

MASTER'S THESIS

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Contrasting Responses:
Norway's Distinct Policies and Attitudes towards Middle
Eastern and Ukrainian Refugees

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The logo for Oslo Metropolitan University, featuring the word "OSLOMET" in a bold, black, sans-serif font. The letters are arranged in a slight arc, with "OSLO" on the left and "MET" on the right, all slanted upwards from left to right.

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Abstract

September 2015 and March 2022 marked significant milestones in the history of refugee reception, not only in Norway but also across Europe. These periods witnessed a significant increase in the influx of refugees. In 2015, Norway experienced an extraordinary surge in asylum applications, totalling more than 31,000 claims by the year's end, predominantly from the Middle East. This starkly contrasted the preceding year, which had seen 11,000 claims, and the subsequent year, which recorded a mere 3,000 (UDI, 2023 b: 9). After this peak in 2015, there were years of low influx until a significant spike in 2022, surpassing the 2015 figures, with over 40,000 asylum claims, mainly from Ukraine. This marked the highest number of asylum claims received within a single year in Norway's history, as reported by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI, 2023 c).

The topic of refugees has long been a subject of extensive political and media discourse. Immigration policies are dynamic, frequently changing, and the events of 2015 gathered significant media attention and political discussions, not just in Norway but throughout Europe. During this period, various measures restricting access to Europe, including the controversial EU-Turkey deal, were implemented. Norway, enforced similar measures. However, in 2022, a starkly different response emerged. All refugees from Ukraine were promptly granted *collective protection* in Norway, with official policy adjustments made swiftly following their arrival. Similar shifts in policy were observed across Europe. The policy responses in 2015 and 2022, therefore, presented stark contrasts to each other.

This research project delves into the different approaches adopted by Norway in responding to two distinct refugee crises: the post-2015 influx of refugees from the Middle East and the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis. The study explores changes in legislation and policies, the actual experiences of refugees within Norway, and the evolving attitudes towards these refugees.

To examine these responses, the study employs a qualitative research approach, incorporating interviews with organisations, journalists, politicians and writes, as well as policy document analysis. The research questions compare how legislation accommodated Ukrainian and Middle Eastern refugee groups, and how these identified disparities influenced the integration process in Norway. The findings suggest that Norway's response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis demonstrates a higher degree of openness and willingness to accommodate refugees compared to the earlier influx of refugees from Middle Eastern countries. This shift is evident in both political attitudes and the reception of refugees within local communities. The research uncovers significant changes in legislation that reflect these altered perspectives.

Additionally, the study highlights the role of media and public attitudes in shaping Norway's response to refugees. Despite both refugee groups experiencing the hardships of war and displacement, this research seeks to comprehend why varying attitudes and actions have emerged towards them. The study's significance is underscored by its contribution to the ongoing debates about the presence of racism, and prejudice, in refugee and asylum policies in European countries, including Norway. By analysing Norway's contrasting responses to these two refugee crises, this thesis sheds light on the factors influencing policy-making decisions and public perceptions concerning refugees.

Key Words: Refugee policy, asylumseeker, legislation, integration

Acknowledgement

This thesis stands as my concluding contribution, marking the end of my academic journey at OsloMet. Over the course of these two years, I have had the privilege of engaging in compelling perspectives on development, education, and sustainability. I am beyond grateful for many people whom I have crossed paths with, whose guidance and support have been invaluable during this period. At the outset of this program, the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted our routines. However, as societal restrictions eased, I was able to conduct my fieldwork in Oslo. I extend my gratitude to the remarkable individuals I met along the way: to politicians who challenged my preconceptions, to organisations that welcomed me into their vital initiatives, to journalists who generously shared their insights on complex matters, as well as writers who encouraged me to continue working on such an important matter. This thesis would not be possible without these contributions.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to conduct interviews at the parliament. Being granted access to engage with various political party members was an honour, and I am appreciative of their genuine interest, patience, and encouragement throughout our discussions. It was a privilege to converse with these key figures within Norwegian politics, and their willingness to share their insights has profoundly enriched my research experience.

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You cannot permit it! You dare not, at all. Accepting that outrage on all else may fall!
("Du må ikke tåle så inderlig vel, den urett som ikke rammer deg selv.")
- Dare not sleep/ Du må ikke sove, Arnulf Øverland.

List of Abbreviations

CEAS: Common European Asylum System

EU: European Union

NGO: Non-Governmental Organisation

NRC: Norwegian Refugee Council

TPD: Temporary Protection Directive

UDI: Norwegian Directorate of Immigration

UN: United Nations

UNE: Utlendingsnemnda

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

Political parties

AP: The Labour Party (Arbeiderpartiet)

FrP: The Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet)

H: The Conservatives (Høyre)

SV: The Socialist Left Party (Sosialistisk Venstreparti)

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Part 1

Chapter 1 – Introduction

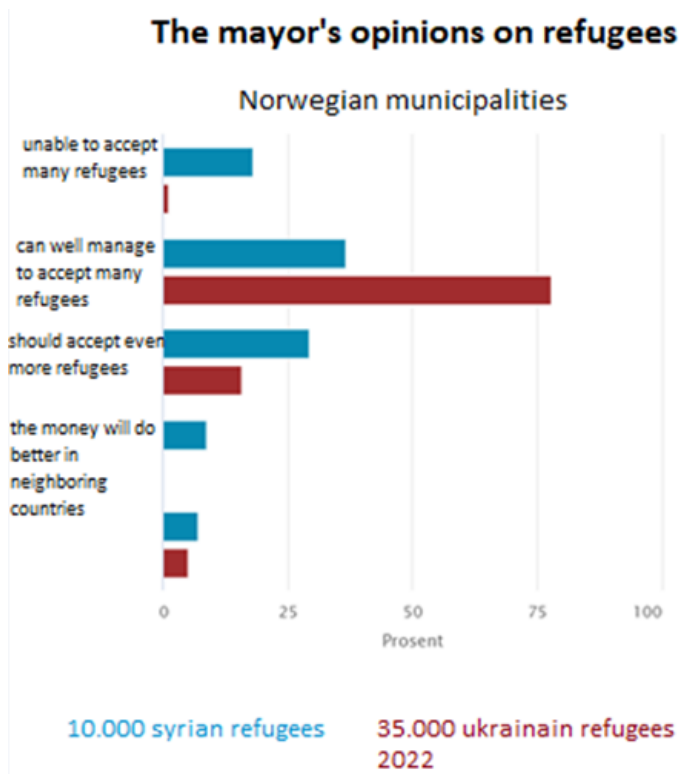
1.1 Aim of the study

This research project investigates Norway's response to two distinct refugee crises: the post-2015 crisis emerging from the Middle East, primarily the Syrian conflict, and the crisis triggered by the 2022 war in Ukraine. The Syrian conflict exacted a heavy toll on people, creating the largest refugee crisis of our time, affecting millions of people, and spilling into neighbouring countries (UNA, 2023 a). The effect of this was witnessed across Europe after 2015, and is therefore referred to as the post-2015 refugee crisis. Subsequently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II, overwhelming European nations with an influx of displaced individuals (Fladmoe & Brekke, 2022). This study critically examines Norway's approaches to these two, distinct, crises by analysing legislative changes enacted from 2015 to the present day. Beyond legal frameworks, the research investigates the experiences of those engaged in refugee work in Norway, and their view on the subject. In addition, the distinct approaches will be considered by reviewing contrasting attitudes to refugee groups, as expressed in the media and in Norwegian politics generally.

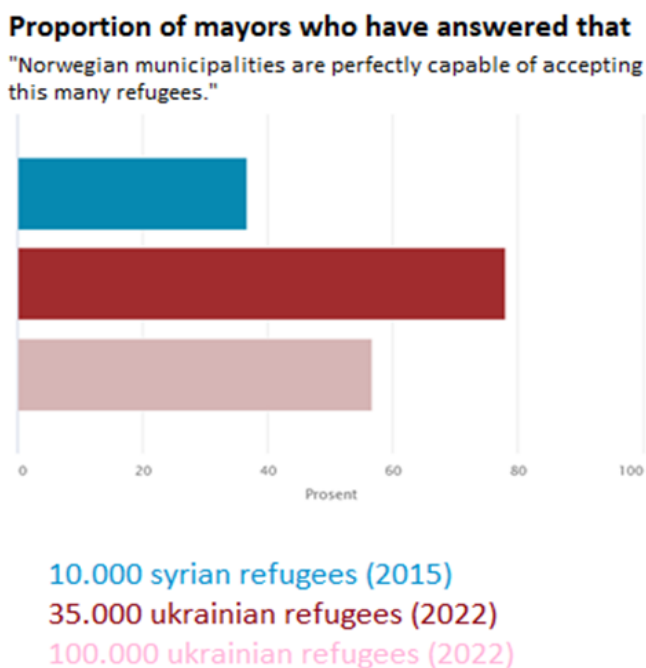
Central to this analysis is the exploration of how these multifaceted factors—legislative shifts, personal experiences, and societal attitudes— influence the process of integration. This is of interest, as the concept of 'integration' holds major significance in Norway's refugee policy discourse. By studying refugee flows from two different regions of the world, this paper examines the role of *intergroup contact* on attitudes towards refugees within Norwegian society. Additionally, it also draws on *securitization theory* to dissect the phenomenon of certain groups being labelled as 'threats' within the realm of politics. This study gains relevance in the context of the contemporary debate surrounding racism and prejudice in European refugee and asylum policies. By comprehensively examining Norway's responses to these crises, this research seeks to contribute valuable insights to this ongoing discourse.

The Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises represent two distinct situations, with different underlying causes and effects. The Syrian refugee crisis was triggered by the outbreak of civil war in 2011, compelling millions of Syrians to flee their homes and seek refuge in neighbouring countries and Europe. In contrast, the Ukrainian refugee crisis emerged in the aftermath of the annexation of Crimea by Russia in 2014, and the following invasion of Ukraine by Russia in 2022, which led to the displacement of millions of Ukrainians. A pivotal factor distinguishing these crises lies in the scale of displacement. The Syrian refugee crisis has resulted in the displacement of over 6.7 million people, making it one of the largest refugee crises in recent history (UN, 2023). In contrast, the Ukrainian refugee crisis has led to the displacement of around 1.6 million people—a significant number, though notably smaller when compared to the Syrian crisis (Prop. 44 S, 2022–2023:6). Further, alongside the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Europe continues to grapple with the arrival of refugees from the Middle East today. Another factor that sets these crises apart is the nature of the conflicts. In Syria, the civil war has been characterised by intense fighting between government forces, various rebel groups, and various foreign powers, resulting in extensive destruction of infrastructure and a tragically high loss of life. The conflict in Ukraine, on the other hand, has been characterised by tensions between Russia and Ukraine, with sporadic clashes between military forces and separatist rebels, leading to a displacement that is more localised and fragmented in nature.

When the Arab uprisings began in 2011, it triggered a migration crisis in European countries in 2015. Syria was engulfed in war, forcing many to risk their lives by crossing the Mediterranean in search of safety (SSB, 2017a). Those who arrived in Norway faced challenges in obtaining citizenship and encountered non-inclusive attitudes. However, a visible shift in both political will and public attitudes is evident concerning Ukrainian refugees today. Norwegian municipalities, in particular, have exhibited a remarkable transformation in their receptivity towards refugees. This newfound openness contrasts starkly with attitudes prevailing during the crisis seven years ago. In 2015, NRK conducted a comprehensive survey, canvassing all mayors in Norway regarding their willingness to host refugees. This baseline study captured the initial stance during the peak of the refugee crisis. A similar survey was replicated when the conflict in Ukraine began. This comparative analysis sheds light on the evolving attitudes and policies toward refugees, demonstrating the changing dynamics within Norwegian society.



The survey results are significant, indicating a substantial increase in willingness to settle up to 100,000 Ukrainians, a notable contrast to the willingness to accommodate 10,000 refugees from more distant countries observed in 2015. (Pedersen & Hjorthen, 2022)



The research findings highlight a notable shift in public attitudes. Eirik Christophersen, a senior adviser at the Norwegian Refugee Council, argues that the Norwegian desire to help is much more significant this time than before. “We have never had such a large influx of private individuals and companies who want to help, both financially and practically” (Pedersen & Hjorthen, 2022). This raises a crucial question: why this heightened response now, considering that in both instances, people are fleeing from war? This study aims to explore the underlying reasons for the diverse reactions to situations that share common ground. Amidst the complexities of war, recent events have spurred discussions and debates questioning whether these trends expose or are symptomatic of systemic racism within refugee and asylum policies. This issue extends beyond Norway, resonating across various European nations where stringent border controls and pushback policies clash with fundamental human rights. To delve into these complexities, this thesis engages in interviews with current politicians in the parliament, exploring the extent of consensus or divergence regarding this evolving approach.

The same fundamental principle of safeguarding human rights should be extended to protect refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants from diverse regions across the globe. In studying this, we will examine more closely how legal security and equality before the law are being implemented for different refugee groups, and consider ways in which these approaches potentially conflict with our legal framework. Furthermore, disparities in treatment are not limited to the countries where asylum applications are processed. In contrast to Ukrainian refugees, individuals fleeing from the Middle East are often subjected to pushbacks. These actions contradict the human rights obligations of member states, as they violate the principle of non-refoulement, undermine the right to asylum, disregard essential safeguards in the return process, and frequently result in violence, torture, and threats to the right to life.

1.2 Research question

This thesis will investigate the following research question:

In what way have the crises of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees been attended differently in Norway?

The following sub-research questions have guided the interviews during the fieldwork and helped illuminate different aspects of the main question.

1. *How has legislations accommodated Ukrainian refugees contrary to the refugee flow post-2015?*
2. *In what ways have legislative changes affected integration of refugees in Norway?*

These research questions reflect the interest in exploring the polarised Norwegian debate on asylum and migration. To comprehensively explore Norway's evolving approach to refugees, this thesis engages in in-depth interviews with parliamentarians, journalists, and authors who are deeply immersed in this field. This inquiry is an academic pursuit, but one driven by personal commitment to highlight equality and fundamental human rights among all refugees, ignited during my hands-on experience working with Middle Eastern refugees in Lesbos in 2018. Interacting closely with individuals like Omar Alshakal, the founder of Refugees4Refugees, opened my eyes to the profound significance of their work. Their dedication and resilience inspired me to delve deeper into the complexities of refugee issues. Witnessing the injustices faced by refugees, and their lack of awareness about their human rights further intensified my motivation to explore this thesis's topic. During my time in Lesbos, I had the opportunity to work within reception centres, the notorious Moria camp, and activity centres, gaining invaluable first-hand experience. Witnessing the injustices faced by refugees and their limited awareness of their fundamental human rights left an indelible mark on me. The stark contrast between the chaotic, uncertain conditions in Lesbos and the perceptions back home highlighted the urgent need for more informed discourse and compassionate policies. Many prevailing opinions on the matter were tainted by misinformation and scepticism, a painful realisation after witnessing the harsh realities up close.

As the Ukrainian conflict unfolded, my interest in understanding the quite diverse approaches to this crisis and the resulting refugee situation intensified. This curiosity stems from a deep-seated desire to comprehend the multifaceted ways in which policies and attitudes influence our responses to humanitarian crises. The heart of this exploration lies in the fundamental question of how these factors shape not only immediate reactions but also the long-term integration outcomes within Norway. Furthermore, this study seeks to shed light on pathways toward fostering a more empathetic and inclusive society. It aspires to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical applications, offering insights that can inform not only policy-making but also community initiatives and public awareness. Through a nuanced examination of the interactions between policies, attitudes, and integration efforts, this research endeavours to provide findings and statements that can contribute to the creation of a more compassionate, inclusive and supportive environment for refugees, fostering a sense of belonging and empowerment within our society.

1.3 Racism and Refugees?

The ongoing debate on racism and prejudice in European refugee and asylum policies is complex and multifaceted. On one side of the debate, there are those who assert that these policies are inherently discriminatory and designed to exclude people of certain races, ethnicities, or religions. They point to policies being used, such as the EU's Dublin Regulation, which requires refugees to claim asylum in the first EU country they enter, as evidence of this discrimination. The Dublin Regulation, established in 1997, is a law that determines which EU member state is responsible for processing an asylum application. According to this regulation, asylum seekers are required to claim asylum in the first EU country they enter (UDI, d). The objective is to prevent multiple asylum claims in different countries and ensure a coherent and fair asylum system across the EU. However, critics argue that this regulation places a disproportionate burden on the frontline countries where refugees first arrive, creating challenges in the equitable distribution of responsibilities among European nations. Conversely, there are proponents who argue that these policies are essential to maintain order and safeguard national security. According to this perspective, Europe cannot accommodate everyone who wishes to enter, necessitating specific measures to regulate the influx of refugees and asylum seekers (Prop. 90 L a, 2015–2016). Moreover, there are concerns that some individuals might pose threats to national security, underscoring the need for thorough examination before granting entry.

Furthermore, the prevailing argument posits that the challenge primarily revolves around practicality rather than racism or prejudice. Europe is currently grappling with an overwhelming surge of refugees, stretching resources to their limits and making it impossible to accommodate all those seeking refuge (Faiola, 2015). Advocates of policies such as the Dublin Regulation assert their necessity to prevent countries from being overwhelmed by the sheer volume of refugees and asylum seekers. However, critics argue that such policies are both discriminatory and ineffective. The use of phrases like "everyone who wants to come" often overshadows the reality that a significant portion of these individuals are refugees fleeing war, thereby entitled to fundamental human rights protections. These last years have also exposed weakness of the Dublin Regulation, particularly evident in countries like Greece and Italy, which find themselves overwhelmed with refugees while other EU nations disclaim responsibility (Wagner, 2018). In addition, refugees frequently encounter substantial barriers to integration, including language obstacles, limited access to education and employment, and a wide range of discriminatory practices. Arguably, policies solely focused on controlling the influx of refugees and asylum seekers, without addressing these integration challenges, are inherently flawed and limited. This is a matter that this thesis will shed light on while examining the different approach to Ukrainian refugees. Ultimately, the debate concerning racism and prejudice in European refugee and asylum policies is likely to persist. This multifaceted issue encompasses a spectrum of considerations, ranging from national security imperatives and practical constraints, to moral and ethical questions regarding the treatment of those fleeing war and persecution.

