

NORWEGIAN INSTITUTE FOR URBAN AND REGIONAL RESEARCH NIBR

Integration of displaced persons in Europe – a brief methodological note on the lack of harmonized and comparable data

Kristian Tvedt and Kristian Rose Tronstad

OSLO METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY
STORBYUNIVERSITETET



Title: Integration of displaced persons in Europe
– a brief methodological note on the lack of harmonized and comparable data

Author: Kristian Rose Tronstad og Kristian Tvedt

NIBR Working Paper: 2023:118

ISSN: 0801-1702
ISBN: 978-82-8309-406-0

Project name: Government responses to high influxes of protection seekers (GOVREIN project)

Financial supporter: The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi)

Head of project: Vilde Hernes

Abstract: This method note includes both a general assessment of challenges with comparing return and integration results across European countries, and an assessment of data availability and existing analysis in each of the eight countries included in the GOVREIN project, assessing the following two questions: What data sources exists? And what are the possibilities and limitations for cross-national comparison of refugees' integration outcomes and their emigration/return?

Date: November 2023

Pages: 25

Publisher: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research
OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University
Postboks 4 St. Olavs plass
0130 OSLO
Telephone: (+47) 67 23 50 00
E-mail: post-nibr@oslomet.no
<http://www.oslomet.no/nibr>

© NIBR 2023

Preface

This report is part of a larger research project, the GOVREIN project, which was commissioned by The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) in April 2023. The overall assignment from IMDi was threefold, and included:

- Quantitative (descriptive) analysis of asylum flows and integration measures in European countries.
- Qualitative comparative analysis of governance and policy development in European countries, with particular focus on the high influxes in 2015/16 and 2022/23.
- Based on the comparative governance and policy analysis, identifying learning points for a Norwegian context.

This report addresses the first point and is a methodological note on the challenges involved in cross-national comparisons of return and integration outcomes. The report is based on a combination of data, interview with eight national experts on migration and integration data in the countries involved, a systematic literature search on academic research on refugees' integration outcomes, and study of documents concerning migration and integration statistics.

The report has been written by Kristian Tvedt and Kristian Rose Tronstad, both at Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research (NIBR)

Table of contents

Preface.....	1
Table of contents.....	2
Summary.....	3
1 What is at stake?	4
1.1 A more diverse society	4
1.2 Huge variations in scope and composition of displaced persons over time.....	4
2 Why is this important?	6
2.1 The importance of reliable statistics on displaced persons	6
2.2 Aim of this report	6
3 Challenges with European harmonized data on refugee integration	7
3.1 What is refugees' integration?	7
3.2 Challenges in compiling data and comparing the integration of displaced persons over time and between different countries	7
3.3 Surveys and ad hoc modules targeting migrants and refugees	10
4 What have we done?	15
4.1 Interview with eight national experts	15
4.2 What did we find?.....	16
4.3 Integration outcomes.....	16
5 Literature search.....	18
5.1 Overview	18
5.2 Methodology, scope and limitations.....	19
5.3 Literature search findings	20
6 Conclusion and recommendations.....	21
References.....	23
Appendix	25

Summary

This report discusses the challenges associated with obtaining and comparing data related to the integration of refugees in European countries. Unlike policies for asylum and protection seekers, which have standardized data collection and reporting regulations across Europe, refugee integration is primarily a national matter. However, European countries did agree in the period 2010-2014 to develop common integration indicators for measuring and comparing immigrants' integration, particularly in areas like employment and education.

The nature of refugee integration varies between countries and over time, emphasizing the need for comprehensive data. However, obtaining reliable and comparable data on refugees' participation in the workforce, education, or society at large remains a challenge. Different countries employ varying data collection methods, making cross-country comparisons difficult. Nordic countries, with their population registers, face different challenges from those using census- and survey-based methods.

Furthermore, the challenges include difficulties in obtaining comparable data due to under-coverage of migrants and refugees, non-responses, sample size limitations, and incomplete information on immigrants' reason for immigration, country of birth and year of settlement. The report also discusses the issue of high mobility among displaced persons, with Ukrainian refugees as a current example.

The report highlights limitations in survey data collection, such as the exclusion of collective households, the absence of recently arrived migrants such as refugees in the sampling, and high non-response rates among migrant and refugee populations. Large sample surveys like the EU Labor Force Survey are designed for the entire population, making them inadequate for analyzing refugee integration effectively. Since 2021 the EU labour force survey will have an ad hoc module on immigrants and their immediate descendants. This module has questions about reason for immigration, with a possibility to identify migrants granted international protection.

Moreover, the report includes a discussion of specific surveys targeting immigrants and refugees in different countries, providing valuable information but often not suitable for cross-country comparisons. An example mentioned is the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) cohort study in the UK, which aims to provide insights into the integration outcomes of refugees resettled in England and Wales between 2015 and 2020. The study may expand to Scotland, Northern Ireland, and other humanitarian programs in the future.

In conclusion, the challenges in obtaining and comparing data on refugee integration across European countries are multifaceted, from differing data collection methods to under-coverage and non-responses. Nevertheless, efforts are being made to provide more accurate and comprehensive insights into the integration of refugees and immigrants.

1 What is at stake?

1.1 A more diverse society

Over the last 50 years, migration to the Nordic and European countries have increased significantly. In 1970, only 1,5 per cent of the population in Norway had immigrant background, mainly from other Nordic and European countries. By the beginning of 2023, more than 1 000 000 or 20 per cent of the population in Norway were immigrants or children born in Norway with two foreign born parents. More than half a million of the immigrants in Norway have migrated from countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America, or European countries outside of the EU (Statistics Norway 2023).

Previous studies indicate that integration outcomes of immigrants in Norway, as compared to other countries, are reasonably good (OECD 2023, Tronstad 2016). However, behind indicators of immigrants' integration outcomes, there are persisting gaps between the majority and the minority population in important areas of society, and between different groups of immigrants. Many immigrants, including those with high level of education, have poor Norwegian reading skills. Immigrant households in Norway are far more likely to be at risk of poverty than what the native households are. Children raised in immigrant households are four times more likely to live in "poor households" compared to children without immigrant parents (OECD 2023, Tronstad 2016).

