values courses, organizes public events and creates information materials. At the same time, the same institution is also responsible for certification and for handling German language courses.

If there are still activities at the local or regional level, they have to be supported by the Federal States or by NGOs through their own funds, e.g. language courses for asylum seekers are organized and financed by the Federal States, activities of the ÖIF focuses on recognised refugees and other TCNs. However, with the centralization of language and orientation courses there is the threat that integrative activities of NGOs and volunteers at the regional and local level may not or be less supported than before.

INVENTORY OF GOOD PRACTICES ON SOCIAL IMPACT

A series of relevant initiatives have been elaborated across the country, extending to rural regions as well, and providing numerous examples from the two Austrian MATILDE case study areas. Good practices seeking to contribute migrants' inclusion in the local society are led to a substantial part by local actors (community organizations), voluntary associations and individual volunteers, associations and NGOs, and social-sector institutions, partly supported by public funds and administration. By curtailing “public services” the bulk of integration efforts is hence entrusted in this private field of social groups enhancing effective integration pathways. Many of these initiatives are short-termed, project-funding dependent and conditionally approved as long as political support is not withdrawn. The long-term challenges of integration can therefore hardly be met in a sustained and empowering way by these structures and fragile conditions. The following inventory of selected initiatives highlights examples from the two regions representative for the diversity of themes, approaches and actors:

- Both in Carinthia as well as Vorarlberg an **integration prize** has been adopted by the Federal State Government. The aim is to honour civil society engagement as well as active communities and companies in the area of integration achieving an important contribution to social cohesion, providing visibility of good practice examples and raising their appreciation and recognition in the course of an award ceremony (Land Kärnten 2019a; Land Vorarlberg 2020).
- Located at the intersection of lowland and mountain areas in Vorarlberg, a **Regional Coordination Office for Integration** aims at combining integration efforts of 11 municipalities. Since 2016, this office provided a regional anchor point for advice and support for migrants and refugees in this area,

supported by public funds (Verein Region Vorderland-Feldkirch n.d.). Many support projects addressed issues like “Refugees and Integration”, one of the sub-activities of a small municipalities called Röthis, oriented at integration of local refugees (about 20) there (Gemeinde Röthis 2020).

- The **Integration Pass of the City of Villach** has been offered since 2016 and is aimed at asylum seekers in order to explain the rules and customs in Villach and Austria and to facilitate their entry into society. It is divided into 7 modules in which the conditions for living together in Villach are explained and people are given the opportunity to exchange ideas with specialists. At the end, i.e. when all modules have been completed, the participants receive a certificate from the city of Villach (City of Villach 2020).
- A specific project targeting at a local welcoming society in a rural context was advocated in the project “**vorankommen**”, which is the German verb for “progressing”, indicating the aim to advance with integration objectives at this level. The project was carried out as a LEADER initiative in the period 2015-2018 in the mountain municipality of Alberschwende, representative for many remote parts of Vorarlberg (Regionalentwicklung Vorarlberg eGen n.d.). Through “institutionalizing” the approach it should provide an incentive to shift attention and acceptance towards newcomers in the small community. The target was to address five neighbouring municipalities, with about 150 enterprises, local partners and actors to instigate change in perceiving migrants and refugees.
- The **ASPIS** association is an independent institution and offers a wide range of help for traumatized people, which is highly needed as there are too few places for trauma therapy available especially for children; DerStandard 2018). People who have experienced violence often suffer psychological, psychosomataical and physical stress from the consequences of the “extreme situation”. The multi-professional team is specialized in psychotherapeutic work and in the implementation of accompanying measures. There is also close cooperation with other professional groups and treatment institutions (doctors, social workers, counselling for foreigners, UNHCR etc.) (ASPIS 2020).
- In some projects the focus was explicitly on one social group to address their needs with more detail and effectiveness. As the age structure of migrants shows particularly high shares of young people, youth is often a specific target group. The project “**Youth, Culture, Labor in Walgau**”, located in the municipality of Nenzing is a characteristic example (Regio Im Walgau n.d.). It further underpins that social capital enhancement should be seen as foundational to employment creation and an effective

strategy to enhance labour market performance and integration objectives. Though, initially it was a local action in one municipality. Since 2008, it was applied to seven municipalities through a LEADER project in 2017-2020. The specific target group are young refugees with their traumatic experiences and individual desire for trust-building action, enhanced partly by dedicated recreation offers. However, here a careful planning and informal support is required which seeks to promote, gradually, acceptance with local associations and population.