This case study holds considerable importance as it sheds light on the ongoing and currently heightened debate surrounding racism and prejudice within European refugee and asylum policies (Nwabuzo & Schaefer, 2017). It engages with the ongoing reality that policies may promote integration and inclusion, but can also perpetuate discrimination and marginalisation. Through this study, it becomes evident that recognizing the diverse experiences and needs of refugees is paramount, necessitating policies that are tailored to accommodate these differences effectively. Moreover, the case study demonstrates how policies directly impact the lives of refugees, showing the consequences of exclusion and marginalisation. By understanding the complex dynamics of integration, policymakers can develop more nuanced and effective strategies that tackle the root causes of social exclusion. Such strategies can pave the way for refugees' full and meaningful participation in society. Overall, this case

study highlights the need for continuous dialogue and collaboration among policymakers, civil society actors and refugees, to ensure that policies promote equality, inclusion, and respect for human rights.

1.4 The significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its potential to contribute valuable insights and understanding to various aspects of Norway's response to refugee crises in particular. This research sheds light on the evolving dynamics of Norway's integration and asylum policies by examining and comparing the reactions to the Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugee influxes. Understanding how legislative changes have accommodated different refugee groups provides crucial insights into formulating and adapting refugee policies in the face of complex geopolitical events. This shows how our society is capable of going together and manoeuvre issues in effective ways when necessary. The handling of Ukrainian refugees, the effectiveness, is rather a goal one should aim for when dealing with humans fleeing their homes.

Moreover, this study delves deeply into peoples' actual experiences, both in working with refugees in Norway and other countries, and their view on integration into Norwegian society. This in-depth exploration offers profound insight into the challenges and successes encountered by these individuals. The findings regarding public attitudes and media perspectives towards the two refugee crises provide a glimpse into the social perceptions and dynamics surrounding refugee reception in Norway. Further, the study employs a comprehensive approach, utilising qualitative research methods such as interviews and document analysis. This multifaceted methodology contributes to a more nuanced and complete understanding of the various factors shaping Norway's responses to refugee crises. By revealing the disparities in attitudes and actions towards refugees, the study highlights the potential impact of socio-political contexts on refugee policies and public sentiments.

Additionally, the research draws on securitization theory and intergroup contact theory, offering valuable theoretical insights into the dynamics of intergroup relations and the political discourse concerning refugee matters. Using these when analysing how refugees are

portrayed in media and politics, generates interpretations that can contribute positive integration outcomes. Grasping these theoretical frameworks can help inform policy-making processes and public debates, potentially fostering more inclusive and compassionate responses to future challenges related to refugees. Importantly, the findings from this research hold relevance beyond Norway, resonating with other European countries facing similar refugee crises. Examining attitudes, policies, and integration experiences in Norway provides valuable lessons and considerations for policymakers and stakeholders across the continent, especially in the midst of ongoing discussions about racism, prejudice, and asylum policies. In essence, the significance of this study lies in its potential to inform decision-making, foster dialogue, and promote more humane and effective responses to refugee challenges, thereby shaping more inclusive and compassionate societies for both present and future generations. This thesis aims to underscore the significance of societal responsibility in integration, alongside political influence.

1.5 Delimitations

This thesis is subject to some delimitations that are worth mentioning beforehand. First and foremost, the study exclusively concentrates on Norway's response to the post-2015 refugee crises originating from the Middle East and the 2022 war in Ukraine. This means that the findings may not apply to other countries or periods, and therefore the scope of the study is one matter. Further, the study relies on available data. Some data might be difficult to access, such as information on people's actual experiences, as well as honest opinions and attitudes on such a sensitive subject. This must be taken into consideration when conducting interviews. While organisations may provide an overall perspective, they might exclude specific in-depth examples to ensure the anonymity and safety of the refugees involved. That being said, subjectivity also plays a crucial role. The study may be influenced by the researcher's biases and perceptions. In light of this, the thesis has made a deliberate effort to encompass diverse viewpoints across the political spectrum, aiming to enhance understanding and complexity in examining the situation. I am deeply appreciative of the opportunity to do so through these interviews. Lastly, time constraints are also worth mentioning, as the study has a specific time frame and may need to fully capture the long-term effects of Norway's response to the refugee crises later. These are both ongoing situations that might develop differently through time. During the process of writing this thesis, it is important to acknowledge that the situation in Ukraine has been subject to ongoing changes. Consequently, the data and figures presented in

this thesis may vary from the current scenario. It is imperative to recognize and address all these delimitations to guarantee the validity and reliability of the findings.

1.6 How the thesis is structured

This master's thesis delves into the complexities of integration policies in Norway, focusing on the experiences of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees. The study seeks to illuminate the challenges these refugees encounter in the process of integration, and explores how political perspectives and media coverage influence public attitudes toward them.

In Part 1 of the thesis, Chapter 1 serves as the introduction, outlining the study's objectives, research question, rationale for the case study, significance, delimitations, and overall research structure. Additionally, the chapter delves into key theoretical foundations by clarifying concepts related to stereotypes and prejudicial attitudes. Chapter 2 offers a contextual background on Norway's integration and asylum policies, delving into the historical context of the refugee crisis. Specifically, it focuses on the 2015 European refugee crisis and the more recent 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis, both central to this thesis. The methodology is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3, explaining the research design and the chosen qualitative research approach. This chapter provides insights into the field description, including the sample and its limitations. Moreover, it details the data collection methods, such as semi-structured interviews and document analysis, while emphasising ethical considerations, including the importance of avoiding harm, obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality, and the role of the researcher in a sensitive topic. Chapter 4 outlines the theoretical framework, integrating concepts like securitization and desecuritization, as well as the intergroup contact theory. These theories help us understand the dynamics between different social groups and their interactions, as well as the power of media and politics in creating a distinction between groups of refugees.

Part 2 of the thesis focuses on data and analysis. Chapter 5 delves into different approaches to the two refugee crises, including attendance through media and politics, as well as laws and regulations. In this chapter, the interconnections between these aspects and the concepts of legal security and equality before the law are thoroughly examined. It further emphasises the

difference in approach and examines collective protection. Chapter 6 delves into an equal approach to human rights, based on the research findings. Finally, Chapter 7, 'Bringing it to an End,' serves as the concluding chapter. Here I will provide a brief summary of the research findings and analysis, emphasising key discoveries and concluding remarks. Additionally, this chapter delves into the contributions made by this thesis and puts forth recommendations for further research on the topic. Given the ongoing nature of the situation, attempts will be made to provide comments on observed developments and potential outcomes that may emerge.

1.7 Concept clarifications

In the course of this discussion, terms such as 'refugee,' 'immigrant,' and 'asylum seeker' are frequently employed. These words carry diverse associations, meanings, and more importantly, power. Consequently, it is crucial to establish clear definitions for these terms at the outset. Given their frequent use and significant impact on shaping perceptions and attitudes, clear definitions become crucial. This awareness is particularly relevant when examining media and political discourse, where the terms may be employed differently, further emphasising the need for clarity in their usage and interpretation.

Asylum:

“Asylum is an inviolable sanctuary. In Norway, asylum is granted to persons defined as refugees in accordance with the Refugee Convention of 1951, and to those who are in danger of being subjected to the death penalty, torture or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment upon return. Being granted asylum is the same as being granted refugee status.”
(NRC, 2023)

Asylum seeker:

"An asylum-seeker is someone whose request for sanctuary has yet to be processed."
(UNHCR,2022)

Immigrants:

“Persons born abroad by two foreign-born parents and four foreign-born grandparents.
(SSB,2016)”

Refugee:

"A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his/her country because of persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution for reasons of race,

religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Most likely, they cannot return home or are afraid to do so. War and ethnic, tribal and religious violence are leading causes of refugees fleeing their countries." (UNHCR, 2023)

Norway has two legal bases for refugee status. The first legal basis is outlined in the Immigration Act § 28, letter a. It refers to the concept as defined in Article 1A of the Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol.

The provision in the Immigration Act is a condensed version of the original text in the Refugee Convention and reads as follows:

A refugee is someone who "...has a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country..."

The second legal basis in the Immigration Act § 28, letter b, grants refugee status if a person

"...without falling within letter a, still faces a real risk of being subjected to the death penalty, torture, or other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment upon return to their home country..."

This provision is not taken from the Refugee Convention but is intended to uphold other international obligations that affirm the prohibition of 'refoulement'. Therefore, Norway has a broader concept of refugees than the Refugee Convention and other countries. The categories are considered equivalent, meaning that asylum applications are assessed based on both legal grounds (Øyen, 2013).

Refugee policy:

"Refugee policy includes goals, regulations and measures in the work to prevent and solve refugee problems and help refugees, both internationally and nationally. Refugee policy instruments include preventive activities, emergency aid, asylum/protection, resettlement and measures for return" (NRC,2023).

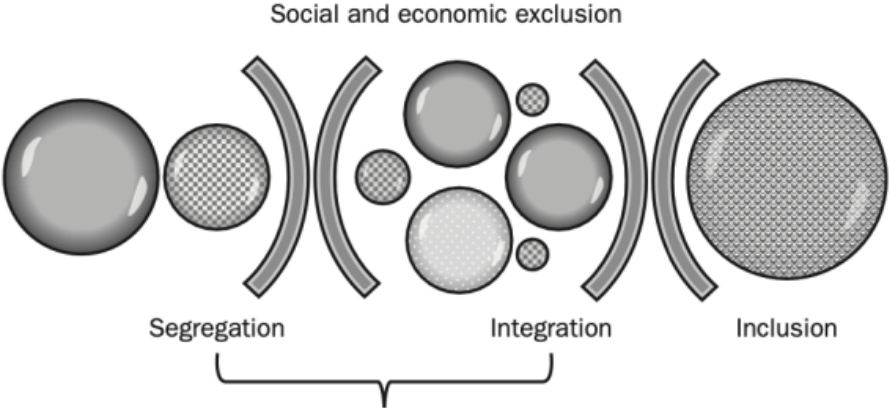
Immigration policy:

"Immigration policy in the broadest sense includes objectives, regulations and measures that apply to immigration and immigrants, be it refugee immigration, family immigration or labor immigration. The policy consists of the following main parts: regulation and control of immigration and the stay of foreigners in the country, measures aimed at various groups of immigrants and foreigners staying in Norway, and measures to create good relations between

immigrants and the rest of the population. The domestic refugee policy is part of the immigration policy” (NRC, 2023).

Integration:

“Inclusion of individuals or groups (such as minorities) on equal terms in society, in an organization or different areas of society such as the education system, working life or the housing market. The term implies that there must be mutual adaptation between the groups in society” (NRC, 2023).



When studying integration, it is vital to question the term's meaning, particularly when distinguishing integration with inclusion. Does the political objective for integration align more with assimilation? Furthermore, the core of the text will be on how integration occurs, changes, and is experienced. This exploration will be conducted in collaboration with various organisations and people working on the matter.

The term 'integration' carries diverse meanings based on the context and perspective of those using it. Broadly, it signifies the process through which immigrants or refugees become part of the host society, embracing the new language, customs, and values while preserving elements of their own cultural identity. However, some argue that integration can be a codeword for ‘assimilation’, suggesting that immigrants are expected to relinquish their cultural identity and conform to the dominant culture. This perspective implies that immigrants must adopt the customs and values of the host society, often overlooking the unique contributions they can make. Additionally, there is a growing recognition that the term "inclusion" might be a more suitable goal than "integration" when discussing refugee and

immigrant policies. Inclusion entails creating a society that values diversity and ensures that everyone has equal opportunities to participate and contribute. This approach acknowledges the diverse cultural and social backgrounds of immigrants and refugees, fostering a society that celebrates diversity and views differences as strengths (Council of Europe, 1997). These key aspects are emphasised in the findings derived from the interviews conducted in Chapter 5 and 6.

It is also essential to recognize that the integration process is complex and multifaceted. It can differ depending on factors such as the country of origin, the length of time spent in the host country, and the policy and legal framework in place. Refugees and immigrants encounter various challenges during integration, including language barriers, discrimination, and difficulties in accessing education and employment opportunities. However, research indicates that successful integration can have significant benefits for both refugees and host societies. It can lead to increased social and economic participation, higher levels of civic engagement, and improved mental health and well-being for refugees. Additionally, successful integration has the potential to foster a more cohesive and inclusive society, creating a sense of belonging and social cohesion for all members. These considerations are essential when deliberating on society's role in integration and the advantages it offers to every individual. In conclusion, the concept of integration in refugee and immigrant policies is complex and multifaceted. It is essential to recognize that integration should not be a one-way process where refugees are expected to conform to the dominant culture. Instead, it should be viewed as a mutual exchange and learning experience. Additionally, the term 'inclusion' emerges as a more appropriate objective in these discussions, acknowledging and valuing the diverse contributions of all society members.

Chapter 2 – Contextual Background

This chapter commences with a brief introduction to Norway's evolving integration and asylum policies, highlighting key developments from 2015 to the present day. Additionally, it provides a historical backdrop of the 'refugee crisis' to facilitate a comprehensive understanding of both scenarios for subsequent comparative analysis.

2.1 A brief introduction to Norway's integration and asylum politics

During the autumn of 2015, Norway witnessed a notable increase in the arrival of asylum seekers, escalating from 11,500 in 2014 to 31,145 in 2015. While a majority originated from the war-torn region of Syria, there were also asylum seekers hailing from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Eritrea (SSB, 2017b). Subsequent to this surge, public discussions have expressed concerns regarding the society's aptitude to assimilate individuals from diverse cultures and backgrounds. The discourse evokes intense emotions, and in the 2017 parliamentary elections, immigration emerged as the paramount issue for voters, surpassing its significance in both 2009 and 2013 (SSB, 2017c). Driven by the implications of integration – or the lack thereof – for both Norway and each immigrant, it has been at interest to investigate Norway's integration and asylum policy.

The term integration has moved from its origins in Durkheimian sociology into other scientific disciplines as well as politics and our everyday language (Loga, 2012). In Northern and Western Europe, the term gained prominence in the politics of immigrant-host society relations during the 1970s, coinciding with new immigration patterns tied to guest worker programs and decolonization (Castles and Miller, 2003). At that time, integration was understood as a golden mean between assimilation, where minorities are expected to be equal to the majority, and segregation, where population groups live separate lives (Hagelund & Loga 2009: 16). In Norway, over the past four decades, integration has become a comprehensive term encompassing policies aimed at ensuring that immigrants become part of society to the greatest extent possible, and thus do not end up on the outside economically, socially and/or culturally. There is broad political consensus in Norway and other Western countries on integration as a crucial policy imperative (Hagelund 2003; Hadj Abdou 2019). This agreement must be understood in light of the term's ambiguity and semantic flexibility,

which makes it possible for different parties to fill it with different content (Hagelund, 2003). According to Rytter (2019), it is precisely this flexibility that makes the term potent and effective. The question of what good integration is, and how this can best be achieved, is in reality the subject of great political disagreement.

In a report done by Statistics Norway in November 2020, called “Integration of immigrants in Norway. Concepts, indicators and group variations”, the report addressed the integration of immigrants and Norwegian-born individuals with immigrant parents, examining the various dimensions through which this integration can be measured. The introduction provided an overview and discussion of several social science perspectives on immigrant integration. It is crucial to note that defining "successful integration" is a normative question lacking a definitive answer. In this report, they adopted a comprehensive approach to measuring integration, encompassing key perspectives from social science literature (Barstad & Molstad, 2020:4). As illustrated in the report, a common perspective posits that individuals or groups are integrated when they attain the same socioeconomic benefits as other members of society, often linked to factors such as employment, housing, and income. This was referred to as structural integration. Further, another common viewpoint links integration to social participation and attachment, referred to as social integration. The psychological-cultural dimension explores the experience of national belonging and the alignment of values with the majority, while the political dimension focuses on political participation and trust in societal institutions. Following the third and fourth dimensions, the last one deals with barriers and resources for integration, includes indicators such as Norwegian language skills, health, and experiences of discrimination (Barstad & Molstad, 2020:4).

The report aimed to link these dimensions, by analysing the 2016 Survey on Living Conditions among individuals with an immigrant background. The evidence was mixed, for instance, certain indicators revealed greater levels of integration among employed immigrants, encompassing proficiency in the Norwegian language, health, and social integration. In contrast, the connection between structural and political integration was either weak or non-existent, mirroring a similar pattern in cultural integration and the sense of belonging to Norway. Noteworthy exceptions include homeowners expressing a heightened sense of belonging compared to renters, while low income among Norwegian-born

individuals with immigrant parents was linked to a diminished sense of national belonging (Barstad & Molstad, 2020:78-79). In the course of these analyses, a consistent theme emerged, emphasizing the pivotal role of proficiency in the Norwegian language. Competency in language was found to be linked with an enhanced sense of national belonging, higher employment rates, broader social networks, and a reduction in loneliness. Discrimination emerged as another prevalent aspect, with three out of ten immigrants and over four out of ten Norwegian-born individuals with immigrant parents reporting such experiences. Instances of discrimination were found to be correlated with heightened feelings of loneliness, an increase in mental health issues, and a diminished sense of belonging to Norway. Notably, a surprisingly robust connection was identified between experiences of discrimination and exposure to violence and threats (Barstad & Molstad, 2020:92-93).

Following the ratification of the Introduction Act in 2004, integration policy has largely relied on municipalities' introduction programs for newly arrived refugees (Enes, 2017). Numerous benchmark analyses have highlighted the considerable variability in integration outcomes across municipalities, even when essential characteristics of both the municipality and participants in the introduction program are taken into account (Seierstad & Lillegård, 2013). A majority of municipalities fall short of meeting the specified requirement of 55 percent of participants in employment or education immediately after program completion. In certain municipalities, dropout rates are high, resulting in a 'success rate' that is less than half of the most successful ones. This is a valuable point to consider when examining integration outcomes later in the thesis

The system:

The primary objective of Norwegian integration policy is to ensure that all individuals living in Norway secure employment, become taxpayers, and actively engage in society (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2016 b). This is explained by the importance of work for both the individual and the nation. In Norway, immigrants are seen as essential participants in maintaining the country's societal model as an economically sustainable welfare state. From an individual perspective, employment provides opportunities for livelihood and self-determination. Furthermore, work facilitates access to a social environment, skill development, and learning of language and cultural knowledge (Brochmann, 2017). The

government's premise is that people will contribute. Integration policy aims to facilitate this by fostering workforce participation and the development of proficient Norwegian language skills. There is a strong expectation that immigrants themselves bear the responsibility for shaping their own lives. Simultaneously, Norwegian integration policy is committed to the idea that integration requires effort from all parties: the state, municipality, county, business sector, and voluntary organizations (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2016 a).