The persisting gaps between natives and foreign-born have spurred massive public debate about migration and the sustainability of the Norwegian welfare state. On the one hand, migration of relatively young people in core working age is considered a key component to counteract the demographic development of an aging population and population decline in rural areas. On the other hand, immigration, particularly immigration of refugees, who are offered a comprehensive introduction program, with language training, social studies and labour market measures, is costly. The long-term perspective is that refugees and other immigrants should become economically self-sufficient and become full-fledged citizens of the society.

1.2 Huge variations in scope and composition of displaced persons over time

Over the past decade, European nations have witnessed substantial variations in the numbers of individuals seeking protection. The remarkable surge in the arrivals of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016 marked the most extensive migratory movement in Europe since World War II. During this period, the majority of arrivals were individuals escaping the ongoing conflict in Syria, with additional arrivals originating from places like Afghanistan and Iraq. The substantial influx strained the reception capacities of many countries. In February 2022, the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine resulted in millions of displaced individuals from Ukraine, both within Ukraine's borders and across European countries. Once again, European nations were confronted with an unprecedented surge in migration as people sought protection. While the majority of those seeking refuge in 2022 and 2023 were escaping the conflict in Ukraine, there was also a significant increase in the number of asylum seekers from other countries in many nations. European countries responded to the situation in 2022 with a more coordinated approach than in previous waves of migration, primarily through the 2001 Temporary Protection Directive which the EU activated for the first time in response to the situation of mass influx of displaced individuals from Ukraine.

Nevertheless, there remained substantial variation in how different countries received and formulated policies for this group.

With a record-high population growth in 2023 due to displaced persons from Ukraine and other countries, settlement and integration policies are once again at the top of the political agenda. How do we succeed in integrating newly arrived refugees? And what can we learn from other countries?

2 Why is this important?

2.1 The importance of reliable statistics on displaced persons

Accurate and reliable statistics concerning refugees and related populations are of utmost importance for making well-informed decisions that directly affect the well-being of vulnerable communities (UN/Eurostat, 2018). Such statistics serve a wide range of potential users, including local authorities, national governments, and international organizations. Data is essential for gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of forced displacement, analyzing its consequences, and tracking changes over time (UN/Eurostat 2018). High-quality statistics on forcibly displaced populations also offer the necessary evidence to support three key objectives:

- (a) The development of more effective policies and informed decision-making.
- (b) Enhanced monitoring, evaluation, and accountability of policies and programs.
- (c) Improved public discourse.

2.2 Aim of this report

This report is part of a larger research project, the GOVREIN project, which was commissioned by The Norwegian Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) in April 2023. The overall assignment from IMDi was threefold, and included:

- Quantitative analysis of asylum flows, and integration and returns of displaced persons in European countries.
- Qualitative comparative analysis of governance and policy development in European countries, with particular focus on the high influxes in 2015/16 and 2022/23.
- Based on the comparative governance and policy analysis, identifying learning points for a Norwegian context.

This report addresses the first point and is a methodological note on the challenges involved in cross-national comparisons of return and integration outcomes. Part of the original assignment from IMDi was not only to compare asylum flows, but also assess possibilities for comparing return and integration results for protection seekers that arrived in 2015/16 and 2022/23 across European countries. In this method note we discuss the challenges with comparing existing data on return and integration results. The note includes both a general assessment of challenges with comparing return and integration results across European countries, and an assessment of data availability and existing analysis in each of the eight countries included in the GOVREIN project, assessing the following three questions:

- What data sources exist?
- What are the possibilities, and limitations, for cross-national comparison of refugees' integration outcomes?
- And their emigration/return?

To answer these questions we will in the following chapters describe some of the main data sources for analyzing the integration of refugees, and discuss the challenges concerning comparative analysis of refugees integration outcomes and return.

3 Challenges with European harmonized data on refugee integration

In contrast to policies towards asylum and protection seekers, where the aim is to treat asylum seekers uniformly across Europe and data collection and reporting is regulated¹, refugee integration is more of a national matter. In the period 2010-2014, following the so-called Zaragoza Declaration, European countries nevertheless agreed on some policy areas where common integration indicators should be developed to measure and compare the integration of immigrants. Harmonized data used in European countries as integration indicators are mainly based on large sample surveys, such as the EU Labor Force Survey (LFS), the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), as well as the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) and administrative data sources (EU 2023). These are generally good and reliable data sources for comparative European analyses of immigrants' integration on an overarching level, but these surveys have limited value for the aim of this report, which looks at the integration of refugees settled in recent years.

3.1 What is refugees' integration?

The nature of the integration process differs between national contexts and varies over time. Refugee integration can be defined as a mutual, dynamic, multifaceted, and ongoing process and can be described with reference to the main dimensions outlined below:

- From a refugee perspective, integration requires a preparedness to adapt to the host society without having to lose one's own cultural identity.
- From the point of view of the host society, it requires a willingness for communities to be welcoming and responsive to refugees and for public institutions to meet the needs of a diverse population." (UNHCR, 2002).

Integration can be defined as the gradual inclusion of refugees, asylum seekers, and other refugee related groups in their host country (UNHCR, 2002). The Declaration on Integration, established during the European Ministerial Conference on Integration in Zaragoza in 2010, emphasizes the significance of employment and education in the integration process. Furthermore, the Declaration suggests enhancing integration indicators through the incorporation of qualitative or subjective data to evaluate integration policies. These indicators should complement existing measures in the areas of employment, education, social inclusion, and active citizenship².

3.2 Challenges in compiling data and comparing the integration of displaced persons over time and between different countries

Despite European countries harmonizing data collection on the number of asylum applications, processing outcomes, rejections, and approvals, there is no equivalent

¹ See e.g. EU regulation 862/2007 on community statistics on migration and international protection, amended by EU regulation 2020/851, and EU decision 2022/382 establishing the existence of a mass influx of displaced persons from Ukraine within the meaning of Article 5 of EU directive 2001/55

² [Zaragoza Declaration on Integration \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/e300042c-3251-47e3-992d-cd959047381c/attachment/data/2010/12/12/1327227.pdf)

legislation and requirements for national statistical agencies to provide Eurostat with data on individuals with a refugee background and their integration into various aspects of society after settlement.