- Since 2013, activities have been carried out in the rural Hermagor region to support the permanent settlement and integration process of national and international migrants. The project “come to stay” **((ge)kommen, um bleiben)** aimed at raising the awareness of the public administration and the population towards migration process and raising pluralization of society. It was intended to create a service offer for immigrants according to regionally agreed quality criteria and thus make an important contribution to diversity and quality of life in the region (including a welcome handbook and checklist for the administration in order to be able to support the immigrants in their first steps in the region) (Region Hermagor n.d).
- Different religious beliefs, linked-cultural traits and cultural symbols are a further field of concern which is often neglected as understanding for these crucial issues tends to be limited. An inspiring example in Vorarlberg is the planning, preparation and creative realization of the cemetery for Muslims in that federal state. On account of the distinct rites and rules for burial sites an introductory study argued for the need of an “**Islamic Cemetery**” in Vorarlberg (Dörler 2004) and its feasibility. Being realized in a very specific architectural manner, addressing the contexts of religion and migration, the actual cemetery in Altsch received several architectural prizes between 2012-2014 for its exemplary design and evocation of these topics (okay.zusammen leben 2013).
- The Day of Encounter (**Tag der Begegnung**) in Carinthia is an annual event designed to strengthen polylogue and inter-religious understanding between Catholic, Protestant and Muslim religious communities. Other participants include the Federal State of Carinthia and representatives of the Carinthian Slovenian ethnic group (Land Kärnten 2019b).
- Access and use of public spaces and communication facilities are a more fluid aspect, but highly interesting to achieving new relationships, open dialogue and acceptance from diverse partners in this process. In Carinthia, a project called “Cariola-Community Gardens” runs **intercultural**

community gardens. These spaces are intended to create possibilities for joint gardening, encounters and intercultural exchange and to support the acquisition of the German language and integration process (Land Kärnten 2020).

The projects, offers and initiatives mentioned represent a selection of many supporting offers for asylum seekers, refugees and TCNs in the two Federal States Vorarlberg and Carinthia. On behalf of all the others, they provide an overview of what is mostly provided by NGOs, associations and volunteers.

ECONOMIC POLICY-INTEGRATION CONCLUSION. POLICY RELATED FACTORS ON THE MIGRANTS' IMPACT INTO THE ECONOMY

Participation in the labor market is considered the key to social integration. When refugees were asked in a study, when they feel “integrated”, they answered “when having a job” (UNHCR 2013, p. 76). Paid employment creates the basis for the self-sustaining ability of individuals, families and relatives and is acknowledged as foundation for integration in other fields. Household income affects housing options and quality, as well as education, qualification and skill development opportunities. Thus, the (legal) permission of (sufficiently paid) employment for TCNs is crucial.

On the one hand, labour market integration is highly regulated for TCNs in Austria, on the other hand citizens from the EU member states and the EEA states who make up of more than two thirds of the yearly immigrants, have free access to the Austrian labour market. As they enjoy free movement of workers, they do not need a labour market authorization to take up work. Legal regulations are focused on TCNs and may be divided into policies for (high-skilled) working migrants and policies for asylum seekers and persons entitled for asylum as well as subsidiary protection.