Norway's migration strategy should prioritize predictability and responsibility, emphasizing stability and continuity. The pursuit of broad consensus is essential (Hurdalsplattformen, 2021:72). The right to seek asylum and protection from persecution is a fundamental human right. Norway must demonstrate solidarity and bear its share of responsibility for individuals fleeing persecution. International cooperation and assistance to countries in conflict are crucial. The global effort to assist as many people as possible near their homes must be strengthened. As stated at the government's website: "The government aims to establish a solidarity fund within the development budget, aiming to enhance conditions for displaced individuals and assist impoverished countries that host large numbers of refugees in providing better care. Norway is committed to international responsibility, addressing the underlying causes of forced migration. This includes increasing efforts to assist vulnerable states, strengthening humanitarian aid, and supporting countries that receive the most refugees to help more quota refugees." (Hurdalsplattformen, 2021:72-73).

Norway has a comprehensive integration system designed to support refugees and immigrants in their transition to living and working in the country. Upon arriving in Norway and applying for asylum, individuals are registered as asylum seekers by the UDI (Norwegian Directorate of Immigration). Some applications are redirected to other countries under the Dublin Convention or to secure non-EU nations. The primary goal of this integration system is to facilitate the incorporation of refugees and immigrants into Norwegian society and the labour market. This is achieved through various programs and initiatives, including language training, job-oriented measures, and cultural orientation programs. Additionally, the government provides access to essential social services, such as healthcare and housing, to help refugees and immigrants establish themselves in their new communities.

A comprehensive integration policy involves participation from various sectors and stakeholders. The Ministry of Justice and Public Security bears the overarching responsibility for integration policy, encompassing tasks such as refugee resettlement, administration of the Citizenship Act, and oversight of the Introduction Act. The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) serves as the ministry's specialized agency, focusing on core tasks related to integration policy (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2016 a). IMDi is tasked with contributing to municipalities' integration planning and coordinating at the national level with municipalities. This includes overseeing the resettlement of refugees in municipalities and facilitating a seamless transition from the introduction program to employment or education (Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet, 2005). Municipalities play a central role in the day-to-day implementation of integration work. It is where people live, work, attend school, and engage in community life. Municipalities shoulder the responsibility for the practical execution of integration policy, including the administration of introduction programs for newly arrived immigrants (Kommunal- og regionaldepartementet, 2005).

Legal residents in Norway can choose their municipality of residence, except those relying on financial aid. State-subsidized resettlement is exclusive to refugees in agreements between the state and municipalities, granting them rights and obligations under the introduction program. Over 90% of refugees seeking assistance historically settle in municipalities of their choice (Justis- og beredskapsdepartementet, 2016 a). The state, along with the Association of Municipalities in Norway (KS), determines resettlement needs. IMDi annually requests municipalities to resettle a specific number, considering criteria like population size, housing and job markets, geography, previous resettlement, and municipal finances. A municipality cannot choose the type of refugees they resettle. Refugees gain rights under the Introduction Act, and municipalities must provide the introduction program, Norwegian training, societal knowledge, and housing. Refugees receive a single resettlement offer from IMDi, which is unappealable (Brochmann, 2017). Municipalities receive state subsidies to cover average additional costs during the resettlement and integration process, extending over the resettlement year and the subsequent four years (Djuve & Kavli, 2015).

Norway's most significant integration initiative for newly arrived refugees is the Introduction Program (Enes, 2017). Enacted through the Introduction Act on September 1, 2004, this

program and allowance for newly arrived immigrants became a mandatory provision for municipalities. Previously marked by considerable local variability in content, scope, and quality, the Introduction Act's implementation resulted in a more standardized national approach to integration policy (Tronstad, 2015). All municipalities resettling refugees were required to provide a two-year full-day introduction program, aimed at “Strengthening the opportunities for newly arrived immigrants to participate in professional and societal life and achieve economic independence” (Introduction Act §1). Since 2010, the program's objective has been to have at least 55 percent in employment or education immediately after completion (Enes, 2014). As the number of refugees arriving in Norway are rising, an increasing number of municipalities are resettling refugees, thus offering introduction programs. In 2016, 386 municipalities provided introduction programs (SSB, 2017a).

The implementation of the Introduction Program is the responsibility of each municipality, as outlined in §3 of the Introduction Act. Municipalities are tasked with tailoring the program to align with the law's objectives and guidelines for newly arrived immigrants, covering competency assessment, program follow-up, and the coordination of various elements within the introduction program. However, the law does not specify the organizational structure within the municipality, leaving the determination of which authority is responsible for different aspects of the program to the discretion of each municipality. As a result, the organization of the introduction program can vary, with some municipalities placing it under NAV, the refugee office, or adult education departments (Enes, 2014). Participants in the program receive an introduction allowance as financial support for their livelihood. They are entitled to an allowance equivalent to twice the basic amount in the National Insurance Scheme.

When examining Norway's integration system and comparing the approaches taken during the two refugee crises, it's essential to consider recent critiques that have emerged. One common critique is the perceived slowness and bureaucracy in the asylum application process, leading to unnecessary delays for asylum seekers. This extended waiting period can significantly impact the mental well-being of those undergoing the process. For instance, in 2020, the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) reported an average processing time of 230 days for asylum applications, far exceeding the government's target of six months. Another

critique of Norway's asylum politics revolves around the high rate of rejected applications. In 2019, Norway rejected 65% of all asylum applications, a figure higher than many other European countries. Critics argue that this elevated rejection rate stems from Norway's strict interpretation of the UN Refugee Convention, making it challenging for numerous asylum seekers to qualify for protection. Additionally, concerns have been raised about the living conditions provided for asylum seekers in Norway. Recent reports have highlighted overcrowded and unsanitary housing conditions, with some asylum seekers placed in former prisons or military barracks. Many argue that such facilities are unsuitable for long-term housing, prompting further criticism of Norway's approach to housing refugees.

In addition to these critiques, concerns have also been raised about Norway's treatment of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in the country. In 2019, the Norwegian government was criticised for deporting a 16-year-old Afghan boy who had lived in Norway for several years and had reportedly been subjected to abuse and neglect in Afghanistan. These incidents underscore the challenges and controversies surrounding Norway's asylum policies. Despite commendation for its humanitarian efforts and commitment to refugee resettlement, Norway's approach to asylum seekers and refugees continues to be a topic of intense debate. This discourse primarily focuses on the speed and effectiveness of the asylum process and the living conditions provided for asylum seekers.

The situation:

In 2015, Europe experienced a striking wave of migration, with a staggering one million refugees and asylum seekers, tragically marked by numerous deaths during dangerous Mediterranean crossings. Norway, during this period, became the destination for over 30,000 individuals seeking refuge. This surge in arrivals sparked a profound discourse within society, focusing on Norway's ability to both embrace and effectively integrate such large numbers of displaced people. At the peak of this influx, Norway experienced more than 8,000 asylum seekers arriving monthly throughout 2015. To contextualise this surge, it is noteworthy that the previous annual peak, dating back to 2002, stood at 17,480 arrivals for the entire year. Remarkably, the preceding year saw a total of 31,145 asylum seekers entering Norway, nearly doubling the earlier record and tripling the figures from years prior to 2015. It is imperative to note that all asylum seeker statistics mentioned here are sourced from the Norwegian

Directorate of Immigration (UDI) in 2016. From September to November, a period during which 70 percent of asylum seekers arrived, the refugee reception system faced significant challenges. Moreover, the emergence of a new refugee route through Storskog in Sør-Varanger led to the arrival of more than 5,000 asylum seekers, intensifying the political concern about the influx of asylum seekers in the autumn of 2015. This situation invoked widespread concerns regarding its trajectory. According to Frode Forfang, Director General of the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), Norway needed to prepare for the possibility of up to 100,000 asylum seekers in 2016 (Larsen, 2015). If the current levels persisted, readiness for up to 120,000 asylum seekers was considered necessary. The sudden surge in asylum seekers during the autumn of 2015 triggered significant unrest and uncertainty, leading to a series of political agreements in Norway. Within a European context, actions taken by one country to restrict immigration often triggered similar responses in other nations. These measures were predominantly justified by the urgent need for rapid and pragmatic integration.

The Norwegian discourse on asylum and migration has long been marked by political contradictions and polarisation. Various political parties have embraced distinct perspectives on refugee and immigration policies, with some advocating for a more stringent stance, while others champion a more welcoming and inclusive approach. Between 2015 and 2018, right-wing parties like the Progress Party (FrP) and the Conservative Party (H) generally endorsed stricter refugee and immigration policies (Halle, 2019: 20-23). They placed significant emphasis on border control and the imperative to reduce the influx of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly in light of the Middle East's refugee crisis that was unfolding in Europe during that period. In contrast, left-wing parties such as the Labour Party (Ap) and the Socialist Left Party (SV) tended to adopt a more inclusive outlook on refugee and immigration policies. They emphasised providing protection and assistance to refugees and asylum seekers while focusing on facilitating their integration into Norwegian society. Between 2015 and 2018, Norway's political landscape concerning refugee and immigration policies was characterised by a mix of restrictive and inclusive strategies, reflecting the broader debates and complexities surrounding these issues in both Europe and the global context (Halle, 2019 ; Brekke & Aarset, 2009). Further elaboration on this theme will be provided in greater depth throughout the text.

Between 2015 and 2023, Norway's integration and asylum policies for refugees underwent significant changes. The nation grappled with numerous challenges concerning the integration of refugees and asylum seekers into society, leading to a dynamic evolution of policies in response to these complexities. In 2015, Norway faced a substantial influx of refugees and asylum seekers, primarily originating from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan, as part of the broader European migrant crisis. In response to this surge, the Norwegian government initiated a stricter asylum policy to reduce the number of asylum seekers entering the country (SBB, 2017 a). Among the foremost measures implemented was the reinforcement of border controls. Across Europe, measures like these involved increasing the number of border guards and integrating advanced technologies to improve their ability to detect and prevent illegal immigration. These technological advancements included the utilization of biometric data, such as fingerprints and facial recognition, to verify the identity of asylum seekers and prevent duplicate applications (Hermansen, 2020). Another crucial aspect of Norway's revised asylum policy included conducting extensive security and background checks to confirm the identity of asylum seekers and assess the legitimacy of their asylum requests. Additionally, the government established a new quota system for asylum seekers, which imposed limitations on the number of individuals eligible for asylum within the country (Brekke & Aarset, 2009).

2.2 A brief historical background of “the refugee crisis”

2.2.1 The 2015 European Refugee Crisis

The 2015 European refugee crisis was a pivotal event, marked by a large influx of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants seeking refuge and security in Europe. This surge was closely linked to the aftermath of the Arab Spring, a series of popular uprisings against authorities that swept through numerous countries in the Middle East and North Africa, commencing in 2011 (Prop. 90 L b, 2015–2016). The collective aspirations of the protesters encompassed the resignation of existing regimes, the pursuit of democratic governance, and the quest for improved living conditions.

Although these uprisings were interconnected, their paths diverged significantly. Originating in Tunisia, the protests swiftly spread to neighbouring nations such as Egypt, Libya, Syria,

Yemen, and Bahrain. However, by mid-2012, many of these movements faced brutal suppression or evolved into prolonged civil conflicts. In Syria, for instance, peaceful demonstrations met swift suppression, ultimately giving way to a devastating civil war that continues to this day and has claimed the lives of over 400,000 individuals. The emergence of the Islamic State (IS), an extremist Islamist militia, further contributed to the refugee crisis from 2015 onward. IS sought to establish an Islamic state through military means and exerted control over areas in Iraq and Syria. The group attracted foreign fighters from various nations, perpetrating genocide and severe human rights violations, resulting in dire living conditions for local populations (UNA,2023 a).

As the conflict escalated, desperate families embarked on dangerous journeys across the Mediterranean, hoping to seek refuge in Europe. The vessels they used were often unsafe, and the quality of life jackets varied considerably. Consequently, between 2015 and 2016, Europe witnessed a sharp rise in asylum seekers. Termed the 'refugee crisis of 2015', this event marked the most substantial humanitarian challenge faced by Europe since the end of World War II. In 2015 alone, a staggering one million refugees and migrants arrived in Europe via sea routes, with many undertaking the perilous Aegean Sea crossing from Turkey to Greece. The vast majority of these individuals were fleeing conflict, persecution, and various forms of violence in their countries of origin (Spindler, 2015).

The massive influx of refugees and migrants into Europe strained the resources and capabilities of both the European Union (EU) and its member states. They grappled with the challenging task of responding to the immediate needs of refugees while effectively managing the inflow. Many refugees and migrants encountered difficulties in accessing basic necessities such as shelter, food, and healthcare, and tragically, numerous instances of exploitation and abuse were reported. This crisis laid bare Europe's inability to formulate a comprehensive plan, highlighting the complexities of EU and international cooperation. Instead of a unified EU response characterised by solidarity, the prevailing trend leaned towards nationalistic political solutions, including closed borders and stricter refugee policies. During the peak of 2015, Norway experienced a monthly arrival rate exceeding 8,000 asylum seekers (SSB, 2017 a). This substantial influx placed immense strain on the reception system, triggering apprehension and uncertainty. Consequently, this period set the stage for a series of political

agreements within Norway, which reverberated on the broader European stage. The adoption of restrictive measures in one country frequently prompted similar actions in others, with the primary rationale being the imperative for swift and pragmatic integration.

In response to the crisis, the EU and its member states adopted a series of measures to address the needs of refugees and manage the flow of arrivals. This involved establishing a relocation program to distribute refugees across the EU and implementing measures to manage migration flows and secure the EU's external borders. Despite these efforts, the refugee crisis of 2015 has had a profound and lasting impact on Europe and its political landscape. The crisis has fuelled anti-immigrant sentiment and led to the rise of nationalist and far-right political movements across the continent (Regjeringen, 2023). In many cases, refugees and migrants have been subjected to discriminatory policies and practices, as well as facing significant barriers to accessing essential services and rights. In summary, the 2015 European refugee crisis posed significant humanitarian and political challenges for the EU and its member states. Despite efforts to address refugee needs and manage arrivals, the crisis had a lasting impact on the continent and its political landscape, fuelling anti-immigrant sentiment and leading to the rise of nationalist and far-right political movements (Bratberg & Raake, 2021). The EU and its member states need to continue supporting refugees and addressing the root causes of forced migration to ensure a sustainable and humane response to the ongoing refugee crisis.

From a political science perspective, it is essential to note that the European refugee crisis of 2015 also highlighted the challenges and limitations of the EU's Common European Asylum System (CEAS). The CEAS is designed to ensure that asylum seekers are treated fairly and equitably across all EU member states, but the crisis exposed significant flaws in the system. In illustration, the Dublin Regulation, which governs the allocation of responsibility for asylum claims among EU member states, was scrutinised during the crisis. The regulation specifies that the member state where an asylum seeker initially arrives is accountable for processing their claim (European Commission 2023b). However, this placed a disproportionate burden on countries like Greece and Italy, which were the primary entry points for refugees and needed more resources to manage the influx. Furthermore, the crisis highlighted the lack of solidarity among EU member states when addressing migration and

asylum. While some countries like Germany and Sweden were more welcoming to refugees, others such as Hungary and Poland refused to accept their fair share of asylum seekers and implemented harsh anti-immigrant policies.

The crisis also had significant political implications for the EU. The rise of far-right and anti-immigrant political movements across Europe was, in part, a response to the refugee crisis and has contributed to a growing sense of polarisation and fragmentation within the EU (Karolewski & Benedikter, 2018:101). Overall, the 2015 European refugee crisis demonstrated the need for a more cohesive and coordinated approach to migration and asylum within the EU. This will require addressing the root causes of forced migration, reforming the CEAS to ensure greater burden-sharing among member states, and fostering greater solidarity and cooperation among EU member states.

The refugee crisis of 2015 exposed a fundamental tension between the principles of national sovereignty and human rights. The principle of national sovereignty dictates that states have the right to control their borders and determine who can enter their territory (UNA, 2023 b). However, the principle of human rights dictates that states are obligated to protect all individuals' rights and dignity, regardless of their nationality or immigration status. The crisis highlighted the difficulty of reconciling these two principles in practice and raised important questions about the role of states in protecting refugees and upholding human rights. Additionally, the crisis also exposed the limitations of the European Union as a supranational institution. While the EU has made significant progress in promoting economic integration and political cooperation among its member states, the crisis revealed deep divisions among EU member states regarding migration and refugee policy issues. Some member states, particularly those in Eastern Europe, have been resistant to accepting refugees and have argued that the burden of hosting refugees should be shared more equitably across the EU. This has led to tensions between member states and raised questions about the future of the EU as a political project. Furthermore, the refugee crisis has also had significant implications for the rise of far-right and populist movements in Europe. Many of these movements have used anti-immigrant rhetoric to gain political support and have argued that refugees threaten national security and cultural identity (Campo, Giunti & Mendola, 2021). The crisis has thus become a powerful symbol of the political establishment's perceived failure to address

ordinary citizens' concerns and has contributed to the erosion of trust in democratic institutions. Finally, the crisis has highlighted the importance of addressing the root cause of forced migration. While providing immediate assistance to refugees is critical, it is equally important to address the political, economic, and social factors that drive people to flee their homes in the first place. This requires a long-term commitment to promoting stability, development, and human rights in regions most prone to conflict and instability.

2.2.2 The 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Crisis

On February 24 last year, Russia initiated a large-scale invasion of Ukraine. The attack was a clear violation of the UN Charter and, therefore, illegal. In addition, the warfare has resulted in serious war crimes. But what is the conflict really about, and how did it begin?

The conflict in Ukraine revolves around issues of territory, power, and security, with pivotal considerations encompassing matters of history, identity, and adherence to international law. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 has its origins in the long-going political and military conflict between the two countries, with roots tracing back to 2013 (Holm-Hansen and Paulsen, 2023). The initial discord emerged from an internal dispute over Ukraine's alignment with the European Union (EU), with the Russian perspective emphasizing collaboration among former Soviet Union countries as a counterbalance to Western international influence. Despite the EU presenting Ukraine with an association deal, the former Ukrainian president, Viktor Yanukovytsj, opted for an economic agreement with Russia under the Eurasian instead (Holm-Hansen and Paulsen, 2023). This decision led to strong protests in Kyiv, marked by violent clashes resulting in casualties (Holm-Hansen and Paulsen 2023; Ray 2023). An accord between Yanukovych and opposition leaders stipulated that he would remain in office until a new presidential election, but he fled the country in February 2014 (Council on Foreign Relations 2023). Subsequently, in March 2014, Russian forces took control of Crimea, as President Putin cited the need to protect the rights of Russian citizens in Crimea and southeast Ukraine (Council on Foreign Relations, 2023). The annexation of Crimea was followed by an unrecognized referendum on March 18, 2014 (Holm-Hansen and Paulsen, 2023). The conflict escalated in April 2014 when Russian forces and local proxy groups seized territories in Ukraine's Donbas region. By the close of July 2014, the EU and the U.S. responded with heightened sanctions against Russia. Over the ensuing seven years,

the Eastern region of Ukraine witnessed a protracted conflict resulting in the loss of more than 14,000 lives (Ray, 2023).