Interviews with experts from the 8 different countries in GOVREIN8 and a literature search conducted in this project indicate that there are data on the target population, the refugee population in all countries, and analyses of their integration are being conducted. The challenge lies in the difficulty of comparing this data due to variations in data collection methods, which offer differing opportunities to identify the population of refugees, broken down by arrival year and country of origin. Even when the refugee population can be identified, reliable and comparable data on refugees' participation in the workforce, education, or society in general are largely unavailable.

This discrepancy is a result of differing data collection methods among the countries in GOVREIN8 and in European countries at large. To simplify, the Nordic countries base their population statistics on population registers, whereas most other European countries conduct censuses every ten years to describe population composition and analyse population changes. The most recent census was carried out in various countries in 2021. Censuses typically include household and individual data and generally inquire about country of origin and year of settlement in the country but do not typically include questions about reasons for immigration, such as humanitarian protection, work, family, or study.

In the Nordic countries, national statistical agencies can link data from population registers with all other administrative registers, including permit data on reasons for immigration, employment, and education. However, operationalizing data on social integration from registers is challenging. The advantage of register and administrative data is that they cover the entire population, allowing descriptive analyses to be performed on smaller groups, such as refugees. All life events such as births, deaths, marriage, divorce, emigration and immigration are recorded, and participation in various parts of society allows for the construction and analysis of life histories for individuals with e.g. refugee background, following their participation in school, integration measures, language training, in and out of the labour market, up to retirement age. From register data integration indicators, such as employment, unemployment rate, highest educational attainment, income levels for different groups of refugees can be calculated. However, while such microdata are available to researchers in various Nordic countries, data on refugee integration is not regularly published in a format suitable for cross-country comparisons.

In countries without register-based population registers, larger sample surveys are a common method for analysing various people's participation in the labour market (labour force survey), their living conditions (EU-SILC), learning and skills (PISA), lifelong learning (PIAAC), and health, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS). Surveys offer the advantage of combining objective measures with respondents' subjective experiences. Questions like trust in people and authorities, and sense of belonging, cannot be answered with register data. Hence, every tenth year, Statistics Norway conducts a living condition survey targeting the largest immigrant groups in Norway. The drawback of large sample surveys mentioned above is that they usually target the entire population. Since immigrants in general, and refugees in particular, make up a small part of the population, the sample in such surveys is not large enough to analyse and generalize on the integration of refugees. Moreover, the rapid changes in refugee flows over the last ten years in terms of composition and scale complicate the ability to gather reliable data from sample surveys. Surveys like LFS, EU-SILC, and European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) provide a snapshot of the population at a specific point in time and offer limited opportunities to describe integration processes over time.

In some countries, specific sample surveys are conducted that focus more specifically on individuals with immigrant backgrounds. In Norway, for example, Statistics Norway conducts a living conditions survey among immigrants every ten years, with the last one being in 2015/16. This survey provides valuable information about the situation of immigrants that cannot be obtained from registers, but it does not allow for the analysis of integration over time for the large arrivals of refugees who were settled in 2015/2017 or those who arrived in 2022/23.

A final challenge pertains to the scale and mobility of displaced persons currently taking place. Ukrainian refugees, unlike previous refugee cohorts, can move freely within Europe. This means that neighbouring countries, such as Poland, have experienced a substantial influx and transit of refugees. In Norway, which is on the periphery of Europe, the influx of Ukrainian refugees is still very high, and expected to be higher in 2023 than in 2022. When the refugee population changes so rapidly, obtaining reliable data for enumeration and comparison is challenging.

3.2.1 Statistics based on sample surveys targeting the entire population

In terms of survey data, constraints arise when it comes to capturing the diversity of migrant populations comprehensively. The EU Labor Force Survey (LFS), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), and European Health Interview Survey (EHIS) are intentionally structured to encompass the entire resident population rather than specifically focusing on migrants, not to mention refugees. What are the challenges?

3.2.2 Coverage and selective non-response

Several key limitations in the data collection process related to migrant and refugee populations need to be considered within the context of the EU Labor Force Survey (LFS), European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), and European Health Interview Survey (EHIS). These limitations include:

- **Exclusion of collective households:** These sample surveys specifically target private households, thereby excluding individuals residing in collective households and institutions for asylum seekers and migrant workers. This exclusion may lead to an underrepresentation of migrants in the sample survey. Such under-coverage should be considered carefully when conducting statistical analyses and interpreting indicators, both at the national and international levels.
- **Absence of recently arrived migrants:** The sampling frame for these surveys does not encompass recently arrived migrants in any host country, resulting in an additional under-coverage of the actual migrant population in the LFS, SILC, and EHIS.
- **Non-response among migrant population:** A noteworthy challenge with these surveys is the high non-response rate among the migrant population. This non-response may be attributed to various factors such as language barriers, a lack of clarity about the surveys' purpose, or communication difficulties with interviewers. Additionally, migrants might be reluctant to participate in fear of potential negative repercussions on their legal status within the host country.

- Sample size limitations: Given the nature of the LFS, SILC, and EHIS as sample surveys, they may not adequately capture the characteristics of migrants in EU member states with very low migrant populations.
- Incomplete information on country of citizenship and birth: Information regarding an individual's country of citizenship and country of birth is solicited from all individuals aged 15 or older in private households selected in the LFS and EHIS. However, in EU-SILC, this information is collected only from those aged 16 and above. This leads to an underestimation of the migrant population when analyzing their distribution by country of citizenship and country of birth (Eurostat 2023).

3.3 Surveys and ad hoc modules targeting migrants and refugees

The European Union Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) is the largest European household sample survey providing quarterly and annual results on labour market characteristics of people aged 15-89. The EU-LFS covers the resident population, defined as all people usually residing in private households. Since 1999, an inherent part of EU-LFS has been the ad hoc modules. In 2014 and 2021, EU-LFS included a module on the labour market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants. From 2021, this module will be conducted regularly every eight years under Regulation (EU 2019/1700).

The inclusion of the 'reason for migration' variable in the EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS) ad-hoc module on the labor market situation of migrants and their immediate descendants from 2014 and 2021 serves as an illustration of a survey that enables the identification of certain refugee and refugee-related populations and the generation of statistics that facilitate comparisons with both nationals and other migrant groups.

