Labour Markets, Post-2014 migrants and Refugees in Europe: Short Policy Lessons from the SIRIUS Research Project

Research Topic: The capacity for labour market opportunities to ensure the economic and social 'inclusion' of people within society holds true for host populations as well as for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (MRAs). Regardless of one's migrant or native status (by native we mean people residing in their country of birth and nationality), employment provides income, social identity, social connections, and enables individuals to contribute to the growth and prosperity of the country through consumption and taxation.

Research Data: Our research evidence and policy considerations regarding the 'macro' dimensions of integration involved scrutinizing the characteristics of post-2014 MRAs along with the economic drivers of the SIRIUS economies (the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom and Switzerland) and the determinants of their labour markets.

Findings: In each of the SIRIUS countries, MRAs are concentrated in the 15-64 age group and thus belong to that section of the population which is active in the labour market. Among the SIRIUS countries Switzerland, Denmark and the UK have the highest number of foreign nationals with a tertiary educational attainment level as opposed to Greece and Italy which have more foreign nationals with lower educational attainment levels (Levels 0-2) not only amongst the SIRIUS countries, but also compared to the EU28 average. This uneven distribution could result from the different approaches to migration taken by the SIRIUS countries, as some favour more highly educated migrants, limiting access for those with lower levels of education. However, the uneven distribution of MRAs with different educational levels inevitably produces diverse integration needs and opportunities.

The sectoral capacity to provide employment in each of the SIRIUS economies was statistically significantly and positively associated with the level of educational attainment of employees. The level of sectoral labour cost does not affect - in a statistically significant manner - the evolution of labour dynamics in most of the SIRIUS economies, with the exceptions of Greece and Finland. Investments in Research and Development have a positive impact for the creation of employment opportunities in the most tertiarised economies. Due to the high diversity of the labour markets and the economic structure of the SIRIUS case countries, different sectors and occupations are expected to effectively absorb the MRAs. The gender gap in employment is evident in most of the SIRIUS case countries. Apart from a few exceptions (namely Denmark and Finland) the labour markets of the SIRIUS case countries remain dominated by the male breadwinner model: this means that female MRAs face a far more challenging environment than their male counterparts when searching for an occupation (gender inequality in terms of access to the labour market is stronger in Greece, Italy and the Czech Republic).

Recommendations: A more informed and coordinated cross-European labour market capacity that takes into account the potential workforce contribution of MRAs could tackle irregular work and manage secondary movements (the intra-EU movement of MRAs). Countries should focus their integration policies on the development of further opportunities for vocational education and training, as well as on increasing language proficiency so that MRAs have better opportunities for integration in those sectors more likely to create jobs. Concerning women MRAs, such policies should encourage the recognition of skills and education, while, with regard to both MRAs and native women, these countries should improve their provision of child and elderly care services to ease women's entry into the labour market. There is a clear need for the creation of a platform at Member States and the EU level that would enable MRAs to have their education, qualifications and skills profiled and accredited in line with the EU regulatory framework.