Relations between Moscow and the West have not been as tense as they are now since the Cold War. The main threat back then was the risk of nuclear war, and that threat still exists. From October to November 2021, Russia initiated a substantial deployment of troops and military assets along its border with Ukraine (Ray, 2023). The escalation led to several NATO countries mobilising parts of their military forces and increasing their presence in Eastern Europe, despite Ukraine not being a NATO member. The situation took a drastic turn on February 24, 2022, when Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine, resulting in widespread displacement as civilian populations became indiscriminate targets of rockets and artillery strikes (Ray, 2023). Fleeing the conflict, millions sought refuge, with a significant number heading to Poland, Hungary, Moldova, or Slovakia. As queues lengthened at the Polish borders, authorities there pledged to facilitate entry as much as possible. Simultaneously, individuals, particularly those with relatives elsewhere in Europe, endeavored to reach the European Union (Connolly & Rankin, 2022).

The global response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine was marked by widespread condemnation. The Prime Minister of Poland, the main host of Ukrainian refugees, urgently called for a swift reaction to Russia's aggression, urging the European Council to “approve the fiercest possible sanctions” (Al-Jazeera 2022, b). In interviews with citizens from Lithuania, Slovakia, Latvia, Estonia, Romania, and Poland, The Guardian captured a shared concern that their respective countries could be the next targets of Russia's invasion. Emphasizing the security implications, NATO's Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, highlighted that the attack “puts countless civilian lives at risk,” labeling it a “grave breach of international law and a serious threat to Euro-Atlantic security” (Al-Jazeera 2022, b). Despite global condemnation, Russian President Vladimir Putin dismissed the criticism and issued threats, cautioning of unprecedented consequences for any nation attempting to intervene.

In response to the crisis, Norway has played a role in providing humanitarian assistance and support to those affected. Norway has been a significant donor to humanitarian efforts in

Ukraine, with the Norwegian government providing more than \$13 million in humanitarian aid in 2022. This aid has been channeled through organisations such as the UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to provide shelter, food, and medical care to those affected by the crisis. Norway has also taken steps to help refugees and asylum seekers who have fled to Norway from Ukraine. In March 2022, the Norwegian government announced that it would allow 1,000 Ukrainian refugees to resettle in Norway over the next three years, focusing on vulnerable groups such as children, women, and people with disabilities. The Norwegian government has also stated that it will consider individual cases for asylum on a case-by-case basis by international law.

The European civil society demonstrated a compelling show of unity, expressing solidarity with Ukraine. From Berlin to Washington, in cities worldwide, hundreds of protesters mobilized, demanding an end to the war. In the media, BBC hosted Ukraine's former deputy general prosecutor, David Sakvarelidze, who emotionally remarked, "It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blonde hair and blue eyes being killed every day with Putin's missiles and his helicopters and his rockets". On France's most-watched cable news channel, journalist Philippe Corbe commented, "We're not talking here about Syrians fleeing the bombing of the Syrian regime backed by Putin, we're talking about Europeans leaving in cars that look like ours to save their lives" (Al-Jazeera, 2022 a). These statements faced significant criticism on social media and illustrate some part of the different attendance refugees have experienced in European policy.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction and Organization of the Chapter

In this chapter, the methodological approach used in the study is elucidated, offering a justification of the chosen methods utilised in data collection and analysis. The methods are drawn from fieldwork observations and document analysis. After detailing these sampling techniques, the chapter explores the challenges encountered and ethical dilemmas faced during the research process. Additionally, it discusses the method's reliability and credibility. The following sections provide insights into the decision to adopt a qualitative research approach, beginning with an overview of the study's research design, initial motivations, and an exploration of what qualitative research design and case studies are. The chapter then navigates through various methods such as interviews and document analysis, providing a concise overview of the data analysis process. Finally, the chapter concludes by addressing ethical considerations and highlighting the research's trustworthiness.

3.2 Research Design

3.2.1 Topic and Initial Motivations

Jacobsen (2022) asserts that research studies frequently emerge from experiences or observations that intrigue the researcher, sparking curiosity about a specific topic. My interest in refugees and asylum policy was sparked during my undergraduate studies. I had the opportunity to connect with Omar Alshakal, the leader of Refugees4Refugees, whose work inspired me to actively engage in refugee assistance on Lesbos. In the summer of 2018, I traveled to Lesbos where I gained extensive experience working closely with refugees, both in reception centres and within the Moria camp. Engaging in various activities and courses, I established valuable networks with several organisations and individuals dedicated to this cause. Witnessing the significance of their efforts and realising the importance of refugees understanding their rights, I resolved to focus my master's studies on this subject. My determination was further fuelled by concurrent events, notably the Ukrainian war, which occurred during my studies. Comparing Norway's distinct responses to these two refugee crises underscored the urgency of my chosen field of research. I found myself questioning the varying treatment of those fleeing war and reflecting on its implications for integration. This

last consideration was particularly interesting, given that it is often used as the main argument for refugee policy.

After working closely with refugees from the Middle East during some of the most intense periods on Lesbos, I witnessed how countless mothers, fathers, and children were forced to abandon everything they knew and held dear, embarking on a dangerous and uncertain journey. Returning to Norway, I found it difficult to grapple with the contrasting viewpoints I encountered. Consequently, I became actively involved in movements that advocated for the rights of these refugees. Issues like increasing the number of refugees to Norway, evacuating children from the Moria camp, and fostering a welcoming atmosphere for those arriving in our country became important for me post-2018. The lack of political resolve across Europe was disheartening. I discovered organisations in Norway tirelessly trying to convince politicians to reevaluate their approach, urging for a more efficient and socially inclusive response to those entering the country. The unfolding war in Ukraine highlighted this contrast even more sharply. The political will and effectiveness were profoundly different. This stark contrast motivated me to delve deeper into understanding the underlying reasons and potential consequences of these differences.

3.2.2 Qualitative research design

In this study, the utilisation of qualitative research methods served as a fundamental approach to gathering nuanced and rich data for the thesis. Utilising a qualitative research approach offers in-depth insights into a specific case and the contextual intricacies of the participants. Qualitative research methodology, recognized for its inherent flexibility, enabled a dynamic and interactive engagement with the research participants. This approach provided a unique opportunity to gain profound insights into specific cases, unravelling the subtle contextual intricacies that might be overlooked in quantitative studies. The intention of qualitative research design is usually to cultivate an understanding of how individuals interpret and comprehend a given situation (Jacobsen, 2022). In the context of this thesis, the goal is to investigate the perceptions of individuals engaged in refugee-related work, exploring their perspectives on the system and potential disparities in the assistance provided to refugees. This design made it possible to discover new topics within this field of interest as I did my

research. The utilisation of semi-structured interviews offered me the chance to delve deeper into emerging themes by posing follow-up questions during the interviews.

One of the notable advantages of employing qualitative research was the flexibility it offered. This approach facilitated a dynamic interplay between the researcher and the participants, allowing for adjustments in research questions and methods throughout the study. The open-ended nature of qualitative research provided the opportunity to delve deeper into unexpected areas, ensuring a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. As a researcher navigating relatively uncharted waters due to limited prior knowledge about the topic, the qualitative design not only served as a means to acquire knowledge but also as a catalyst for formulating new inquiries. This iterative process of data collection and analysis not only expanded the depth of the research but also paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in refugee-related work. Through the adoption of qualitative methods, particularly semi-structured interviews, the study transcended the surface-level observations, allowing for a profound exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of those actively engaged in refugee assistance. This approach provided the necessary depth to uncover new insights, contributing significantly to the body of knowledge in this vital field.

3.2.4 The Case Study

My research delves into diverse political perspectives and statements, examining the roles of organisations and journalists in the field. Qualitative research designs are intricately tied to case studies, particularly favoured for in-depth investigations. The execution of qualitative research demands substantial resources, both in terms of data collection and analysis. Consequently, focusing on a limited number of cases is often preferred (Jacobsen, 2022). In a case study, the researcher conducts a thorough examination of a specific entity, such as an organisation, making it a suitable choice for providing nuanced and comprehensive descriptions of reality. These detailed portrayals facilitate the development of new insights (Jacobsen, 2022). For my thesis, a detailed analysis was imperative to comprehend the intricate relationship between political will/attitude, media coverage, and refugees. Practical considerations such as budget constraints, field access, and time constraints led me to choose a case study as my preferred research method. By focusing on a limited number of cases, I aimed to delve deeply into the complexity of the political attitudes and media narratives

surrounding refugee-related issues. It's worth noting that the narrow focus inherent in case studies may limit the generalizability of the collected data, a common critique of this research approach (Jacobsen, 2022). Addressing these concerns, I will elaborate further on the transferability of my research findings in section 3.6, providing a nuanced perspective on the broader implications of the case study approach in the context of my study.

3.3 Description of the field

In this section, I provide an overview of the fieldwork and data collection methods employed in this thesis. The data material used in this thesis was partially collected during eight weeks of fieldwork in Oslo, from the end of March to mid-May 2023. This period of on-the-ground engagement not only facilitated primary data collection but also provided a unique opportunity to immerse myself in the local context, gaining firsthand insights into the dynamics of refugee-related work in the area. Following the fieldwork phase, additional data was acquired through a combination of phone calls and email correspondence, allowing for continued communication with key stakeholders and participants. The fieldwork not only facilitated primary data collection but also fostered valuable connections, detailed further in section 3.3.2. A central component of this study involved conducting a total of 13 interviews, encompassing both formal and informal participants. The distinction between these categories will be elucidated in the subsequent section. These interviews were conducted with thorough care and attention, allowing participants to share their experiences, challenges, and viewpoints openly. To increase the contextual broadness of the study, I actively engaged with relevant social media accounts and attended various events in Oslo related to the subject matter. This proactive involvement provided valuable supplementary data, offering a holistic understanding of the public discourse and community initiatives surrounding refugee issues.

3.3.1 Sample

I employed a purposive sampling method to identify participants possessing specific expertise relevant to my research domain. According to Cohen et al. (2018), a sample refers to a smaller subset of the population (p. 202). Purposive sampling, a prevalent technique in qualitative research, involves deliberately selecting participants based on their specialised knowledge in a particular field. In my study, I aimed to engage individuals well-versed in the realm of refugee

education. To achieve this, I combined purposive sampling with a snowballing approach, a method where one participant leads the researcher to another, and so forth (Cohen et al., 2018; Flick, 2018). This approach allowed me to tap into a pool of knowledgeable participants, each contributing a unique perspective to the study. However, it's crucial to acknowledge a potential limitation associated with this approach: the likelihood of biases emerging due to participants being connected through personal or professional networks. Despite this limitation, the snowballing method proved invaluable in my research. For instance, engaging in conversations with a prominent political figure facilitated access to another influential individual within the parliamentary sphere. This interconnected network not only broadened the scope of participants but also paved the way for diverse viewpoints and insights, enriching the qualitative data. The deliberate selection of participants based on their specialised knowledge served as a foundation for the in-depth interviews, ensuring a nuanced understanding of the challenges and innovations within the realm of refugees.

Table 1. Interview participants

Pseudonym	Gender	Occupation
Politician A	Male	The Socialist Left Party
Politician B	Male	The Progress Party
Politician C	Male	The Progress Party
Politician D	Male	The Conservative Party
Politician E	Female	The Labor Party
Author A	Female	
Author B	Male	
Journalist A	Female	
Journalist B	Female	
Journalist C	Male	
Organisation A	Female	
Organisation B	Male	
Organisation C	Female	

3.3.2 Limitations

The initial phase of my data collection commenced before the interviews, involving reaching out to contacts within my network to connect with relevant participants. Despite numerous emails and phone calls, accessing participants proved more challenging than expected. Some individuals responded initially but failed to follow up, even after reminders. Others were reluctant due to the contentious nature of the topic in Norway, where diverse opinions and debates are prevalent. Additionally, some individuals expressed interest but requested interviews at a later date. To address this matter, I postponed my master's submission, allowing crucial interviews to take place just before the summer deadline. Realising their significance, I integrated these interviews into my research, leading to a submission date in November. To overcome delays and rejections, I employed the snowballing technique, exploring existing connections to access other participants. These were of great value to me. I engaged with politicians, organisations, writers, and journalists, each offering unique perspectives on the subject matter.

In the process of utilising the snowballing technique, I established connections with influential figures offering invaluable insights. Among them were key policymakers with intricate knowledge of Norway's asylum policies, grassroots organisations dedicated to refugee support, respected writers illuminating human narratives behind statistical data, and journalists offering nuanced perspectives through detailed reporting. Engaging with this diverse range of voices allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding refugee integration policies in Norway. These interactions not only enriched the depth of my research findings but also emphasised the importance of diverse viewpoints in shaping a comprehensive narrative of the challenges and successes within the Norwegian asylum landscape. Furthermore, these discussions illuminated public sentiment, political discourse, and societal attitudes, providing a nuanced backdrop against which to analyze the policies and their practical implications. Nevertheless, it is imperative to acknowledge the limitations of this study, as mentioned above. One notable limitation lies in the scope of the interviews. While efforts were made to engage with a diverse range of participants, the perspectives presented might not fully encapsulate the experiences of all stakeholders involved in Norway's asylum policies. Additionally, this research focused primarily on the period up until 2023, while the landscape of refugee integration continues to evolve.

3.4 Methods and data collection

"The fundamental purpose of research is to attain reliable and valid insights into reality. To achieve this objective, researchers must employ specific strategies, known as methods" (Jacobsen, 2022). According to Cohen et al. (2018), methods are about "how data are collected and analysed" (p. 186). These methods are crucial for gathering empirical data in a manner that ensures reliability and validity. In this study, the primary methods utilised include structured and semi-structured interviews, along with informal conversations. Additionally, document analysis was utilised to deepen our understanding of the research topic. In the upcoming sections, I will explain the methods used in this research, discussing their respective strengths and weaknesses.

3.4.1 Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews serve as a key method for obtaining detailed and profound information (Flick, 2018). Human interaction plays a central role in knowledge production, and interviews provide a valuable means to achieve this. Through interviews, researchers gain an opportunity to delve deeply into the interviewee's perspective on the topic of interest. This is achieved by asking follow-up questions, clarifying misunderstandings, and thereby eliciting richer information (Cohen et al., 2018). In my research, data collected through interviews proved to be a significant complement to document analysis. The interviews offered valuable insights into the thoughts and perspectives of various individuals working with refugees in Norway. To capture comprehensive insights, I opted for semi-structured interviews during synchronous data collection.

Cohen et al. (2018) define semi-structured interviews as interviews where "the topics and questions are given, but the questions are open-ended and the wording and sequence may be tailored to each individual interviewee and the responses given, with prompts and probes" (p. 511). This type of interview has a set of prepared open-ended questions which are meant as a guide during the interview, but at the same time give flexibility to the interviewee to answer according to their own interest. Semi-structured interviews also, to a greater extent than other forms of interviews, focus on a specific topic (Flick, 2018). While conducting interviews, I employed a general interview-guide approach, where a set of main questions guided the

discussion but allowed flexibility for changes as the interview progressed. This method enabled me to gather relevant data tailored to the participants' expertise and explore intriguing themes that emerged organically during the interviews. However, during the first interviews, I found my interview guide restricting as I followed it in detail. This became easier as I became more comfortable in my role as a researcher. I became more adept at asking questions based on the participants' responses, rather than rigidly following the guide.

During my fieldwork, I observed a notable emotional investment from writers, organisations, and grassroots activists when discussing refugees and asylum policies. The emotional investment stemmed from their direct involvement in the lives of refugees and asylum seekers. Many writers have delved into personal narratives, sharing the harrowing stories of individuals displaced by conflict and persecution. Organisations and activists were actively engaged in providing support, shelter, and advocacy for refugees, creating a profound connection based on empathy and shared humanity. These emotional ties often translated into passionate discussions during interviews. Participants recounted moving experiences, reflecting on the resilience of refugees, their struggles, and aspirations for a better life. This emotional depth provided valuable context and emphasised the urgency of compassionate and effective solutions. Conversely, interviews with politicians typically revolved around policy frameworks, legal considerations, and pragmatic challenges. The discourse was more analytical and policy-oriented, reflecting the need for practical solutions within the political landscape. Navigating these diverse emotional tones required careful consideration. While empathetic engagement was essential when discussing personal experiences with writers and activists, discussions with politicians necessitated a balance between empathy and policy-focused inquiries. Recognizing and respecting these emotional dimensions allowed for nuanced and respectful conversations.

3.4.2 Document analysis

Document analysis involves the extraction and interpretation of relevant textual data. These documents can include a wide array of texts that the researcher considers valuable for the exploration of the research question. The data extracted from these documents may not always be explicit; rather, it often reveals underlying meanings that become apparent within a specific context. Consequently, it is crucial for researchers to understand the context in which

the documents were authored, and to be mindful of their own situational context during the analysis process. In the context of this study, document analysis enables the examination of regulations, laws, and statements relating to refugees and refugee policies in both the Ukrainian and Middle Eastern contexts. By examining these documents, the research gains insight into the nuanced dimensions of refugee policies and the socio-political landscapes in the regions under study.

To facilitate the analysis of my data, I chose to transcribe my oral interviews. Transcription provides the advantage of seamless navigation within the conversation, enhancing the analytical process (Cohen et al., 2018; Jacobsen, 2022). However, it's essential to note that transcribing interview recordings into accurate verbatim records is a time-consuming task, as emphasised by Cohen et al. (2018). Engaging in discussions with organisations dedicated to refugee issues over several years, I gained insights into laws and regulations relevant to this thesis. Norwegian People's Aid, for instance, highlighted the significant issue of legal uncertainty within our immigration administration. This insight prompted further investigation, becoming a topic of discussion during my interviews with politicians. Consequently, I contend that the knowledge derived from these interviews added depth and authenticity to my research, enriching it in ways that wouldn't have been possible without these conversations.