An examination of the ad-hoc module from 2014 uncovered that Sweden, Norway, Switzerland, and the UK offer the most favorable prospects for refugees to secure employment. Migrants, particularly refugees, tend to be disproportionately concentrated in countries with stable labour markets and low unemployment rates (OECD 2017). These data are valuable to compare differences in labour market integration between people with an immigrant background across Europe. Nevertheless, analysis of this ad hoc module cannot be disaggregated by specific refugees sending countries (countries of origin), year of settlement or length of residence in refugees' new host countries. There are few countries that have a sample of refugees in EU-LFS ad hoc module large enough to to analyse and compare e.g. the labour market integration of refugee men and women in different countries (Liebig and Tronstad 2019).

Other examples of surveys targeting immigrants and refugees are:

- 2010 Sweden: Living Conditions among Immigrants in Sweden
- 2010 United Kingdom: Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom
- 2005-2006 Norway: Living Conditions among Immigrants in Norway
- 2015-2016 Norway: Living Conditions among Immigrants in Norway
- Annually since 2016 Germany: IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey

3.3.1 The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees

The IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees is a study that involves annual interviews with participants. The target group for these interviews comprises individuals who arrived in

Germany between January 2013 and September 2022 and sought international protection. Starting from 2023, Ukrainian nationals who have come to Germany due to the Russian war of aggression are also included in this study. In addition to the primary participants, all other members of their households are also interviewed. This study is conducted by the Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF-FZ) in collaboration with the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) at DIW Berlin. The primary objective of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees is to gather reliable information about the living conditions of individuals who have sought refuge in Germany since 2013. To achieve this, the study collects information on various aspects, including education, vocational training, and the current employment status of the refugees. Language proficiency, housing conditions, family situations, social engagement, and the nature and extent of their social networks are also central subjects of the study. As part of this study, individuals who applied for asylum or temporary protection in Germany between 2013 and September 2022 are interviewed annually, regardless of the outcome of their applications. Additionally, interviews are conducted with their respective household members. The aim is to survey the same individuals each year. In 2016, information was available for 4,465 adults, for 2017, 5,703 adults were included, for 2018, the study covered 4,471 individuals, for 2019, it encompassed 3,993 participants, and in 2020, data from 3,319 adults was collected.

3.3.2 Longitudinal Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom, 2010

This survey encompassed all newly arrived refugees aged 18 or older who received a favorable decision regarding asylum, humanitarian protection, or discretionary leave to stay in the period from December 1, 2005, to March 25, 2007. A postal questionnaire was distributed shortly after the asylum decision (considered the baseline), followed by subsequent questionnaires at 8, 15, and 21 months after the baseline assessment. In the initial phase of the survey, over 5,600 new refugees took part, with the number of respondents decreasing to approximately 940 by the time of the 21-month assessment.

3.3.3 Linking of administrative data and census data - The Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) cohort study in United Kingdom

The Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) cohort study, is a joint effort between the Home Office and the Office for National Statistics (ONS), initially aimed to link NHS Personal Demographics Service (PDS) data and Home Office border systems data with refugees resettled under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS). Having successfully concluded the RIO data linkage pilot in June 2022, the study was expanded to include refugees granted asylum between 2015 and 2020. Census 2021 for England and Wales has been linked to the VPRS, VCRS, and asylum-granted refugees. The RIO cohort study is poised to provide unique insights into the integration outcomes of approximately 113,000 refugees resettled under the VPRS and VCRS or granted asylum in England and Wales between 2015 and 2020. While the RIO cohort study currently encompasses England and Wales, there are future plans to extend it to Scotland and Northern Ireland, as well as to other humanitarian and protection programs, contingent on data availability, data supplier agreements, data quality, and funding. The ONS is also exploring the feasibility of creating an anonymized person-level longitudinal data source for England and Wales, based on Census 2021, updated annually to reflect changes in the population (births, deaths, and migration). This dataset, known as the

Longitudinal Population Dataset (LPD), is envisioned to integrate RIO as a satellite cohort study, facilitating comparisons with other population groups, including the general migrant population ³