Austria has introduced a system of criteria-based labour immigration in 2011, which was adapted in 2017 and 2018 (Red-White-Red card). In the frame of these criteria labour market migration from third countries is geared to cover domestic labour requirements, provided that the applicant falls into one of the following groups (migration.gv.at 2020):

- Particularly highly qualified persons (e.g. persons with a university degree, preferably in mathematics, computer science, natural sciences or technology, and persons in a management function with a correspondingly high gross salary or research and innovation activity, and with sufficient German or English language skills); persons in this category can apply for a Red-White-Red card and do not have to show a job prior to entering the country, thus can come to Austria to look for a job;
- Professionals in professions with a shortage of skilled workers²² (completed apprenticeship in an occupation where there is a shortage of skilled workers; other criteria such as German and English language skills are also assessed);
- Other key professionals (criteria such as a university degree or minimum gross salary per month must be fulfilled and minimum salary levels must be proven);
- Graduates of an Austrian higher education institution (a job must be found in Austria within one year after graduation with a minimum salary of € 2,416.50 plus special payments (year 2020);
- Self-employed key professionals (possible, if employment involves a transfer of investment capital of at least €100,000 to Austria or if employment creates new jobs or secures existing jobs or involves a transfer of know-how or the introduction of new technologies or if the company is of major importance for a whole region);
- Start-up entrepreneurs (possible, e.g. when a new company to be set up develops innovative products, services or technologies and launches them on the market).

Although these criteria for labour-market-led immigration are still very demanding and can therefore only be met by a very limited number of people wishing to immigrate to Austria, the amended laws aimed at opening up the labour market and raise attractiveness for a skilled and qualified labour force.

While every TCN needs an employment permit in order to take up work in Austria, asylum seekers face additional obstacles and their possibility to work are very limited. During the first three months of the asylum procedure there is an absolute ban on employment. After these three months, an employment permit can be applied for, however employment opportunities and activities open to asylum seekers are very restricted:

- According to a decree from 2004, access to the labour market for asylum seekers has been regulated in such a way that after the first three months, they may only be employed as seasonal workers (e.g. in

agriculture as harvest workers or in tourism) for a maximum of six months (Arbeitsmarktservice Österreich 2020b).

- In addition, after the first three months of the asylum procedure, asylum-seekers may be employed for domestic services in private households (e.g. cleaning, mowing the lawn, supervising children, shopping) and may be remunerated by the so-called "service cheque". The service cheque is a means of payment and a wage for people who work in private households. In order not to lose basic care services, asylum seekers are allowed to earn a maximum of €110 additional per month (AMS 2020b; Fonds Soziales Wien 2020).
- Asylum seekers may become self-employed after the first three months. However, becoming self-employed means that asylum seekers lose the right to basic care, have to pay health insurance, chamber levy and income tax, and observe the other provisions relating to the exercise of the trade (Fonds Soziales Wien 2020).
- Asylum seekers are also allowed to become volunteers, so to be employed for up to three months for the purpose of expanding and applying the own knowledge without the obligation to work and without remuneration. Volunteering or work training must be registered with the Public Employment Service (AMS) and the General Accident Insurance Institution (AUVA) and has to be approved by them (Fonds Soziales Wien 2020).
- In addition, asylum seekers can carry out charitable work for Federal Government, federal states, municipalities and municipal associations (e.g. maintenance of parks and sports facilities). They may receive a minimum recognition fee of a few euros per hour, which must not exceed the possible additional income limit, as basic care is reduced or gets lost completely otherwise (Fonds Soziales Wien 2020).
- Finally, asylum seekers may be used for support activities directly related to their accommodation (e.g. cleaning, kitchen operations, transport, maintenance).

In 2012, an easement for young asylum seekers took place, enabling them an access to apprenticeship during their asylum procedure (with an extension of the age threshold from 18 to 25 years since 2014). The concept of this forward-looking integration instrument argues that young asylum seekers should be offered the opportunity to acquire professional qualifications during the asylum procedure which would facilitate their career entry after a positive asylum decision or, in the case of a negative outcome of the asylum procedure,

could be useful for their professional advancement in their country of origin. In 2018 the decree was repealed with immediate effect. The reason given was the current labour market development and, in particular, the large number of domestic and foreign young people who are registered with the Public Employment Service (AMS) as looking for a job. Furthermore, any pull factor for potential asylum seekers should be eliminated. Since then, it has no longer been possible for young asylum seekers to start an apprenticeship.