3.5 Ethics

Ethics are integrated and present at every turn in the research process, from the beginning to the end (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2017). Elements such as the choice of research topic, methods, and writing styles are all imbued with ethical dimensions (Cohen et al., 2018: 111). In the following sections, I will concentrate on examining these ethical considerations in detail. Cohen et al. (2018) argue that “ethics are situated, i.e. they have to be interpreted in specific, local situations” (p.111). Additionally, they explore the ethical dimension as the distinction between right and wrong, good and bad. It pertains to the researcher's conduct and delineates what they should or should not do in their research, emphasising the importance of safeguarding the rights of others (Cohen et al., 2018). In qualitative research, a delicate balance emerges between the pursuit of knowledge and crucial ethical considerations. During interview sessions, researchers aim for depth and insight, yet this aspiration carries the risk of

participants feeling violated or offended. This was important to bear in mind when conducting my interviews.

3.5.1 Informed consent

Informed consent is defined as “those procedures for individuals to choose whether or not to participate in the research, once they have been told what it is about and what it requires”(Cohen et al., 2018: 122). Informed consent involves providing participants with clear information about the research objectives, intentions, potential risks associated with participation, and the measures taken to protect their data. Before doing my interviews, I wrote a consent that I forwarded to my participants. This included the main purpose of the study and the privacy of the participants. To formalise their voluntary participation, each contributor was provided with the consent form in advance. This allowed them sufficient time to review its contents, ask questions, and familiarise themselves with the study's parameters. Subsequently, they willingly and knowingly signed the consent form, symbolising their informed agreement to contribute to the research. The commitment to informed consent did not end with the mere dissemination of information. At the onset of every interview, participants were reminded of the study's purpose and the conditions under which their insights were sought. This repeated briefing served as a respectful reminder, ensuring that participants remained fully aware of their involvement's scope and significance. Upholding the principles of informed consent was not merely a procedural requirement; it was a commitment to respect the participants' agency and privacy. By thoroughly sticking to these ethical standards, this study honoured the participants' autonomy, ensuring that their voices were heard within a framework of respect, transparency, and ethical integrity.

3.5.2 Role of the Researcher

Reflexivity highlights the imperative acknowledgment of the researcher's influence on the research process, demanding an awareness of potential biases that can significantly impact data quality. Operating as an outsider in the research field presents both advantages and limitations, with the researcher's presence influencing every stage of the research journey (Cohen et al., 2018; Patton, 2002). Prior to fieldwork, cultivating self-awareness through reflective practices is essential. This enables researchers to identify biases that could emerge

during their work in the field (Cohen et al., 2018). However, the question remains: can one truly set aside their personal values, assumptions, and cultural background, regardless of their self-awareness? Considering my background, as previously discussed, inevitably influences my research approach. As a young woman who has closely interacted with refugees from the Middle East, I have strong feelings towards what I saw, heard, and experienced. Therefore, it has been essential to critically reflect on these emotions while examining differences in regulations, laws, and approaches to this subject. For instance, during interviews, it was crucial to focus on participants' actual statements, avoiding preconceived assumptions or selective listening based on what I expected to hear or wanted to perceive.

3.6 Trustworthiness of the research

The dynamics of human interaction play a pivotal role in shaping participants' experiences during interviews, thereby influencing the knowledge generated and our comprehension of the situation (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Acknowledging the researcher's impact in this process, how can research ensure the quality and accurate reproduction of collected data (Cohen et al., 2018; Jacobsen, 2022)?

The qualitative research approach has faced criticism for its perceived flexibility in defining research subjects and participants, leading to concerns about the researcher's potential lack of objectivity (Jacobsen, 2022). However, this flexibility can be seen as a strength. It allows for a multitude of perspectives and interpretations, offering valuable insights into cultural traditions, norms, and diverse perceptions of the research issue. This diversity not only enriches the researcher's understanding but also provides a comprehensive view of the topic from the participants' varied viewpoints (Jacobsen, 2022). Having that said, the intention of this thesis is to provide insight into the research issue, which may change in time and space.

Through all parts of the research, it is imperative to reflect upon reliability, validity, and ethics to make the study trustworthy. One way to ensure this is to use a combination of different qualitative methods when collecting the data, to strengthen the quality of the research. Jacobsen (2022) highlights the importance of being critical of the data collected and that a combination of different methods enables the researcher to see convergence between the data,

or lack of it. This is central to the trustworthiness of the research. According to Cohen et al. (2018) “In essence it is suggested that ‘trustworthiness’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) replaces more conventional views of reliability and validity, and that this is devolved on issues of credibility, confirmability, transferability, and dependability” (p. 279). The use of a combination of qualitative methods, I believe, has strengthened the credibility of this research. Throughout every phase of the research process, it is crucial to contemplate credibility, validity, and ethics to establish the study's trustworthiness. One approach to ensure this is by employing a variety of qualitative methods during data collection, enhancing the research's overall quality. Jacobsen (2022) emphasises the need for critical evaluation of collected data, and employing diverse methods allows the researcher to identify convergence or divergence in the data, both of which are vital for the research's trustworthiness.

Nevertheless, it's essential to acknowledge certain challenges in the fieldwork. In interview contexts, Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) emphasise the vital role of the researcher's integrity, underscoring how the interview's quality directly affects the subsequent analysis. One should recognize that the information participants provide might not always fully convey their genuine perspectives due to various situational constraints or roles they inhabit. This becomes particularly crucial when delving into politically sensitive subjects, where participants might shape their responses based on perceived expectations, either mine or their organisations, potentially impacting the research's validity. To address this challenge, it's imperative that participants maintain independence from one another, each offering unique perspectives and interests to enrich the conversation (Jacobsen, 2022). Therefore, when attempting to gain political insights, difficulties may arise, such as navigating the complexities of researching attitudes on refugee policy. Political figures might need to align their statements with the current party's directions, making it challenging to obtain honest opinions. Utilising diverse methods, such as open-ended questions and ensuring anonymity, can provide a more nuanced viewpoint. Additionally, engaging in discussions with a diverse range of individuals can offer valuable insights into broader patterns. However, it's important to note that due to the controversial nature of the topic, some individuals might be hesitant to delve into specific details. Conducting interviews solely with individuals from political or refugee-related backgrounds could have introduced bias. To ensure research validity, my analysis primarily drew on secondary data from document analysis. Incorporating informal data, in my opinion, enhanced the validity of my research. Spontaneously shared insights

from informants often reflect their genuine perceptions of the topic more accurately (Jacobsen, 2022).

In this chapter, I outlined the methodology and methods used in this research, including interviews, informal conversations, and document analysis, along with the data analysis procedures. The next chapter will present the analytical framework employed for this thesis. It is important to emphasise that the analytical framework contributes significantly to enhancing the overall trustworthiness of the research.

Chapter 4 – Theoretical framework

In this chapter, the theoretical framework will be presented. It includes concepts, theories, and literature reviews, which will frequently be used in chapter 5, 6, and 7.

In the contemporary world, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reports an unprecedented number of forcibly displaced individuals, surpassing 70 million, with nearly 26 million refugees, 3.5 million asylum-seekers, and over 41 million internally displaced people (UNHCR, 2020a). Strict immigration and asylum policies in several European countries have stopped the influx of refugees, yet the global crisis persists; millions continue to seek refuge, although beyond Europe's immediate purview (Stone, 2018). Norway, too, has experienced fluctuating numbers of asylum seekers, marked by distinct peaks (IMDi, 2019). Given the growing population of individuals with a refugee background in Norway and the enduring global refugee crisis, the issue of refugees seeking asylum in countries like Norway remains a pressing concern, both in the present and the foreseeable future. Understanding public attitudes towards refugees becomes essential, as newcomers' integration and their ability to contribute positively depend significantly on how they are perceived by the host society (Kalogeraki, 2019). Psychology, as emphasised by Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, and Ryan (2005), play a crucial role in comprehending and combating prejudice within a nation's broader community. Consequently, investigating the

perceptions of the majority, Norwegians in this case, toward the refugees arriving in Norway, emerges as an essential attempt.

4.1 Securitization and Desecuritization

This thesis aims to apply securitization and desecuritization theories to analyse the portrayal of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees in Norwegian politics and media. The global trend of securitizing refugees is increasingly apparent (Rygiel, 2008). Thus, this chapter delves into the concept of securitization and its impact on the actual integration of refugees in Norway, a central aspect of our immigration policies. This theory offers a framework for critically examining the underlying motivations behind security measures (Cote, 2016), making it a fitting choice for this thesis.

The securitization theory, formulated by the Copenhagen School led by Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap De Wilde in the 1990s, challenged the conventional approach to security in International Relations. It introduced fresh perspectives on the subjective and objective nature of security. Buzan, Wæver, and De Wilde emphasised that something is not inherently threatening; rather, it becomes a security concern through its characterization as one (Buzan, Wæver, & De Wilde, 1998). Securitization, therefore, can be viewed as a political stance adopted by actors. According to the Copenhagen School, it represents an exceptional form of regular politics, where the agent asserts the need for extraordinary measures to safeguard society by framing a specific issue as a genuine and imminent threat. In this process, the agent elevates the matter from the realm of everyday democratic politics to emergency politics, surpassing standard regulations. By creating the perception that an issue demands immediate attention, other concerns are downplayed to prioritise security. Bright (2012) elucidated the core of this theory: no issue inherently poses a security threat; rather, any issue can be designated as such. Essentially, the categorization of security concerns is politically influenced, not solely based on the emergence of a threat, but on our political decisions to address specific issues distinctly. Securitization, as a theory, delves into the reasons why particular matters become securitized while others do not, looking beyond the urgency that authorities present to the public.

The Copenhagen School defines security as a concept that is socially constructed, and moulded by the context in which it is discussed. According to this perspective, security issues do not inherently exist in the world; instead, they are created through discourse, which is the process by which actors interpret and communicate about the world. Security concerns gain prominence when they are portrayed as existential threats to a society's survival, well-being, or identity, and when actors assert that extraordinary measures are essential to address them. Securitization refers to the process wherein political actors, such as politicians, policymakers, and media outlets, present an issue as a security threat, thereby justifying exceptional measures to deal with it. The securitization process involves three stages: problem construction, speech act, and audience acceptance. In the problem construction stage, actors identify an issue as a security threat and define it in terms of the harm it poses to society. In the speech act stage, actors express the threat urgently and emotionally, using securitizing language to frame it as a matter of national survival. Finally, in the audience acceptance stage, actors aim to garner support from the audience by persuading them of the seriousness of the threat and the necessity for extraordinary measures. In terms of this thesis, Wæver's statement "something is a security problem when the elites declare it to be so" is valuable to bear in mind.

To securitize a matter, specific threats must be identified, prompting questions like 'Security for whom and what?' and 'By whom?' Securitization occurs when there is a shared understanding of the urgent need for action. The concept of speech acts, rooted in philosophy, asserts that words carry real consequences. As noted by Balzacq (2005), power lies in choosing the 'appropriate' words, and adhering to established speech act conventions. Actors shape an issue and try to raise it above mere political discourse, aiming to persuade an audience. In this context, words aren't just expressions; they actively shape reality, encouraging specific responses. Thus, threats aren't inherently threatening; they are constructed as such through language, influenced by how they are labelled (Wæver, 1995: 55).

Securitization occurs when the audience recognizes the imperative for immediate and extraordinary action. These actions are often justified using language emphasising 'urgency' and 'existential threats,' providing grounds for measures that might seem undemocratic under

normal circumstances. Wæver (2015) formulated the theory to balance politics, ensuring that the success and failure of securitization rest with the audience rather than the actor. Wæver advocates for 'desecuritization' as a preference, signifying a return to standard political processes. In essence, by designating something as a matter of 'security,' it is amplified into an issue of dominant importance. Securitization can be understood as the process through which issues, whether non-politicized or politicised, rise to the status of security concerns demanding immediate attention. This elevation permits emergency measures outside democratic control. Wæver (2000) generally supports desecuritization over securitization as the preferable approach to problem-solving, avoiding emergency measures beyond democratic oversight.

Securitization occurs when policies, legal documents, and current practices imply that migrants, including irregular or displaced individuals, pose specific threats to society. On the other hand, desecuritization is evident in legal documents and practices that undermine security claims related to migrants. This argument posits that desecuritization unfolds within the context of securitization, reshaping the language surrounding the security concerns of forced migration at the regional level. To assess the shift in the perception of security threats posed by migration, one can examine policy changes implemented by other states in the region and international institutions dedicated to refugee protection. Desecuritization is the process through which an issue transitions from the realm of security back to normal politics. This process involves three stages: de-legitimization, de-securitization, and normalisation. During desecuritization, actors challenge the severity of the threat and question the necessity for extraordinary measures. In the de-securitization stage, actors work to diminish the issue's prominence as a security threat by proposing alternative policy solutions that do not require exceptional measures. Finally, in the normalisation stage, actors aim to reintegrate the issue into everyday politics, addressing it through standard policy-making procedures.

Securitization and desecuritization theories have important implications for understanding security in today's world. First, these theories show how language and communication play a key role in defining what we see as security threats. People in power can use certain words and phrases to make something seem like a threat, even if it might not be a big problem objectively. On the other hand, others can use different language to question these claims and

suggest different solutions. This means that what we consider a threat can change based on how it's talked about. Second, these theories challenge the traditional idea that only countries can define security. According to these theories, security isn't just about what governments say; it's also influenced by many other groups like communities, media, and international organisations. This means that security issues can come from many places, not just traditional things like wars between countries. Lastly, these theories highlight how our values and beliefs shape what we think of as security issues. When something is securitized, it means certain values, like protecting our nation or upholding democracy, are being emphasised. Different people and groups might have different values, so what's seen as a security issue can vary based on what people care about.

Maggie Ibrahim (2005) argues that with the widening of the concept of security, migration has been increasingly described in security terms since the end of the Cold War. This has been done through the linking of risk and threat to migrants. Studying the securitizing discourses on migrants and asylum seekers, she wrote that:

Our eyes are fed images of chaos in the South through the media's depiction of "disorder". Threats and insecurity are being redefined and broadened. Due to the assertions of international organisations, states, academics, and journalists, migration has become synonymous with a new risk to the liberal world. This discourse has reached its pinnacle, normalising the view that migrants are a threat. (Ibrahim 2005, 163)

The relevance of the theory of securitization and desecuritization in the context of Norway's policy and immigrant laws is profound. This theoretical framework offers a lens through which one can comprehend the framing of immigration and integration issues as security concerns, leading to the securitization of related policies. Norway, with its history of immigration, has established a robust legal and policy framework for immigrant integration. Nevertheless, recent years have witnessed immigration emerging as a prominent political topic, often portrayed as a security menace by certain stakeholders. This securitizing discourse is evident in the language employed by politicians and media outlets, characterising immigration and integration as threats. Expressions like "immigration invasion" and "security threat" have been utilised to depict the influx of asylum seekers into Norway. Such securitization legitimises exceptional measures, resulting in stricter immigration policies,

including tighter asylum regulations, reduced welfare benefits, and heightened deportation efforts.

However, the securitization of immigration and integration policies carries detrimental repercussions. It fosters the stigmatisation and marginalisation of immigrant communities, hindering initiatives aimed at fostering integration and social cohesion. By framing immigrants primarily as security risks rather than potential contributors to Norwegian society, securitization emphasises control and exclusion over inclusion and diversity. Desecuritization stands as a crucial method to counter the securitization of immigration and integration policies. This process involves discrediting the language that frames these issues as security threats and redefining the narrative in non-security terms. In the Norwegian context, desecuritization could challenge the prevailing notion that immigration and integration pose security risks. Instead, it could emphasise the positive contributions immigrants bring to Norwegian society. Moreover, desecuritization may propose policy approaches emphasising inclusion and diversity, steering away from exclusionary and controlling measures.

The theory of securitization and desecuritization provides a valuable framework for comprehending the complexities of immigration and integration policies in Norway. Recent years have witnessed a heightened securitization of these policies, particularly due to a substantial influx of asylum seekers and refugees, raising concerns among certain factions about the potential threats these immigrants pose to Norwegian society (Wæver 1995, p 56). Securitization involves framing immigration and integration issues as existential threats, a narrative echoed by politicians, media outlets, and various actors, highlighting them as challenges to Norwegian culture, values, and security.

This securitizing language has led to the endorsement of exceptional measures, such as stricter asylum laws and increased deportation rates, ostensibly to mitigate the perceived threat. However, this approach carries adverse consequences, fostering the stigmatisation and marginalisation of immigrant communities. Instead of recognizing immigrants as potential assets to Norwegian society, they are cast as security risks, hindering efforts toward integration and social cohesion. The emphasis on control and exclusion, rather than inclusion

and diversity, exacerbates these challenges. Desecuritization, conversely, involves contesting the securitized narrative by reframing immigration and integration in non-security contexts. This approach challenges the notion that immigration poses inherent threats and underscores the positive contributions immigrants can make to Norwegian society. Moreover, it advocates for policy solutions centred on inclusivity and diversity, rejecting exclusionary and controlling strategies, thereby fostering a more integrated and cohesive society.

4.1.1 Difference Portrayal of Refugees

September 2015: Sharing the Burden

In September 2015, refugees were predominantly portrayed through humanitarian lenses in Norwegian media. However, they were also frequently labelled as a 'burden.' Describing someone as a burden inherently creates a distinction between the 'Self' and the 'Other.' When the 'Other' is portrayed as a burden, the 'Self' is positioned as the one bearing the weight. This division emphasises a spatial and fundamental difference. The 'Other' is portrayed as needing assistance, while the 'Self' is presented as having the capacity to provide help.

After portraying refugees as burdens, they were further characterised as a threat to the established order through media narratives describing a system buckling under pressure. In a speech, Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg emphasised “Everyone cannot come to Norway. The Norwegian welfare society is not designed to handle many refugees” (Kvale, 2015).

Medias portrayal of a system in crisis extended from Norway's reception and welfare systems to the broader European asylum structure and the EU as a political entity. The focus often centred on the system's failure or its inability to safeguard shared borders.

The refugee crisis has led to European countries disregarding the Schengen agreement and taking their own measures. The capacity for refugee reception is being stretched thin in country after country. There are fears that the EU might disintegrate,

expressed concerns voiced by a Norwegian professor. (Kampesæter & Ask, Aftenposten, 2015)

The EU has a refugee crisis, and can be torn to shreds if the countries fail to come together on common measures to protect their outer borders against the flow of refugees (Johnsen & Bjørnstad, VG, 2018).