3.3.4 Possibilities and limitations of comparison with Nordic data

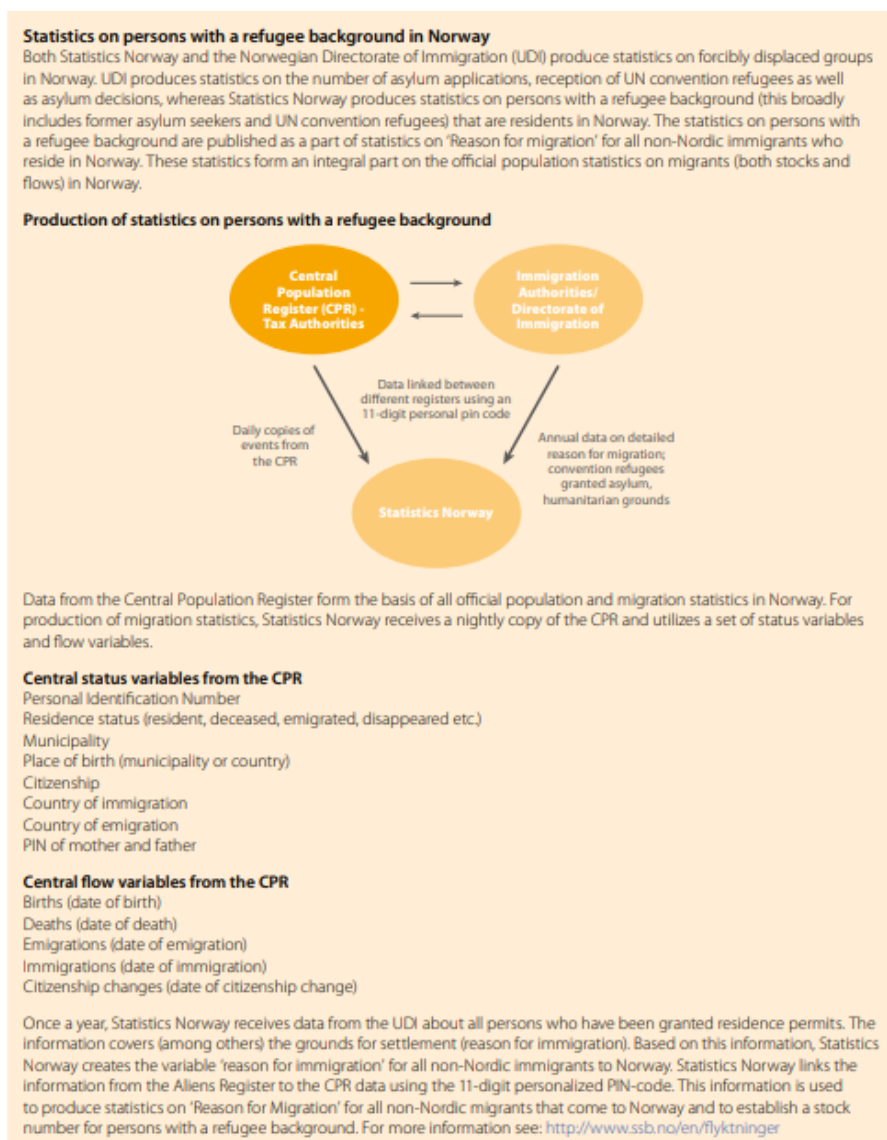
In the Nordic countries, statistics for various topics are compiled in the Nordic Statistics Database. There is a separate thematic area covering "integration and migration," with data for, among others, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland. The database is based on data from the national statistical offices (NSO) of all the Nordic countries, and definitions and classifications are harmonized, making data comparable. The challenge with this source is that the data has unfortunately not been updated since 2018. This means that it is possible to make some simple comparisons of employment and educational levels in the Nordic countries for some refugee groups, for example, those with a background from Syria who arrived in 2015/16 and had less than 3 years of residence in 2018 (Østby & Aalandslid 2020). However, it will not be possible to track the integration of the 2015/2016 cohorts in the labor market and education level over time, nor the new refugee cohorts settled in 2022/23.

3.3.5 Analysis of population and administrative registry data

The Nordic countries have unique individual-level register data, where it is possible to compile and process individual data (Hernes et al. 2022, Røed & Raaum 2003). However, such administrative data are published with delays. For example, data on employment is based on observations in a reference week in the fourth quarter of one year and is usually published no earlier than March of the following year. It is also important to note that even though it is possible to strive for harmonized Nordic analyses, this is a challenging exercise. For example, it is not straightforward to harmonize data for the target group across national borders in the Nordic region. Finland, for example, does not yet have permit data as a characteristic in its population records, but must identify the population through a combination of country of origin and citizenship (Østby & Aalandslid 2020). Figure 1 gives an example on how data are linked to produce statistics on displaced persons in Norway, with a combination of status and flow variables from the Central Population Register (CPR), and how this can be linked to other administrative registers based on a 11-digits personal identification code.

³ [Refugee integration outcomes data-linkage pilot - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/refugee-integration-outcomes-data-linkage-pilot)

Figure 3.1: Linking administrative data on refugee and refugee related populations in Norway



Source: UN/Eurostat 2018

3.3.6 Insufficient comparable data on actual returns

Most European countries have a good overview of immigration flows, but population figures for the number of immigrants and refugees present in the country at a given time can be difficult to determine. This is because data on emigration is less accurate. For those who move from one country to another, there may be few incentives to register emigration, and analyses of what is recorded regarding immigration and emigration figures between different countries are largely inconsistent (Poulain, Merrin & Singleton, 2006, Mooyaart J.E., Daňko M.J., Costa R. and Boissonneault, 2021). In the Scandinavian countries that base their population statistics on population registers, rather than decennial censuses, it is possible to use data on so-called registration status (resident, deceased, emigrated) and compare this information as of January 1, 2023, for various refugee cohorts (immigration basis + year of immigration) to see how many of them, for example, those who immigrated and received protection in, for example, 2015, 2016, and 2022, are still resident in Norway. These are

analyses that can be carried out in the Scandinavian countries based on available data in microdata.no. It will not provide information about where refugees are going, only whether they are still registered as residents. For the other Scandinavian countries, this could involve more extensive work. For Germany, the UK, and most European countries, this will not be possible based on official statistics (Poulain et al. 2006)

4 What have we done?

This chapter addresses the GOVREIN Work Package 2 objective of identifying data on integration outcomes for protection-seeker in the eight countries that are covered in the project. These include the four Nordic countries: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, in addition to four European countries: Austria, Germany, Poland, and the United Kingdom. The data collection process for this WP2 objective follows two paths: 1) qualitative interviews with country experts in the eight countries, to assess the comparability and existence of relevant integration data in national statistics services and official registries and 2) the literature review expanding the search to peer-reviewed journals.

4.1 Interview with eight national experts

We interviewed one country expert in each of the eight countries. The country experts were contacted with a proposal that contained a clear outline of how the data was to be used in the GOVREIN project, and an overview of the four specific topics we wanted to cover: three categories of integration outcomes and repatriation/stocks of refugees who had been granted residence permits. Several of the country experts had done research before the interview to provide adequate coverage of all topics.

All of the country experts had experience in migration research, but they have somewhat different academic backgrounds within social science; half of them are economists, and the others work in public policy or demography and population statistics. Some country experts work in national statistics services, some work in semi-governmental agencies and research centres, and some are affiliated with universities. One had worked with the OECD as a SOPEMI correspondent for several decades, which provides country contributions to the annual Migration Outlook publications of the OECD.

Table 4.1: National experts and affiliation

Country	Expert	Affiliation
Norway	Minja Tea Dzamarija	Senior adviser, coordinator of immigration statistics and analysis, Statistics Norway (SSB)
Sweden	Karin Lundström	Demographer, Department for Social Statistics and Analysis, Statistics Sweden
Denmark	Jacob Arendt	Research Professor and Head of Labour Market Research, The Rockwool Foundation
Finland	Minna Säävälä	Senior researcher, Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment
Germany	Yuliya Kosyakova	Head of the Research Department <i>Migration and International Labour Studies</i> , Institute for Employment Research (IAB)
Austria	Gudrun Biffi	Prof. em., Danube University Krems, Department of Migration and Globalisation. SOPEMI correspondent (OECD) until 2017.
Poland	Pawel Kaczmarczyk	Vice director, Centre of Migration Research, University of Warsaw
United Kingdom	Dominik Hangartner	Professor of Public Policy at ETH Zurich, and affiliated with the Department of Government at the London School of Economics and Political Science. Faculty Co-Director of the Immigration Policy Lab (Stanford University and ETH Zurich).