Another supportive integration instrument, the “integration year”, directed towards persons entitled to asylum and subsidiary protection, is no longer pursued since 2019, despite its high utilization and success. The aim of this policy was to strengthen inclusion into Austrian social life, to familiarize with “Austrian values” and to learn the German language. It was intended to provide career orientation and deepen previous school education, as well as to promote personality development, the expansion and application of knowledge for various occupational fields, the strengthening of social and intercultural skills and the social commitment of the participants.

INVENTORY OF GOOD PRACTICES ON ECONOMIC IMPACT

The economic aspects are tightly interwoven with the development of social integration and thus a strict separation of good practices is rather difficult. Moreover, many renowned enterprises and migrants don't stress their origin or even tend to downplay that aspect of their biographies in business communication. The following inventory exemplifies activities that enhance work integration through service and advice, skills development and approval, linking migrants and local people and entrepreneurs, the role of associations and needs of specific groups.

- The **Refugee and Migrant Support** by Caritas Carinthia (2020) encompasses all aspects of social and labour integration. With its accompanying support it provides guidance which is similar to many mentoring projects (that are more tightly focused on specific personal and job advice). The department **“Flight and Inclusion”** by Diakonie de La Tour in Carinthia (2020a) support asylum

seeker, refugees and migrants. They i.e. organize and operate accommodation for asylum seekers, run labour integration projects (like TourIK or A:life) or project on sexual education for refugees.

- A comprehensive assessment of the labour market effects of integration action was carried out by “arbeit plus” (2017), the Austrian network of community-oriented social enterprises. It lists a number of interesting examples, including several activities in the study area Vorarlberg. One of it, the project “**start2work - labour integration of migrants**” is supported by Caritas Vorarlberg (arbeit plus 2017, 18). Up to 400 approved refugees are supported year by year in their search for labour and/or skills development.
- A further example is the “**Youth College INTEGRA**” in Vorarlberg which was conceived in 2015 due to the strong increase of immigration, and the large number of young migrants (arbeit plus 2017, 22). The target is to achieve an “ability check” for young migrants (15-19 years) and to suggest subsequently appropriate courses and institutions for further skill improvement or work according to their interests and affinities. The situation is particularly challenging as most (more than 80% of them were unattended refugees with negative psychological effects due to their refugee biography). In the first phase more than 200 persons were included in the programme and most could be integrated to either the school system or vocational training, with a drop-out rate of just 16%.
- “**TourIK - Tourism and Integration in Carinthia**” is about the “pre-apprenticeship” for young refugees as a cooperative support model against the lack of skilled workers in Carinthian tourism. The aim of the project was to enable 30 motivated asylum seekers (including unaccompanied minors, UMFs) and recognized refugees to complete a one-year training programme (“pre-apprenticeship”) at the Villach vocational tourism school after a comprehensive potential analysis (clearing). After completion of the preliminary training in tourism in mid-November 2018, the prospective tourism professionals have been placed in the Carinthian economy, where many of them had the chance to start their regular apprenticeship (KWF 2017). A follow-up project is “**A:Life - Asylum & Apprenticeship**” in Carinthia, which aims to establish a commitment to dedicate apprenticeship places from industry or from hotel and gastronomy based in Carinthia as well as to support recognized asylum seekers during the socialization phase in Austria, prepare them for an apprenticeship with a training programme and offer socio-pedagogical follow-up support during an apprenticeship (Diakonie de La Tour 2020b).

- Reference should also be made to the **Institute for Labour Migration in Carinthia (IAM)**, which provides counselling and support to help migrants integrate into the labour market through job placement or further training. IAM is an association whose activities are funded by the Public Employment Service and the Carinthian Government and which offers the “competence check” (IAM 2020).
- The joint initiative of the Austrian Integration Fund, the Austrian Chambers of Commerce and the Public Employment Service, “**Mentoring for female migrants**”, aims to bring together experienced people from the domestic economy (mentors) and well-qualified people with a migration background (mentees) in order to support their integration into the Austrian labour market (Österreichischer Integrationsfonds 2020).

It should be noted that despite of the successful projects mentioned here, a thorough investigation of the demand differentiated by age groups and reflecting specific needs would be required. However, current policy trends focus on the costs of these activities and argue on short-term failures and difficulties, without considering “social cost” and deficiencies in public community development.

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