Amidst this nuanced portrayal, the media's dichotomy between refugees and migrants created a layered narrative. While the term 'refugees and migrants' was frequently employed, it carried subtle implications, often attributing responsibility to 'migrants' for the strain on the system. This distinction, irrespective of whether individuals sought protection, deepened the perceived divide between 'migrants' and the 'Self.' Simultaneously, it subtly aligned 'true' refugees closer to the 'Self,' implying a hierarchy of deservingness. The complexity of media discourse not only shaped public perceptions but also influenced policy decisions and societal attitudes towards those seeking refuge.

March 2022: European women and children

In March 2022, the media discourse concerning refugees returned to a humanitarian focus. The representations centred on refugees as Europeans, particularly women and children, who had already gained access to Europe and Norway. Emphasising their European identity created a geographical and identity proximity between the 'Self' and the 'Other,' as 'Europe' transcends mere geography.

But this isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan, that has seen conflict raging for decades. You know, this is a relatively civilized, relatively European – I have to choose those words carefully, too – city where you wouldn't expect that or hope that it's going to happen. said CBS reporter Charlie D'Agata live from Kyiv a day into the war (Lamber, CBC, 2022).

It also helps a lot that those who are coming as refugees now are a group that the people embrace, women and children that are coming first. It is easy to relate to this group as worthy of help. (Hallgren and Stokke, Aftenposten, 28.03.2022)

The focus on refugees as women and children crafted a perception of them as ‘worthy’ refugees. Furthermore, with the refugees having easy access to Europe, the process of spreading to different countries was constructed as a ‘natural’ process, rather than one of chaos and emergency. Neither the refugees nor the asylum institute itself are constructed as a threat.

We are standing in the middle of the largest refugee disaster in Europe since World War II. And yet everything is astonishingly calm, friendly and organised. (Johansen, Aftenposten, 2022)

This statement highlights the contrast between the gravity of the refugee disaster and the calm, friendly, and organised response. It serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience and strength exhibited by both the refugees and the communities receiving them, emphasising the human side of the crisis.

4.2 Intergroup contact theory

Due to numerous historical incidents marked by intergroup conflicts, social psychologists have extensively researched intergroup relations. Their focus has been on understanding phenomena such as prejudice, discrimination, and intergroup conflict (Holt et al., 2015). Given the growing influx of refugees receiving asylum in Norway, it is essential to explore the influence of intergroup contact between refugees and Norwegians on the prejudiced attitudes within the majority population. This thesis emphasises its theoretical framework on intergroup contact theory, which is essential when looking at reasons for changes in politics and legislation in Norway. The study of intergroup contacts’ effectiveness in reducing prejudice has been central for many social scientists for a long time (Vezzali & Stathi, 2016). The theoretical framework will be based on Gordon Allport (1954), who argues that contact between members of different groups (under certain conditions) can reduce prejudice and intergroup conflict. The intergroup contact theory, a social psychological framework, investigates interactions between individuals from diverse social groups and their impact on attitudes and behaviours. According to this theory, positive and cooperative encounters between people from different groups can diminish prejudice and enhance intergroup relations. Therefore, this essay will delve into the origins, core principles, and empirical backing of the intergroup contact theory.

The intergroup contact theory originated in the mid-20th century as social psychologists sought to understand the factors influencing prejudice and discrimination. Preceding this, theories of prejudice predominantly focused on individual-level elements like personality traits or cognitive processes. However, psychologists began acknowledging the significance of social context and intergroup dynamics in shaping attitudes and behaviours toward those from different groups. Gordon Allport initiated significant work on intergroup contact theory in the 1950s, through his book “The Nature of Prejudice”. Allport argued that interactions between members of different groups could reduce negative attitudes towards an outgroup and enhance intergroup relations. Nevertheless, he also noted that mere contact was insufficient to overcome deeply rooted prejudices and specified certain conditions that needed to be met for contact to be effective.

Further, Allport implied that effectiveness for reducing prejudice occurs if four conditions of optimal contact existed: (a) equal status between groups; (b) common goals; (c) intergroup cooperation; and (d) the support of authority, law, or custom (Allport, 1954). The theory, which explores the impact of intergroup contact on prejudices among individuals from different racial groups, indicates that individuals who interact with refugees tend to hold more positive attitudes toward them compared to those lacking such contact (Abrams, McGaughey, & Haghghat, 2018). Since Allport introduced the intergroup contact theory, it has been extensively used over the decades to demonstrate how positive interactions diminish concerns and prejudices between different social groups, including those based on skin color, sexual orientation, and gender identities. An intriguing finding is that while structured contact following Allport's conditions is particularly effective in reducing prejudice, even informal interactions contribute to this effect (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). This is significant as it highlights that contact between groups, even in less-than-ideal circumstances, is strongly associated with diminished prejudice. This is of interest when looking into integration, and how attitudes may affect its outcome.

Pettigrew (1997) conducted a study involving 3806 participants from seven national probability samples across four European countries to test the contact hypothesis. The findings revealed that individuals with intergroup friendships were more likely to express sympathy and admiration for minority members and held more liberal views on immigration

policies compared to those without such friendships. Pettigrew (1997) suggested that the causal pathway from friendship to reduced prejudice was stronger than the reverse path from reduced prejudice to more friendship.

However, Pettigrew (1998) argued that the contact hypothesis risked becoming an extensive list of conditions, often confusing facilitating factors with essential ones. To refine the intergroup contact theory, Pettigrew (1998) proposed a reformulation. Firstly, he posited that intergroup contact situations must offer the opportunity to develop cross-group friendships, considering this as a crucial fifth condition for prejudice reduction. Intergroup friendships imply close, extensive, and repeated interactions across various social contexts, enabling mechanisms like self-disclosure and friendship development. Secondly, Pettigrew (1998) suggested that intergroup friendships could trigger four processes explaining prejudice reduction: 1) learning about the outgroup, 2) behavioural changes, 3) generating emotional bonds potentially reducing anxiety and enhancing empathy, and 4) ingroup reappraisal, leading to new insights about the ingroup and fostering a broader perspective on the outgroup. Additionally, Pettigrew (1998) acknowledged that individual differences and societal factors influence contact effects, with institutions and societal norms shaping social situations and contact outcomes. Prior attitudes, experiences, and high intergroup anxiety may affect the degree to which individuals seek or avoid intergroup contact.

Over the past half-century, the contact hypothesis has arguably become one of the most influential theories in social psychology regarding prejudice reduction. A substantial body of evidence has confirmed the inverse relationship between contact and prejudice across diverse contexts and intergroup relations (Dixon, 2016). Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis, reviewing 713 independent samples from 515 studies throughout the 20th century, encompassing 250,089 participants from 38 nations. Their findings demonstrated that intergroup contact consistently reduces intergroup prejudice, without being influenced by participant selection or publication biases. Moreover, the positive effects of contact are generalised to the entire outgroup, spanning various outgroup targets and contact settings (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Interestingly, Allport's contact conditions were not found to be indispensable; they rather contributed to a more significant reduction in prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Nonetheless, Vezzali and Stathi (2016) highlighted that

intergroup contact is not a universal remedy for prejudice but a tool that can enhance intergroup relations under specific conditions.

In embracing a truly inclusive and compassionate society, it's essential to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of every individual, irrespective of their background.

Understanding the unique experiences and challenges faced by refugees can pave the way for empathy and support. By delving into the root causes of prejudice and discrimination, we can work towards dismantling these barriers. This study seeks to unravel the intricate layers of bias, aiming not only to raise awareness but also to foster meaningful dialogue and change. It's crucial not to let a refugee's country of origin, skin colour, or cultural background dictate our willingness to help, or to what extent this help might go. By acknowledging the multifaceted nature of prejudice and discrimination, this research advocates for a society rooted in empathy, respect, and understanding. It underscores the significance of genuine, positive interactions between diverse social groups, emphasising their potential to bridge gaps, challenge stereotypes, and foster harmonious coexistence. The findings highlight that while structured intergroup contact following specific conditions can effectively diminish prejudice, even informal encounters play a crucial role in shaping attitudes

We see that Ukrainians have experienced a great inclusion in Norwegian society, being met by openness and desire to help. These attitudes attribute to a better contact, which creates a positive foundation for these refugees (Organisation B)

In exploring intergroup contact theory, it is crucial to delve into the role of Norwegian citizens in the integration process. Despite expectations for refugees to adapt to society, there seems to be a lack of genuine desire for meaningful interaction and understanding between different groups. Interviews with various organisations highlight the importance of mutual learning and giving back, emphasising the value of intergroup connections. While interactions naturally occur in settings like schools and workplaces, there appears to be a lack of societal incentives for Norwegians to engage beyond these contexts, unless through volunteering efforts.

Considering the contributions made through taxes for a better society, it raises questions about the collective responsibility of Norwegians in fostering meaningful intergroup contact, rather than solely relying on newcomers to drive integration efforts.

Part 2 - Data and Analysis

In the upcoming section of the thesis, I will present and analyse the collected data.

Subsequently, in Chapter 5, I will delve into the overarching research question and the first sub-question – both addressing differences being made: RQ: *In what way have the crises of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees been attended differently in Norway?* And SQ1: *How has legislations accommodated Ukrainian refugees contrary to the refugee flow post-2015?*

To answer these questions, I will connect the collected data with laws and regulations. This chapter will concentrate on interview statements provided by politicians, organisations, journalists and writers, and their perspectives on the approach to the various refugee situations. Some of these insights were highlighted during interviews with organisations and writers, providing valuable context to explore, before engaging in discussions with politicians. In chapter 6, the overarching research question will be discussed SQ2: *In what ways have legislative changes affected integration of refugees in Norway?*

Chapter 5: Comparing and contrasting policy and practices, 2015 and 2022

This chapter is focused on examining the overarching research question and the initial sub-question, both aiming to explore the disparities in refugee treatments: RQ: *In what way have the crises of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees been attended differently in Norway?* And SQ1: *How has legislations accommodated Ukrainian refugees contrary to the refugee flow post-2015?* The discussion will be structured around specific sub-chapters, each addressing a distinct facet of the disparities observed.

Chapter 5.1 Comparing attendance– Media and engagement

As illustrated in Chapter 4, when discussing securitization and desecuritization, a notable disparity emerges in media portrayal of the two refugee crises. Comparing articles from post-2015 with recent writings clearly highlights this distinction, which is valuable when discussing the research question.

Thousands of new asylum seekers arrived in Germany over the weekend, and the reception system is now on the verge of being overwhelmed in several cities. On

Sunday, German authorities temporarily reintroduced border controls on the borderline with Austria due to the large influx of refugees to the country, and the train connection from Austria to Germany was halted. (...) In Norway, 790 asylum seekers arrived last week, according to the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). (VG, 2015)

In this context, the term 'asylum seekers' is employed, along with the illustration that society is at risk as reception facilities are becoming overwhelmed. To counter this perceived 'crisis', measures like border controls and pushbacks against refugees are being enforced. Notably, during 2015/2016, newspaper headlines prominently declared "Norway says no to boat migrants." Instances like these were observed in the media throughout the duration of this crisis, as illustrated below.

In the face of the overwhelming influx of refugees, many EU countries have opted for simplistic solutions: either bus the refugees back to where they came from, or preferably, in the direction they wish to go. As the flow of refugees has shifted, one country after another has responded by closing initially open EU borders. (Ege & Johansen, 2015)

'Raises Concerns Over the Refugee Situation in a Classified Ministry of Foreign Affairs Document' - A confidential memorandum composed by a director and a senior advisor in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (UD) portrays a grim and alarming outlook on the potential future developments of the refugee crisis. The document foresees an unrelenting influx, persisting even in the event of peace in Syria. It highlights the risk of new terrorist attacks and expresses deep apprehension about the surge in far-right extremism. (Ertzaaseirik & Mosveen, 2016)

As demonstrated in Chapter 4 with the analysis of securitization theory, there is great power and influence within media, politics, and language. Headlines of this nature naturally cultivate a sceptical and negative perception of refugees from the Middle East among the public. This aspect was emphasised in numerous interviews held with organisations and individuals closely involved with refugees during this period.



(Photo: Alexandros Avramidis)

Media photographs vividly capture a striking disparity in the portrayal of refugees. The images capture scenes characterised by resistance, barbed wire fences, pushbacks, and consistent refusals, highlighting the contrasting experiences faced by Ukrainian refugees. Contrastingly, pictures emphasising women and children evoke greater sympathy within society.

Many Ukrainian refugees, mostly women and children, have been forced to leave their country to escape the Russian invasion. Norway has the capacity to accommodate many of them. The doors are open for a historic resettlement effort, and there is a strong desire to help (Skårderud & Hinna, 2022).



(Photo: Afshin Ismaeli)

In this context, words such as 'refugees' and an emphasis on women and children are employed, alongside the portrayal of Norway's capability to manage the situation. This strategic use is advantageous for shaping societal perceptions and fostering a positive response towards how refugees are likely to be received. To further illustrate the contrast in attendance, a televised interview featuring Bulgaria's Prime Minister in 2022 highlighted his articulation of the nation's stance on admitting Ukrainian refugees:

These are not refugees we are accustomed to; these are Europeans, so we and all other EU countries are ready to welcome them. These are intelligent people, educated people (...) This is not a wave of refugees we are familiar with, people whose identities we do not know, people with unknown pasts who could have been terrorists. (...) There is not a single European country now afraid of this wave of refugees (Okkenhaug, 2022).

The statements of previous refugee groups being a danger to society is vital. The narrative that they enter our countries to compete for jobs and pose a potential terrorist threat impacts the willingness and perception to host these individuals. "PST searched for terrorists among the quota refugees. From a separate hotel room, PST worked to ensure that no terrorists are

hiding among the Syrian quota refugees bound for Norway" (Mikkelsen & Mikaelsen, 2015). Conversely, Ukrainians are depicted as more relatable, urgently in need of assistance, and not perceived as a threat to society. There is no mention of potential risks such as Russian spies or extreme right-wing groups.

Divergent approaches to these refugee crises are evident in political statements as well. A clear illustration of this disparity can be seen in the policies and statements of the Progress Party. Party leader Sylvi Listhaug presents significant contradictions in Norway's approach to the situations. In a news interview, Listhaug was asked about her opinion on what Jesus might have done to assist Syrian refugees. She asserted that he would have supported the approach she and the Progress Party proposed – “he would have helped the refugees where they were” (Odinsen & Eisenträger, 2015). Several similar statements have been made on the subject by the party from 2015 to the present day. One well-known example of unsympathetic behavior, was in 2016 when wearing a survival suit, at that time, the Minister of Immigration and Integration Sylvi Listhaug jumped into the sea to be rescued off the coast of the Greek island of Lesbos. Her intention was to gain insight into the situation refugees are in. This was met with a lot of criticism. “It's like opening a window to feel what it is like to be homeless. It is simply embarrassing," said Socialist Left Party's Member of Parliament Karin Andersen to *Nettavisen* (Berge, 2016). In contrast, as the Ukrainian war unfolded in 2022, Listhaug advocated for increased aid and the reception of Ukrainian refugees in Norway, stating: “We need to step up to help Ukrainian refugees” (Røsvik, 2022). The discourse shifted away from discussions about assisting them where they were. Simultaneously, the party advocated for a pause in accepting refugees from other parts of the world, which they still do to the present day.

Furthermore, in several interviews conducted, participants highlighted the initial similarities in responses to both refugee crises. The influx of mainly Syrian refugees in 2015 evoked a notably positive reaction, fueled by the visible warfare broadcasted on news screens, fostering tangible empathy. The tragic image of Alan Kurdi's lifeless body on the beach triggered a significant shift in European policies, leading to more open borders and intensified crisis management efforts, particularly in Western Europe. This aspect was emphasised during an interview with a member of the Social Left party:

"The immediate response in 2015 was actually very positive: a solidarity-driven reaction, a willingness to welcome people, and a significant political and popular understanding of the refugees' situation. And that, I think, is important to remember." (Politician A).

However, as emphasised by various organisations, writers, and politicians, this response changed. With the opening of borders, a surge in arrivals, including Afghans seeking refuge, posed a challenge. As numbers peaked - exemplified by the arrival of approximately 10,000 individuals on Lesbos in a single day - resources stretched thin, prompting changing attitudes (Bond, 2016). Discussions emerged about an overwhelming number of refugees, concerns about potential threats to safety, and fears of overwhelming the reception system. Suddenly, the situation was deemed "too challenging for us to manage" (Listhaug, 2016). This can be drawn back to the importance of securitization, and creating a possible danger in politics. Additionally, the conversation shifted from 'refugees' to 'migrants', emphasizing the role of language. How we articulate their status profoundly impacts our willingness to provide assistance.

Of course, there is a significant difference between 2015 and 2022; from the very beginning of 2015, there were political forces in Norway that mobilized against it. It undoubtedly creates a different kind of polarization, shapes a different media landscape, and triggers the mobilization of negative attitudes that exist among some. (...) I believe that there is both racism, fear of people from different backgrounds, and political forces that want to exploit that kind of fear. That is a significant aspect of it. And there are certainly media angles that play into it as well (Politician A).

The linguistic direction significantly influences our willingness to help, leading us to define them more as 'us and them.' 'Us' as those who are here and deserve to live good lives, while 'them' are seen as a threat to us, potentially endangering our way of life. When comparing the responses to the refugee crises during the initial weeks, they were quite similar. However, the subsequent actions taken diverged significantly. The argument now is that Ukrainians are similar to us: they integrate more easily, possess higher education, and share similar religious backgrounds, among other factors. These resemblances, coupled with their closer geographical origin, have resulted in a warmer reception. A significant illustration of this differentiation is

the provision of free bus rides and public transportation exclusively for Ukrainian refugees, while those from active conflict zones such as Afghanistan or Syria are not afforded the same privilege (Bonde, 2022). Organisations operating in Lesbos faced the risk of being accused of human trafficking if they assisted refugees by car during the peak influx. 24 aid workers face legal actions and volunteers were accused of human smuggling for assisting asylum seekers on the Greek island of Lesbos. The Greek authorities' decision to prosecute individuals aiding refugees and migrants drew strong criticism from human rights groups (Dahle, 2023). In a report by the EU Parliament, the case was labeled 'the biggest criminalization of solidarity in Europe'. The 24 defendants denied any wrongdoing, asserting that their actions were solely aimed at rescuing people in life-threatening situations. Amnesty International described the case as a farce and urged Greek authorities to drop it. This trial illustrates how Greek authorities are taking extreme measures to put an end to humanitarian aid and discourage migrants and refugees from seeking safety along the country's coast, reflecting a broader trend observed in several European countries (Adressa, 2023). This distinction was highlighted in one of my interviews with a writer and volunteer working at Lesbos, who emphasized the tangible differences in assisting refugees.