The interviews were semi-structured, to allow explanations and deeper knowledge of specific topics, while simultaneously ensuring that all relevant parts were covered. The most important parts related to which data was available, and how it was collected, in countries where population registries were not accessible to researchers. Wherever registries did cover relevant topics/integration outcomes, we probed for possibilities and limitations, such as imputations and whether pins in the registries could enable other analyses (can the target population be connected to other registries, for example?).

All interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams and were scheduled for 30 mins. Some interviews elapsed for 20–60 mins.

The interview guide can be found in the appendix.

4.2 What did we find?

The expert interviews were conducted to assess whether comparable data on integration outcomes were available in the 8 GOVREIN countries. To ensure comparability between cohorts of protection holders within each country, the target population must be defined in the data sources, such as national population registries, census or surveys.

4.2.1 Target population

Administrative data are a useful source of information for measuring both the stock of refugee and refugee related populations, and potentially the flows, if they include variables allowing the identification of the target population, or if the specific administrative source can be linked at the individual level to another data source allowing the identification of refugee and refugee related populations.

If we want to analyze different cohorts of refugees and their integration, we should as a minimum be able to identify the target population by a combination of variables: 1. Reason for immigration – based on permit data such as granted protection or refugee status, year of settlement and country of origin. When these variables are accessible, it is possible to follow e.g. Syrian refugees who arrived in 2016, and distinguish them from refugees from other countries settled the previous year or more recently.

Overall, the interviews revealed that this target population can be identified in population registers in the three Scandinavian countries, and Finland will soon follow. In other countries immigration authorities have information or registers with information of applications and permits of displaced persons, but this information is not linked or possible to link to population registers or other administrative for statistical purposes or research.

The Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) cohort study in United Kingdom is an example of project that aim at linking of administrative data and census data outside of the Nordic countries. It is briefly described in paragraph 3.3.3.

4.3 Integration outcomes

In Scandinavia, it is possible to link population registers with other administrative registries. However, openly accessible integration measures – such as the share of employed refugees in specific cohorts – is not produced on the same basis, and this makes comparability difficult for our purposes in this report. It is possible to request the data from the national statistics agencies.

In the four non-Nordic countries, censuses and surveys can provide some data on integration outcomes, but the aforementioned difficulty with representative data is a challenge. In Germany, a large survey targeting refugees can provide some insights, but comparing employment rates or education levels from this source to those resulting from Scandinavian registry sources is not advised. In the UK, barely any integration data is available from official sources (Home Office/Office of National Statistics), but there have been made «experimental» attempts to follow refugee cohorts lately. These efforts may produce interesting integration data at a later point in time.

In Poland and Austria, it is very difficult to assess the integration of refugees/protection holders. Non-English sources do have some estimates for immigrants from specific sending countries. These are based on registry data and surveys, but neither of those identified here are adequately representative.

While there do exist descriptive analyses that attempt to compare the integration of displaced Ukrainians into European labour markets (e.g. Desiderio and Hooper 2023), they are characterised by the same challenges as detailed above. Data is sourced from non-comparable sources, which leads authors to not juxtapose employment rates at all, and instead provide absolute numbers of the number of protection holders who are registered as employed and not employed. It is not possible to deduce employment rates from these data without knowing the full population of working age persons in the cohort. To add to the complexity, the situation is developing quickly for Ukrainians, who are generally able to work as soon as they are registered for collective protection. However, those who aspire to return to Ukraine may be more likely to start working quickly, and these aspirations may also shape whether they settle temporarily in a country bordering Ukraine, or if they travel further (ibid). This clutters any direct comparisons between Ukrainian protection holders in different countries, as their labour market integration may be directly affected by their long-term aspirations of whether they wish to permanently reside in their new host country.

5 Literature search

In addition to the review of official national statistics, we found it necessary to expand the data collection to peer-reviewed academic research. As detailed in the previous chapters, there are several reasons why integration outcomes are hard to quantify reliably, especially outside Scandinavia, where comprehensive registry data is often missing. Regarding the comparability of studies, the specific methodology of the data collection process may vary between national official registries. As academic scholarship may shed light on integration processes and outcomes, the following literature review supplements interviews with country experts to outline existing knowledge on integration outcomes. Any relevant grey literature was identified in the expert interviews. No grey literature, such as governmental sources or data in reports from international NGOs, is identified in the literature search; only peer-reviewed scholarship is included here.

5.1 Overview

To shed light on three types of integration data – both structural integration (employment and education) and social integration – in the eight countries, the following literature search is split into $8 \times 3 = 24$ search strings. The literature search was conducted in Web of Science, and included articles published between 2015–2023 in peer-reviewed academic journals. The search was structured using three common search terms: (i) refugee/migrant, (ii) integration, and (iii) country name.

Overall, the literature search returned 1777 hits, of which only ~10 % were actually related to the research topic, and less so the research question. We found that most of these documents were qualitative studies, such as case studies and policy analyses. Such scholarship do not provide any insights to the aim of this literature search, which is to find comparable integration data on specific refugee cohorts. Wherever quantitative studies with relevance to the research question did show up, they explored other target populations than the cohorts of interest, such as resettlement refugees (Bratsberg et al. 2021), cohorts arriving before the periods of interest (Hernes, Arendt, Joonas and Tronstad 2020), or dealt with the integration effects of different settlement schemes and municipalities (Adserá, Andersen and Tønnessen 2022).

5.1.1 On data collection

An evident challenge to the data collection is the multitude of languages in the eight countries. There is a risk that important studies may not be available in English. A recent scoping review that examined the labour market integration of refugees in Norway from 2015–2019 returned over 200 articles and found that four-fifths of them were published in Norwegian, with the remainder in English (Wong, 2020). This pattern may be similar for other countries included in the GOVREIN project, but it has not been feasible to conduct scoping reviews for all countries in all languages. We anticipate that valid and reliable measures of integration outcomes, derived from robust research designs, will emerge in the English-language search.