How can we explain our disparate approach to this, other than the fact that we have categorized Ukrainians as so similar to us that they are allowed to be part of the 'in-group,' while others are seen as so dissimilar to us that they are defined as the 'out-group,' and thus not entitled to the same rights as we are? To emphasize the difference, or to clarify the distinction: When we pay 50,000 kroner for a cat or a dog brought from Ukraine to receive treatment here - allowing them to bring their pets, where the state covers the veterinary bill, as we do for one type of refugees - while for another type of refugees with the exact same reasons to flee, we accept pushbacks where people and children are dying. It is a political choice to treat people so differently (Writer A).

The perspectives on refugees vary based on different rationales. Different viewpoints exist, supported by diverse reasons. One frequently cited argument is the necessity of 'assisting them in neighboring regions.', a viewpoint echoed in interviews with politicians from the Progress Party. Their rationale revolves around cost-efficiency and the potential benefits for both Norwegian society and the refugees.

It costs approximately 25 to 30 Norwegian kroner for each Syrian refugee residing in the Nizip1 camp in Turkey, which accommodates 4,900 refugees from the war-torn country. This highlights the potential to assist many more refugees in the neighboring areas. Providing aid to refugees here incurs a considerably lower cost compared to relocating them to Norway. It's evident that the most effective assistance they can receive is right here, stated the Minister of Immigration and Integration Sylvi Listhaug to VG (Sævereid & Henden, 2016).

Such an argument was supported in two interviews done with politicians from both the Progress Party and Conservative Party during the fieldwork:

I believe the fundamental principle is that, to the greatest extent possible, people are best helped in their local regions. It's feasible and more cost-effective considering the number of refugees worldwide. The situation is somewhat different when it comes to Ukrainians, as I believe they are in our neighboring areas. That's why we should, and it's correct that we have, a different approach to it in that case (Politician B).

I firmly stand by the principle that helping refugees in their local regions is the most effective and economical approach, given the global refugee numbers. However, with Ukrainians, being our neighbors, our approach should and does differ (Politician D).

Critics argue that the notion of aiding refugees in their local regions, while advocating for Norway to accept only a proportional share in Europe, oversimplifies a complex issue. The idea of creating safe conditions in neighboring areas to prevent migration is valid in theory. However, the reality in countries like Turkey, hosting a significant refugee population, is far from ideal. Limited job opportunities, education, and unstable living conditions prevail, leaving refugees without secure prospects. Consequently, there is no assurance of stability when attempting to establish a life in nearby regions (Skarstein, 2016). If conditions were more favorable, refugees might prefer staying due to the familiarity of their surroundings. Unfortunately, this is not the current reality. The argument of supporting people in their local areas is frequently employed to avoid addressing the larger problem at hand. A significant concern of mine linked to this argument relates to the mistreatment of individuals in Europe, especially those seeking asylum in Greece, asserting their fundamental human rights. Despite being in neighboring regions, these individuals in Greece do not receive sufficient assistance,

lacking access to education and healthcare. Moreover, they are confined behind wire fences, living in such insecure conditions that children burn to death in their tents, and one-year-olds die of dehydration due to lack of access to healthcare. If there is a genuine commitment to help people 'where they are', attention should be directed to the refugee camps in Europe, which are just as close as Ukraine. Consequently, this argument weakens when confronted with the different treatment of refugees within European borders. In a world where an increasing number of individuals are compelled to flee due to factors such as war and climate issues, solutions like the Dublin Regulation need to be reassessed and reconsidered to foster better cooperation among European countries.

5.2 Comparing accommodations - Laws and regulations

The discourse on Norway's asylum policy goes beyond the mere acceptance of refugees; it encompasses the manner in which newcomers are received, the rights and opportunities afforded to them, and the safeguarding of their legal rights. Most importantly, it revolves around facilitating successful integration. In this chapter, I will examine the outcomes related to the initial sub-research questions: *1. How has legislations accommodated Ukrainian refugees contrarily to the refugee flow post-2015?* I will achieve this by illustrating the changes and connecting them to the statements obtained during my interviews.

5.2.1 Legal security

Legal security, or "rettsikkerhet" in Norwegian, is a fundamental concept that underpins the democratic values of fairness, justice, and equality under the law. In Norway, legal security is a cornerstone of the legal system, ensuring that every individual is treated fairly and justly, regardless of their background, social status, or beliefs. It encompasses a range of rights and protections designed to safeguard individuals from oppressive actions, ensuring that they have access to justice, a fair trial, and legal remedies when their rights are infringed upon (Larsen, 2020). In this section, we will delve into the concept of legal security as understood in Norway, exploring its key principles and implications for refugees. Legal security is built upon several key principles, some of which are:

1. Access to Justice:

Legal security ensures that individuals have access to the justice system. This includes the right to legal representation, a fair trial, and the opportunity to present one's case before an impartial court.

2. Protection from Arbitrary Actions:

Legal security protects individuals from arbitrary actions by public authorities. It ensures that decisions affecting individuals are made based on clear, objective criteria and within the bounds of the law.

3. Right to Legal Remedies:

Legal security includes the right to seek legal remedies when one's rights have been violated. This may involve compensation, reinstatement, or other forms of redress.

4. Equality Before the Law:

One of the fundamental aspects of legal security is the principle of equality before the law. This means that every individual, regardless of their status or affiliations, is subject to the same laws and regulations. We will revisit the concept of equality before the law later, as it holds significance when comparing the various approaches (Lønning, 2011).

In the context of refugee policies, legal security ensures that refugees enjoy equal rights and protections as any other resident in Norway. This principle of legal security is of great importance, guaranteeing refugees access to justice, protection from arbitrary actions, and the right to legal remedies. Having that said, this might not always be the case. “There is reason to question whether refugees have the same legal security as others in Norway”, André Møkkelgjerd, associate lawyer, writes on advokatbladet.no.

The legal security of refugees in Norway, especially those arriving from the Middle East after 2015, has faced challenges due to various factors. The substantial increase in the number of refugees after 2015 overwhelmed the Norwegian immigration system, resulting in significant

delays in the legal processing (Østby, 2017). Consequently, many refugees found themselves in a state of uncertainty and legal limbo. Moreover, these refugees frequently encounter language barriers and lack access to sufficient legal resources. This limited accessibility hinders their capacity to navigate complex legal procedures, making it difficult for them to secure their legal rights. This important matter were pointed out during interviews with various organizations closely involved with refugees. Lastly, some refugees from the Middle East have faced rejections in their asylum applications, potentially leading to deportations (Prop. 1 S, 2016). These rejections may stem from various reasons, such as misunderstandings during the application process, lack of proper documentation, or shifting political attitudes toward refugees. In contrast, refugees from Ukraine have experienced fast legal processing and do not need extensive documents in Europe.

The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) plays a crucial role in ensuring legal security. They handle applications for protection (asylum), visitor visas, family immigration, work and study residence permits, citizenship, permanent residence permits, and travel documents. Furthermore, UDI is responsible for decisions regarding expulsion and deportation. During our interview in parliament, a member of The Socialist Left Party emphasized the inadequate legal security within UDI, highlighting its central position in immigration administration.

We have undermined our own legal framework regarding the rights people are entitled to, and our immigration system suffers from a serious lack of legal security. When cases are taken to court, the immigration board frequently loses, indicating a significant flaw in the rule of law. Why does this happen? Would such a situation be tolerated in any other sector of the administration? The issue lies in people who often lack a voice in Norwegian society, those who come from the outside. Addressing this matter is crucial - there is a pressing need for reform in the immigration board system to enhance legal security for vulnerable individuals (Politician A).

The organizations, along with certain politicians, emphasized that Ukrainians experience a distinct reception upon arrival in Norway. They are promptly granted stay through collective protection, a concept we will delve into later. Consequently, they do not encounter the same

challenges. The unequal legal security for a particular group of refugees in comparison to Ukrainians raises questions about their equality before the law.

5.2.2 Equality before the Law

The principle of equality before the law asserts that legal regulations must be applied uniformly to all individuals, regardless of their social status, wealth, or other characteristics, ensuring equal treatment by governmental bodies and within the judicial system. This principle is fundamental to human rights and holds significant importance in international legal frameworks. In Norway, this principle is deeply rooted and finds its basis in the Constitution. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, emphasizes equality before the law in Article 7, aligning with Norway's commitment to these fundamental human rights (NOU, 2020:16).

Through this, Norway highlights the importance of individual entitlement to equal protection under the law without any discrimination (NOU, 2020:22). This international commitment underscores Norway's dedication to ensuring fairness and impartiality within its legal system. Additionally, the concept of equality before the law is integral to Norway's anti-discrimination efforts. Under the European Convention on Human Rights, specifically in Article 14, discrimination is prohibited, emphasizing equal treatment for all individuals regardless of their background, ethnicity, or origin (NOU, 2009:7). This illustrates the fundamental requirement of granting equal legal protections and rights to all refugees, fostering a fair and inclusive society. Equality before the law attempts to ensure this. Under Norwegian law, refugees have the right to seek asylum, and their applications are processed based on established legal procedures (Utlendingsloven, § 28). However, the great difference between refugees from the Middle East and Ukraine is evident regarding the timeframe, number of acceptations, and requirement of documents. This became a topic when speaking to one organization working closely with refugees in Norway:

We have witnessed a difference in treatment when it comes to refugees writes under Norwegian law. Despite the nation's strong commitment to international human rights standards, refugees from the Middle East have not consistently experienced the same

legal protections as their counterparts from Ukraine. Disparities in processing times, acceptance rates, lack of work opportunities, and document requirements have created significant inequalities within the asylum system. Seeing how the situation has been handled with Ukrainians these last years, it shows the possibilities that exist. These discrepancies underline the pressing need for a more equitable and uniform application of legal safeguards, ensuring that every individual seeking refuge in Norway is treated with fairness and justice (Organisation B).

While there's a consensus on the need for integration and equal opportunities for newcomers, a persistent threat undermines these ideals: the so-called "immigration regulatory considerations." This aspect consistently overshadows discussions and policies, prioritizing strict rules over the best interests of children, their attachment to the country, and every other humanitarian concern (Meld. St. 27, 2012: 46). It essentially operates as a deterrence policy, implying that if individuals don't meet the predetermined criteria, they will be deported. This approach stems from a fear of excessive immigration, as pointed out by organizations, writers and journalists in previous interviews.

It is a huge paradox, so we screamed "crisis, crisis, crisis, crisis" in 2015/2016 throughout Europe. Then one million people came in a year. Contrastingly, one million people came from Ukraine in one week. And now we're saying that we're going to make this happen. We will fix this. And Norway takes in 33,000. We work quicker than ever before. And it is not possible to explain it with anything other than racism (Writer A).

Some might argue that limitations are necessary, citing differences in the numbers from Ukraine versus regions like Afghanistan, Syria, and Sudan. The argument suggests that Ukrainians have limited numbers, and a willingness to return, making the assistance temporary. However, such reasoning lacks depth. Regulation is possible, as demonstrated in other contexts. It is fundamentally a matter of international politics, the decision to engage, and the regulations set to address these challenges. Crucially, this also involves considerations of fundamental human rights. Ultimately, it all boils down to political will – a will often tainted by prejudice.

There is no hiding the fact that the greatest difference between these two refugee crises is based on political will, and not the statements being framed. Acknowledging this reality can pave the way for constructive solutions and proactive measures (Organisation C).

One should not be able to pick and choose between refugees with the same fundamental human rights. The influence of language usage and willingness hinders equality within such measures. It is a shame that we continue to turn a blind eye to this issue (Writer B).

5.2.3 Collective protection

Collective protection refers to a special status granted to a group of refugees or asylum seekers based on the ongoing conflict or crisis in their home country (UDI, 2023 a). Instead of evaluating individual cases, collective protection allows mass approval for people fleeing specific regions facing extreme violence, unrest, or persecution. This approach acknowledges the widespread danger in the home country, making it unnecessary to assess each case individually. Collective protection is typically applied in situations where there is a mass influx of refugees from a particular area, ensuring a swift response to humanitarian crises. Norway's provision of collective protection aims to swiftly provide safety and shelter to those escaping dangerous conditions, eliminating the delays associated with individual case evaluations (UDI, 2023 c). This streamlined process fast assistance to vulnerable populations, ensuring their well-being and legal security within Norway.

Collective Protection in Norway: Managing Mass Migrations

In Norway, a distinctive provision within the Immigration Act, Section 34, addresses the complexities of mass migration scenarios (Regjeringen, 2010).

Understanding Collective Protection:

Section 34, Collective Protection in a Mass Migration Situation, serves a crucial role: enabling group assessments instead of individual evaluations in cases where a substantial

influx of people is anticipated over a short duration. This approach recognizes the strain it places on reception and processing capacities.

Decision-Making Process:

To activate this provision, the government must officially declare the existence of a mass migration situation. The King in Council also decides when the power to grant collective protection shall cease.

Rights Granted Under Collective Protection:

Under Section 34, individuals are granted permission for one year, extendable or renewable for up to three years from the permit's issuance. Although this permission does not confer immediate permanent residency, it acts as a foundation. After three years, a temporary permit can be extended, laying the groundwork for a permanent residency application. If the conditions for the permit remain valid after five years and other prerequisites for permanent residency are met, individuals are granted permanent residency, ensuring stability for those integrated into Norwegian society.

Deferred Asylum Applications:

One notable feature of Section 34 is its provision allowing asylum applications to be deferred for up to three years from the permit's issuance. During this period, individuals can explicitly express their intent to resume the asylum process after three years or once the collective protection option expires. This flexibility acknowledges the evolving nature of migration scenarios and the need for adaptable legal frameworks.

Historical Application of the Provision:

This provision has been activated twice before, notably during the mass migrations from Bosnia in the early 1990s and Kosovo in the late 1990s. In both cases, large numbers of people arrived swiftly from specific regions, necessitating a collective response. The Bosnian conflict's prolonged duration led to the permanent settlement of many refugees in Norway. Conversely, the swift cessation of hostilities in Kosovo enabled the majority of refugees to

return promptly, showcasing the provision's adaptability to diverse humanitarian contexts (UDI, 2023 a).

In essence, Norway's Section 34 exemplifies a balanced approach, allowing the nation to respond effectively to the challenges posed by mass migrations while upholding fundamental legal rights. This legal framework not only addresses immediate challenges but also significantly contributes to the long-term integration and stability of individuals seeking refuge in Norway.

In recent times, the provision under Section 34 has been invoked once again, this time in response to the mass migration of Ukrainian refugees (UDI, 2023 c). With the ongoing conflict in Ukraine, Norway has extended its collective protection to Ukrainians, offering them a stable environment amidst chaos. On the contrary, this hasn't been applied to Syrian refugees — a large group fleeing from war, faced with strains on reception and processing capacities. In comparison, how sustainable is this approach, and won't it have a significant impact on integration outcomes? The disparity lies in the fact that while Ukrainians can establish a life while awaiting the individual assessment of their case, Syrians face a stark contrast. They are unable to secure employment, stable housing, or enroll in schools or nurseries during this period of uncertainty, which can stretch over several years. This situation not only hampers their immediate integration prospects but also inflicts long-term consequences, impacting their overall well-being, social stability, and sense of belonging. This has the potential for substantial critique, as integration is one of the foremost arguments within political guidelines and decision making processes.

This discrepancy in treatment between Ukrainians and Syrians underlines the critical role of political will in shaping the lives of refugees in Norway. The policy allowing Ukrainians to build their lives while awaiting assessments reflects a proactive approach, demonstrating the government's willingness to facilitate their integration journey. On the contrary, Syrians are left in a state of limbo, lacking essential resources and opportunities, highlighting a lack of political determination to ensure their smooth transition into Norwegian society. This disparity in treatment raises fundamental questions about the political willpower behind

refugee policies. It emphasizes the urgent need for comprehensive, equitable, and humanitarian approaches that ensure all refugees, regardless of their origin, receive fair treatment and opportunities. By addressing these disparities, political leaders can not only uphold the principles of equality before the law but also foster an inclusive society.

The discrepancy in treatment between Ukrainians and Syrians concerning collective protection is deeply concerning. Granting Ukrainians the opportunity to establish a stable life while awaiting assessments undoubtedly facilitates their integration process. It enables them to actively participate in society and reclaim their everyday life routines, through the access to education, employment, and housing. This proactive approach not only supports refugees, but also aligns with the principles of equality and inclusion. However, the stark contrast faced by Syrian refugees, where some endure years of uncertainty without access to fundamental resources, raises serious questions about the fairness of Norway's refugee policies. It underscores the need for a more consistent, humane, and equitable approach to ensure all refugees have equal opportunities for successful integration. Policymakers must address these disparities and uphold principles of fairness, justice, and societal inclusion for everyone seeking refuge in Norway (Writer B).

In recent headlines, we have observed a stark contrast in the treatment of refugees seeking shelter in Norway. Take, for instance, the case of Mariam, a Syrian refugee, and Oleg, a Ukrainian refugee. Both fled conflict zones in search of safety in Norway. However, their experiences upon arrival were drastically different. Oleg, benefiting from Norway's collective protection, swiftly participated in society, attending a local school and living with her family. In contrast, Mariam, waiting for her application approval for three years, encountered challenges accessing education and housing stability. These cases can not be argued to aim for the same goal of positive and active integration, which should raise questions about Norway's refugee policies (Journalist C).

In examining the experiences of refugees from Ukraine and Syria, it becomes evident that political will significantly shapes the integration process in Norway. When looking at the

research question of ways that the crisis have been attended differently, with legislations accommodating Ukrainians dissimilar, these examples serve as compelling evidence. The proactive approach afforded to Ukrainian refugees, allowing them to swiftly engage in normal everyday life, contrasts sharply with the challenges faced by Syrian refugees, who often wait years for application approval and encounter barriers in education and housing. Authors and organizations have highlighted their firsthand experiences, noting the disparities in integration, especially in observing the positive aspects of a faster transition into society for certain refugees. These points hold significant importance within this thesis.

Chapter 6: Integration – an equal approach to human rights

In Chapter 6, I will connect the findings from the previous chapter, and expand upon them to address the last sub-question: *2. In what ways have legislative changes affected integration of refugees in Norway?*

Language plays a crucial role in shaping public perception of refugees and migrants, impacting the willingness to help and the level of empathy extended towards them. The choice of words, such as "migrants" versus "refugees," carries implicit judgments, which is vital when looking at the media's role in integration. Referring to individuals as "migrants" implies they are merely seeking economic opportunities, often leading to reduced sympathy and assistance. In contrast, the term "refugees" conveys a sense of sympathy, acknowledging their need to flee war or dire circumstances, thus deserving of aid (Beacco, 2008). This linguistic distinction significantly influences societal attitudes, as shown in previous articles above. This became a subject when interviewing one writer who has been working closely with the refugee crisis post-2015. She stated that:

Examining specific cases like Greece and Moria reveals a disparity in the treatment of refugees. Approximately 70 to 75% of asylum seekers in these regions are granted residence, qualifying as genuine refugees under international law. However,

categorizing this substantial portion as mere "migrants" denies them the care, support, and empathy they deserve. It is a bit like saying that an assembly where there are 25 Sami and 75 Norwegians with a non-Sami background, and then we call them all Sami because we somehow think it fits best. It is just as misleading (Writer A).

Hence, language usage is politically controlled. While acknowledging the need for regulations, it becomes evident that political decisions significantly impact aid allocation and support. Having that said, if a main focus within refugee policy is integration, why do we open for the use of different categorizations for people with the same fundamentals?

The paradox between the goal of integration and the implementation of policies becomes evident. While official rhetoric emphasizes integration and equal opportunities, the reality is marred by immigration regulatory considerations. These policies prioritize deterrence, strict requirements, and potential deportations over genuine human interests and attachments to the host country. The inconsistency in the acceptance of refugees from certain regions, like Ukraine, and the reluctance to accept larger numbers from conflict-ridden nations like Syria or Afghanistan raises questions about political will. Ultimately, these discrepancies underscore the underlying issue of prejudice within refugee policy decisions.

As highlighted, a frequently invoked concept in discussions about refugee policy is the significance of integration. This has been a key argument throughout the time from 2015 until the present day. 'To integrate' is a term originating from Latin, meaning 'to make whole' (Døving, 2009: 8). Imagine a scenario where a minority group and a majority group are meant to 'become one'. Many researchers argue that both groups need to adjust to each other in their own ways. The unease surrounding the large number of asylum seekers in 2015 stemmed from uncertainties about how they could be integrated. The ultimate goal is to integrate those permitted to stay in Norway as swiftly and efficiently as possible. However, the challenge lies in the lack of a universal definition of integration, not from politicians, authorities, or public discourse. There isn't much emphasis on the majority population adapting to the minority.

The term 'integration' is widely used beyond the realm of politics, but it lacks a precise definition in statistics or analyses. Statistics Norway has not provided a comprehensive definition (Barstad & Molstad, 2020:9). Various indicators are employed to describe refugees' involvement in education, employment, etc., aiming to compare socioeconomic conditions between refugees and the majority. Having said that, this thesis describes integration as the process in which individuals or groups from diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds come together to establish a unified and inclusive society, as mentioned in Chapter 1. This concept of integration is intricately linked with the notion of diversity, as it necessitates acknowledging and respecting differences among individuals and groups while promoting social equality and inclusion. Furthermore, various approaches to integration exist, often shaped by political, social, and economic factors. One approach is the multicultural perspective, which emphasizes preserving cultural diversity and recognizing different cultural identities within a society. It acknowledges that individuals may identify with multiple cultures and encourages the celebration of this diversity. On the other hand, another approach is the assimilationist perspective, which aims to foster a unified national identity by encouraging refugees to adopt the language, values, and customs of the host society. This approach stresses integration through conformity, often requiring immigrants to relinquish parts of their cultural identity to fully integrate into the host society (Barstad & Molstad, 2020:13). One organization emphasized the value of mutual learning, emphasizing the importance of refugees and Norwegians adapting together, rather than placing the burden solely on refugees to assimilate into Norwegian culture. They highlighted the common approach of viewing newcomers as 'the others' and suggested shifting the focus from teaching 'our ways' to embracing the opportunity for mutual learning and cultural exchange.

We have this game that we use when doing activities together, both refugees and volunteers, called Amigos. It's a language board game, where, instead of everything being in one language, where one person will have the upper hand, while the other tries to learn a language, it is in two languages, and both parts learn from each other. We have seen how both refugees and Norwegian volunteers come together to learn from one another, unifying integration into something a society does together (Organization A).

This innovative approach to integration can remove the idea of “others” in intergroup contact, which can be argued to have a positive outcome for such interactions. It signifies a shift from passive coexistence to active engagement, underlining the societal responsibility in integration, which was pointed to at the end of Chapter 5. In light of these experiences, it becomes imperative for Norwegians to recognize their collective responsibility in shaping a cohesive society, which will be beneficial for all members. While institutions like schools and workplaces provide natural settings for interaction, initiatives like Amigos showcase the potential for broader engagement. Norwegians, by actively participating in such activities, can bridge cultural gaps and establish positive connections, reinforcing the notion that integration is a shared endeavour. This brings us back to the idea of inclusion, rather than integration, as a potential positive starting point, as illustrated in Chapter 1.

Grete Brochmann, Professor of Sociology at the University of Oslo, elaborates: 'Integration is a multi-dimensional concept, encompassing economic, social, cultural, political, and emotional aspects. In the Norwegian context, it's widely agreed that functional integration is beneficial. Immigrants finding employment and maximising their potential, becoming part of the workforce without facing discrimination, are crucial goals.'

Given the rising number of individuals with a refugee background in Norway and the enduring reality of a large population forcibly displaced worldwide, the influx of people seeking refuge remains a pressing and likely future concern. As highlighted by Kalogeraki (2019), comprehending public attitudes toward refugees is crucial, as the successful integration of newcomers into host societies and their ability to make positive contributions depend significantly on how refugees are perceived by the public. Schweitzer, Perkoulidis, Krome, Ludlow, and Ryan (2005) further stressed the pivotal role psychology plays in understanding and addressing prejudices within a nation's broader community. Therefore, it is imperative to study attitudes expressed through policies and media, as they form a vital aspect of the integration discourse.

During my discussion with a representative from the Socialist Left Party, the conversation emphasised the pivotal role of well-crafted policies in expediting the integration process:

“The key to this is language, work, and equality”. Further, he pointed to how Ukrainians have experienced positive attitudes and hospitality, rapid settlement, and the right to Norwegian language education: "The most negative thing that happened in the cooling water of 2015/2016 was that the government back then took away the rights to Norwegian language education in reception". He firmly believes that language proficiency is a crucial factor for successful integration, noting that Ukrainians have gained a significant advantage in their journey into society due to their language skills.

Further, when looking at integration, he emphasized the significance of human rights in Norway's immigration policy. He stressed the need for honest and tangible rights for immigrants, highlighting his party's focus on reforming the immigration board and enhancing legal security. He also underscored the importance of dignified everyday lives for newcomers, expressing concerns about the government's past reductions in subsistence allowances for refugees. He pointed out that these decisions not only impact individuals' well-being but also send critical signals about their welcome in Norway. This perspective reflects a holistic approach, considering not just legal rights but also the societal integration and sense of belonging for those granted asylum.

In discussions about integration, we've covered essential aspects such as rights, language, work, and equality. However, one crucial factor often overlooked is ensuring individuals lead a dignified everyday life right from the start. Following the 2015 refugee wave, there were substantial reductions in the subsistence allowances provided to those in reception centers by the government. This decision holds significant weight, signaling newcomers' sense of welcome in Norway (Politician A).

By limiting financial support during the initial stages of settlement, the government inadvertently created barriers to successful integration. Insufficient financial resources hinder access to essential services such as language courses, education, and housing, impeding refugees' ability to establish stable lives. This further affects integrational outcomes. Moreover, the reduced allowances heightened the sense of vulnerability and exclusion among newcomers, fostering a feeling of unwelcome. Integration is not merely about providing

opportunities; it's about ensuring individuals have the necessary support and resources to seize these opportunities. The lack of adequate financial assistance has undoubtedly slowed down the integration trajectory, making it crucial for policymakers to reconsider and invest in comprehensive support systems for refugees to foster a more inclusive society.

In addition to these structural challenges, the signals and attitudes expressed by society significantly impact the integration process. Differential approaches evident in media coverage, public reception, and legislative measures contribute to a palpable contrast in the perceived welcome for refugees compared to Ukrainians. The disparities in the portrayal of these two groups shape the newcomers' sense of belonging and inclusion in Norwegian society. The media's influence in framing narratives and public sentiment, combined with varying legislative responses, contributes to a complex web of signals that can either facilitate or impede the integration journey. Addressing these nuanced dynamics and fostering a more unified and welcoming approach can play a pivotal role in shaping a positive and inclusive integration experience for all newcomers.

Unfortunately, throughout the years working close with different groups of refugees, we have observed that the signals sent through media coverage, political statements and public attitudes significantly shape the refugees' feelings of being welcomed. We have witnessed firsthand the importance of fostering an environment that communicates inclusivity, where refugees feel equally valued and supported in their journey to become integral members of Norwegian society. The experiences of Ukrainian refugees are immensely positive and strongly supported within the work of our organisation. Witnessing people unite to create a secure environment for those facing vulnerability is truly inspiring. Having that said, it is disheartening that such positive developments have not been reflective of what we have observed over the last decade in our work (Organization C).

Chapter 7: Bringing it to an end

In this chapter, a brief summary of the findings and analysis of this research is presented. Key findings are emphasized, leading to a concluding remark. Towards the end of the chapter, the limitations of the study are discussed, followed by suggestions for future research on the topic.

7.1 Summary and Concluding Remarks

The Syrian conflict exacted a heavy toll on people, creating the largest refugee crisis of our time, affecting millions of people, and spilling into neighboring countries (UNA, 2023 a). Subsequently, Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 resulted in Europe's largest refugee crisis since World War II, overwhelming European nations with an influx of displaced individuals (Fladmoe & Brekke, 2022). The Syrian and Ukrainian refugee crises represent two distinct situations, with different underlying causes and effects. Having said that, both situations cover refugee policy and fundamental human rights. This thesis has looked at how legislative shifts, media attendance, and societal attitudes influence the process of integration. It has highlighted the role of media coverage, political discourse, and the experiences of organizations on the subject. This is of interest, as the concept of 'integration' holds major significance in Norway's refugee policy discourse. The different responses highlighted here, offer valuable insights into the ongoing discourse on racism and prejudice in refugee and asylum policy today. The main goal of this thesis has therefore been to examine the different approaches and the effect this can have on integration.

RQ: In what way have the crises of Middle Eastern and Ukrainian refugees been attended differently in Norway?

The following sub-research questions guided the interviews during the fieldwork and helped illuminate different aspects of the main question.

1. How has legislations accommodated Ukrainian refugees contrary to the refugee flow post-2015?
2. In what ways have legislative changes affected integration of refugees in Norway?

This study examines the contrasting approaches through an analysis of media coverage and language usage, as well as laws and regulations. Interviews were conducted with politicians, organizations, journalists, and writers involved in the subject. The research emphasized the significance of laws and regulations, such as collective protection, as well as societal attitudes and views of “us” and “them” through securitization policy. This can have an effect on possible positive integration, which was relevant when addressing the research questions. As indicated by various stakeholders closely involved with refugees, the treatment of Ukrainian refugees has a clear positive impact on inclusion in Norwegian society. The effectiveness through collective protection has shown to be beneficial for Ukrainians, which should be pointed to when dealing with refugees from Syria.

As mentioned in the introduction, this paper never argues for the fact that the handling of Ukrainian refugees is wrong, even though it can be regarded as unjust. Rather, it shows how our society is capable of going together and maneuver issues in effective ways when necessary. The handling of Ukrainian refugees, the effectiveness, is rather a goal one should aim for when dealing with humans fleeing their homes. It is of value to emphasize that Norwegian solidarity with Ukrainian refugees is both important and right. In this context, I want to highlight that the way European countries welcome Ukrainian refugees is an excellent example of how the asylum system should work for all people in need of refugee. Ukrainian refugees are allowed to cross national borders without facing violence, and avoid penalties even if they lack valid identification and travel documents. They are not confined by barriers or subjected to stigmatization and suspicion. As outlined in the text, Norwegian authorities have also adapted laws to facilitate swift employment or education opportunities for Ukrainian refugees, embodying a compassionate and dignified approach that lays the foundation for successful integration. The core argument presented here advocates for extending this welcoming and inclusive manner of reception to all refugees. The world will continue to face the movement of people. It is all about making the best outcome of this inherent reality.

Norway is one of the nations extending a welcoming hand to Ukrainian refugees. The unity and support we display are heartening, yet a troubling undercurrent remains. The preference for individuals more akin to us, at the expense of Middle Eastern refugees, raises critical

questions. This has been evident in both media attendance and political statements, as well as the witnessed experiences of those working closely with refugees. A vital point to bring back from statements made by organisations, is the fact that both groups fall under the refugee category, making this disparity deeply concerning. Our response during the crisis of 2015 was not uniformly compassionate, and the Ukrainian invasion harshly highlights this disparity. The Progress Party openly advocates for discriminatory policies against some refugee groups. Their website explicitly calls for an immediate halt to receiving quota refugees from other parts of the world, redirecting all resources to accommodate Ukrainian refugees (FrP.no). Such a stance, anchored in human rights principles, as well as the fact that Greece is also a neighboring area, is difficult to justify. While welcoming Ukrainian refugees is essential, it should not come at the cost of others. It should complement, not replace, the quota of refugees committed to shelter. Discriminating people based on nationality has no place in Norwegian society. The invasion of Ukraine is a horrifying event that demands our assistance, but our solidarity should extend equally to refugees from various corners of the globe.

This thesis has explored my curiosity regarding the impact of policies and attitudes on our approach to humanitarian crises. Drawing from the Copenhagen School's securitization theory, the argument posits that the language employed and the framing of refugees as potential threats can lead to consequences, contributing to societal stigmatization. This, in turn, translates into the formulation of more stringent policies and the development of dichotomous perceptions of “us” and “them.” In envisioning an empathic and inclusive society within a globalized future, the significance of arguments rooted in intergroup contact becomes paramount for minimizing prejudice.

In this thesis, the varying outcomes of refugee integration across municipalities have been thoroughly examined. A central inquiry has been whether Ukrainian refugees are subject to distinct perceptions that may influence their integration differently. Organizations and experts on the subject contend that societal attitudes play a pivotal role in shaping integration outcomes, a process initiated well before refugees reach a municipality. This is underscored by the profound impact of media and policies, which mold societal attitudes and perceptions through the lens of securitization theory.

One interviewee emphasized the advantage of having a substantial number of voters for more compassionate political parties, noting the correlation between the political landscape and the community's openness to integration.

I think it is an advantage that we have many voters for the more humane parties (...) It is true that the refugee office is responsible for the programs we offer on integration, so it is not which party sits in power that determines what we offer. But it says something about the kind of people who live in our municipality, that they do not vote for the most anti-immigrant parties. It is probably difficult to integrate where the population thinks the immigrant is a nuisance - then who will employ the immigrant? Or invite them to football training or a birthday party? It is in such arenas that integration happens.” (Organisation C)

Aligning with intergroup contact theory and the insights garnered from interviews, this thesis asserts the critical role of society in the integration of refugees. How refugees are received significantly contributes to their sense of welcome and the opportunities available for them to become integral parts of their new communities. The narratives presented in this study highlight the intricate interplay between political inclinations, societal attitudes, and the success of integration efforts. In conclusion, the research findings emphasize the central importance of positive interactions, media coverage, and political portrayal in fostering effective integration. As we navigate the complex landscape of refugee integration, it is imperative to strike a balance between compassion, societal needs, and adherence to fundamental human rights principles. The broader discourse surrounding refugee policies should prioritize inclusivity and fairness, ensuring that our commitment to solidarity extends equitably to individuals seeking refuge from various corners of the globe.

7.2 The way forward

As demonstrated in this thesis, the issue at hand is complex. Nevertheless, the Ukrainian situation has shed light on the possibilities. Despite arguments advocating for reasonable differences in treatment, these justifications fall short. As 'integration' continues to be a central consideration in refugee and asylum policy, prioritizing strategies that lead to positive outcomes becomes paramount. Avoiding the creation of divergent perceptions of refugees, particularly concerning potential security threats and system overload, in contrast to situations that a nation can effectively manage, is crucial. This approach fosters a more open reception of refugees in society, as exemplified by the welcoming response to Ukrainian refugees. As emphasized throughout this text; much of this boils down to political will.

In charting a path forward, Germany has prominently emerged as a compassionate and proactive country in handling the refugee crisis. This distinction is not solely attributed to Angela Merkel's open-armed welcome during the post-2015 crisis but also to her efforts to unite Europe's leaders. However, her endeavors faced disappointment as some leaders chose not to participate. In a contrasting scenario, while Ukrainians received substantial assistance in their fleeing situation, Norway experienced the arrival of over 5000 individuals via Storskog (Matre & Johnsen, 2016). Europe's decision to pay the Libyan coastguard for preventing people from reaching its shores was ostensibly driven by a noble intention: preventing drownings. Paradoxically, those who arrived via Storskog did not face such dangers, as it was deemed the safest route into Europe. Nevertheless, after ten days, the gates closed, accompanied by the message, 'Sorry, you're not allowed,' and the subsequent construction of border fences. As highlighted by a journalist in an interview, "Our actions don't align with our words. We must find a safe way into Europe, enduring the bureaucratic challenges of filtering out those who shouldn't be here"(Journalist A). This complex situation underscores the need for political will and coherent policies, as demonstrated throughout this thesis, to address the multifaceted challenges of refugee policy.

For future success with the inclusion of refugees, it is vital to adopt a more compassionate stance. Various stakeholders have emphasized the significance of a swifter system, akin to what Ukrainians underwent through collective protection. The positive impact of swiftly initiating a new chapter in life, rather than being ensnared in uncertainty, is crucial for

achieving positive integration outcomes. Mere closure and wishful thinking won't suffice. Greece can't solve this alone, nor can Italy or Germany. It is therefore necessary that Europe come up with a better strategy for future refugees. This is also vital for countries like Norway within themselves. Sadly, this remains stagnant due to a lack of collective will. The consequence is dire: pushbacks lead to casualties, and camps offer terrible living conditions because genuine solutions are avoided. This aspect has deeply disturbed me while working on this issue. It's not an insurmountable challenge. Stopping the Syrian war is complex, and Assad appears unstoppable. Turkey heads in a concerning, dictatorial direction – we can influence, but our impact is limited. However, we can control how we treat those in Europe. As stated by writer A: “A change can begin in a morning meeting tomorrow if we truly desire it.” Despite this, when it comes to seeking a solution, many refuse to acknowledge the underlying issue – the lack of will.

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