Overall, the literature search returned many hits, but nearly all were irrelevant. Many of the returned articles dealt with other research topics, such as psychology, health, religion and business administration, and were duly discarded. After screening, many articles were found to be qualitative studies, which could not provide any knowledge about the quantitative

nature of comparable integration outcomes. After these two screening steps, the remaining 5–10 % of articles were assessed.

5.2 Methodology, scope and limitations

The purpose of this review is to identify comparable and valid estimates of the aforementioned integration outcomes. In this context, *comparable* means that protection seeker cohorts are identified similarly within different countries. *Valid* means that estimates are based on representative data, such as large-scale surveys using sampling techniques to adequately cover hard-to-reach groups, as mentioned in previous chapter. Notably, this literature search is not a systematic review; we have not deployed rigorous tools for data extraction, because the aim is not to map all existing research of varying methodologies, but rather identify specific articles. Though this literature review differs in scope, it still makes use of rigorous search terms, similar to the systematic review (Robinson and Lowe 2015). Grey literature, especially analyses and white papers released by governmental agencies and registries not subject to academic peer-review, can possibly capture important estimates (Mahood, Van Eerd and Irvin 2013), but are not included in the database Web of Science. Instead, grey literature of high relevance is identified in the qualitative interviews with country experts that supplement this literature search.

Common search terms: (i) refugee/migrant, (ii) integration, and (iii) country name.

While the term «refugee» is denoted as an internationally recognized protection status under the 1951 Refugee Convention (UNHCR, n.d.), existing side by side with other protection statuses such as subsidiary protection and the EU Temporary Protection Directive (European Commission, n.d.), we expect it to cover relevant articles. Alternative wordings in test sampling, using the terms «protection seeker», «asylum grant», and «residence permit» in combination with search string components (ii) and (iii) returns few results (<10), and they all include the term refugee, making alternative wordings redundant.

Scoping terms: (1) labour market/employment, (2) education, (3) social integration.

Limitations: (i) peer-reviewed articles, and (ii) time period: 2015–2023.

The scope of this literature search was confined to have one purpose: identify comparable estimates for the three distinct research topics. Despite the short time limit, we still think the review provides a sufficient basis for identifying the research focus and the central findings on the research questions. Because the data of interest is elusive and subject to scientific scrutiny, we assume that including books in the scope of the literature search will only add redundant information, and therefore we narrowed the search to peer-reviewed articles. These limitations are partly due to the absence of comparable data, and partly due to the short time window.

The review process had two steps: (i) screening: pre-filtering articles to discard documents that were clearly irrelevant; and (ii) post-filtering reviewing: reading and assessing research methodologies in the documents, to ensure comparability, representativity and validity of the integration indicators. Table 5.1 displays the numbers of pre-screening hits across the three categories and eight countries.

5.3 Literature search findings

The search strings within each category were (1) employ* OR unemploy* OR labor* OR labour*; (2) education*; (3) social integration. While the 24 literature searches returned a combined 1777 hits, about 90–95 % were discarded on screening.

Table 5.1: Pre-screening hits in Web of Science

Common search terms:	refugee* + [topic 1, 2, or 3] + [country 1 to 8]		
Country	(1) Employment	(2) Education	(3) Social integration
Norway	19	93	55
Sweden	89	151	24
Denmark	40	65	40
Finland	22	52	18
Germany	154	153	129
Austria	45	293	40
Poland	17	31	15
UK	85	63	84
Total	471	901	405

The search returned no documents that met all criteria. That means that no studies compared the integration outcomes of the specific cohorts that arrived in 2015/16, or 2022/23, within and between countries. Several studies did reveal integration disparities between other protection holder cohorts that arrived earlier, or certain parts of the cohorts, such as resettlement refugees specifically. Some of the identified articles did compare the treatment and effect of policies on specific subgroups of refugee cohorts, such as refugee children (Crul et al. 2019). While the large number of search hits and the lack of findings may seem surprising, this can be explained by the absence of data. If robust and representative data were available across countries, it is likely that there would be more research produced on the integration of protection holders within and between countries.

6 Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, the challenges associated with European harmonized data on refugee integration are multifaceted and complex. While there is a harmonization of data collection and reporting for asylum and protection seekers across Europe, the landscape for refugee integration remains largely a national matter. The harmonized data used for integration indicators primarily rely on large sample surveys and administrative data sources, such as the EU Labor Force Survey (LFS), the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), and the European Health Interview Survey (EHIS). These sources provide reliable data for comparative European analyses of immigrants' integration at an overarching level but face limitations when it comes to assessing the integration of refugees settled in recent years.

One of the significant challenges is the lack of equivalent legislation and requirements for national statistical agencies to provide data on refugees' integration after settlement. Data collection methods vary significantly among European countries, leading to difficulties in comparing data related to refugees' integration. This discrepancy arises from differences in data collection methods, including population registers and censuses based on registers, which are more common in Nordic countries. While these methods are valuable for describing population composition, they do not regularly provide data suitable for cross-country comparisons of refugee integration.

Large sample surveys, such as the EU-LFS, EU-SILC, and EHIS, are widely used in countries without register-based population registers. These surveys aim to capture the entire population but face challenges in representing the relatively small population of immigrants and refugees, particularly in rapidly changing circumstances such as the current development in Ukraine. Since 2021 the EU labour force survey will have an ad hoc module on immigrants and their immediate descendants every eight years. This module has questions about reason for immigration, with a possibility to identify migrants granted international protection.

Some countries conduct specific sample surveys targeting individuals with immigrant backgrounds, which provide valuable information but often lack the necessary sample size to analyze integration over time for recent refugee arrivals. Furthermore, the scale and mobility of displaced persons, such as Ukrainian refugees, make obtaining reliable and comparable data for enumeration and comparison even more challenging.

The challenges in using survey data include coverage and non-response, which may lead to underrepresentation of migrant populations, particularly those residing in collective households, as well as the absence of recently arrived migrants. High and selective non-response rates among migrant populations can also affect the reliability of survey data. The information collected on country of citizenship and birth may not be complete in some surveys, leading to an underestimation of the migrant population when analyzing their distribution by these characteristics.

Several surveys and cohort studies target immigrants and refugees in specific countries, such as the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees in Germany and the Longitudinal Survey of New Refugees in the United Kingdom. These studies provide valuable insights into the integration outcomes of refugees and immigrants. Additionally, efforts to link administrative data and census data, such as the Refugee Integration Outcomes (RIO) cohort study in the United Kingdom, offer a promising way to assess integration outcomes over time.

Despite these efforts, there remains a lack of sufficient comparable data on actual returns of refugees across European countries, which can be challenging to track due to inconsistencies in emigration data. Scandinavian countries with population registers have an advantage in tracking resident populations, but the same is not true for most European countries.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges with European harmonized data on refugee integration requires collaborative efforts to harmonize data collection methods, overcome coverage and non-response limitations in surveys, and improve the comparability of data across countries. Additionally, more research and data collection efforts are needed to comprehensively understand and evaluate the integration of refugees settled in recent years, particularly in the context of rapidly changing refugee flows.

References

- Adserà, A., Andersen, S., & Tønnessen, M. (2022). Does one municipality fit all? The employment of refugees in Norway across municipalities of different centrality and size. *European Journal of Population*, 38(3), 547–575. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10680-022-09618-3>
- Bratsberg, B., Ferwerda, J., Finseraas, H., & Kotsadam, A. (2021). How settlement locations and local networks influence immigrant political integration. *American Journal of Political Science*, 65(3), 551-565. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12532>
- Crul, M., Lelie, F., Biner, Ö., Bunar, N., Keskiner, E., Kokkali, I., Schneider, J., & Shuayb, M. (2019). How the different policies and school systems affect the inclusion of Syrian refugee children in Sweden, Germany, Greece, Lebanon, and Turkey. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 7, Article 10. <https://comparativemigrationstudies.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40878-018-0110-6>
- Desiderio, M. V., & Hooper, K. (2023). Displaced Ukrainians in European labor markets: Leveraging innovations for more inclusive integration. *Migration Policy Institute*. Retrieved October 27, 2023, from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/ukrainians-european-labor-markets>
- European Commission. (n.d.). *Temporary protection*. Retrieved from https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en
- Eurostat (2023) *Measuring migrant integration – framework*. [Accessed 15. November 2023] <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/migration-asylum/migrant-integration/methodology>
- Hernes, V., Arendt, J. N., Joonas, P. A., & Tronstad, K. R. (2020). Rapid or long-term employment? A Scandinavian comparative study of refugee integration policies and employment outcomes. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 29(2). <https://doi.org/10.1080/13501763.2020.1824011>
- Mahood, Q., Van Eerd, D., & Irvin, E. (2013). Searching for grey literature for systematic reviews: Challenges and benefits. *Research Synthesis Methods*, 4(3), 221-234. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/jrsm.1106>
- Mooyaart J.E., Daňko M.J., Costa R. and Boissonneault (2021) *Quality assessment of European migration data*. QuantMig Project Deliverable D6.2. The Hague: Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI-KNAW)/University of Groningen
- OECD/European Commission (2023), *Indicators of Immigrant Integration 2023: Settling In*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d5020a6-en>.
- Poulain, M., Perrin, N., & Singleton, EA. (2006). *Towards Harmonised European Statistics on International Migration*. Presses Universitaires de Louvain. <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-12321.html>
- Robinson, P., & Lowe, J. (2015). Literature reviews vs. systematic reviews. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, 39(2), 103. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1111/1753-6405.12393>

SSB (2023). Innvandrere og norskfødte med innvandrerforeldre, Retrieved Nov. 15, 2023 <https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/innvandrere/statistikk/innvandrere-og-norskfodte-med-innvandrerforeldre>

Tronstad, K. R. (2016). *Integrering i Skandinavia*. IMDI-rapport 2016

UN/Eurostat (2018) Expert Group on Refugee and Internally Displaced Persons Statistics — International Recommendations on Refugee Statistics. [Accessed 15. November 20223] https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/Standards-and-Methods/files/Principles_and_Recommendations/International-Migration/2018_1746_EN_08-E.pdf

UNHCR (2002) Refugee Resettlement. An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration. September 2002, available at: <https://www.refworld.org/docid/405189284.html> [accessed 15 November 2023]

UNHCR. (n.d.). The 1951 Refugee Convention. Retrieved Oct 10, 2023, from <https://www.unhcr.org/about-unhcr/who-we-are/1951-refugee-convention>

Wong, T. (2020). *A scoping review of literature on labour market integration of newly arrived refugees in Norway* (VID vitenskapelige høyskole, rapport 5/2020). Retrieved from <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/327059956.pdf>

Østby, L. & Aalandslid, V. (2020) *Innvandring og innvandrere i Norden: en komparativ analyse*. Rapporter 2020/40, Statistisk sentralbyrå, ISSN 0806-2056

Appendix

Interview guide

Target population:

Is it possible, based on official statistics, to identify refugees, i.e., reasons for immigration, by year of arrival/settlement and country of origin/birth?

Employment and labor market participation:

Are any cross-sectional data available for refugee employment for those who arrived from 2015 onwards?

Are there longitudinal analyses of employment for different refugee cohorts arriving after 2015? For example, employment rates within cohorts from Syria/Iraq/Iran/Afghanistan (2015/16) and Ukraine (2022/23).

Is there information about integration measures and participation in “integration programs” that prepare immigrants for work?

Education:

Are cross-sectional data available for the highest completed education and participation in education for refugees who arrived from 2015 onwards?

Are there longitudinal analyses of education participation for different refugee cohorts arriving after 2015?

What information is available about education participation and education levels of these immigrants?

Social integration:

What is known about social integration for these two cohorts in terms of participation in organizations, trust in the host country's institutions, and the strength of their social networks?

Voluntary return/repatriation/emigration: (not persons who were declined protection/asylum, but refugees with residence permits who voluntarily emigrate)

How many of the refugees who settled since 2015 (and cohorts afterwards) are still present in 2023? What information is available about voluntary return of Ukrainians?