



SIRIUS

Skills and Integration of Migrants,
Refugees and Asylum Applicants
in European Labour Markets

Integrated Report on Individual Barriers and Enablers WP6: Research report

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List of Acronyms

CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
DGCA	Danish Green Card Association
Kela	The Social Insurance Institution of Finland
LMI	Labour market integration
MLI	Migrant Labour Market Integration
MRAs	Migrants, Refugees, and Asylum seekers
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OAMP	Czech Department of Migration and Asylum Policy of the Ministry of the Interior
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RFA	Refugee Facilities Administration
TE-Office	Finnish Employment and Economic Development Office
VUC	VoksenUddanelseCenter (Danish general adult education programme)

Executive Summary

The main goal of the SIRIUS project is a comprehensive analysis of barriers and enablers in the labour market integration of third country nationals (TCNs) including migrants, refugees and asylum applicants (MRAs) in European countries. As an essential component of this analysis, we have undertaken - in the current work package (WP6) - a detailed study of the role that individual characteristics can play in the process of labour market integration. The micro-analysis provided in this package builds on the multi-dimensional framework of the SIRIUS project, which assumes that integration in the labour market depends on the interplay of elements of the macro- (economic, legal and policy dimensions), meso- (civil society and social partners) and micro- (individual characteristics) spheres of our life. Having already highlighted the macro- and meso-level dimensions of integration in the previous work packages, here we specifically discuss its micro-sphere as seen in the individual characteristics of migrants.

On the micro-level, integration depends on the individual's capacity, which is comprised of such factors as the migrant's skills, education, language proficiency, age, psychological and physical well-being and entrepreneurial potential. By using biographical interviews and the innovative tool of film essay, the micro-level of research takes a close look at the needs of migrants and refugees/asylum seekers. This presupposes a specific focus on the needs of women and young people vis-à-vis their skills, their public image in host societies, and their own perception of the barriers and enablers for integration. The detailed analysis of these factors is to inform such integration policies and programmes that would be responsive to the migrants' needs and voices.

In total, we have conducted **100 biographic interviews** in seven countries, namely: 16 interviews in Greece; 10 in Italy; 11 in Switzerland, Finland and the UK each; 14 in the Czech Republic; and 27 in Denmark. Their analysis is further presented in this report on the comparative and country-specific levels.

This Introduction elaborates on the basic rationale for the micro-analysis of labour-market integration, with which WP6 has engaged. In the next section, we elaborate on the agency-vulnerability nexus, which underpins the overall logic of our research. We specifically argue that the labour-market integration manifests itself in the operationalization of this nexus – that is, in how ***migrants' agency, or their decision-making toward the overall migratory process***, responds to the problems emerging from their vulnerability as women, minors, ethnic or sexual minorities, and foreign people (or outsiders) in general. Then we illuminate the main integration barriers and enablers (such as entrance to the job market, recognition of credentials, local bureaucracy and networking) as seen by the migrants themselves. We explain how these barriers and enablers become tangible and meaningful for the migrants as long as they experience specific life-changing events ('turning points') and develop their own theories ('epiphanies') about life in general and about their own adjustment to the host labour market in particular. Looking at how crucial events shape migrants' agency, we explore nuances of the agency-vulnerability nexus.

1. Introduction: Integration under the Microscope

Simone Baglioni and Irina Isaakyan

1.1. Rationale: The ‘agency-vulnerability’ nexus

Various studies show that success of labour market integration is generally associated for the migrant with employment in decent working conditions (Bal 2014; Bernstein 2016; De Beer & Schills 2009). The International Labour Organization (ILO 2020) defines ‘decent work’ as a mode of employment that ‘delivers a fair income, security in the workplace, social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, and equal opportunity and treatment for all women and men’. The ILO (ibid) further states that, only under these conditions, migrants’ lives can be self-fulfilling.

To understand what makes a successful story of labour migration (or what makes the case of the migrant’s decent work), we would like to shed light on the interplay between migrants’ inner capacities/characteristics and the opportunities that are provided to them by the socio-economic and political context. Our starting point is the fundamental argument made by Anthony Giddens (2000) about the ‘agency-structure’ nexus, or his acknowledgement of reciprocal relationship between personal characteristics and context (ibid). Triandafyllidou (2018) and other migration scholars (King et al. 2017; Squire 2017) further note that migrants, in particular, develop new personality traits and make new decisions under the impact of various circumstances of their migration, while also creating new opportunities for themselves through this dynamics.

Throughout the SIRIUS project, we have seen how legal provisions, labour market integration policies and discourses as well as civil society organisations and social partners provide migrants with a range of different opportunities, which differ across countries and migrant categories. For example, so-called economic migrants, are provided with opportunities that asylum seekers or irregular migrants do not have. Gender differences also create different structures of opportunity: thus women continue to lag behind men in their benefits from recruitment policies and become adversely affected by persistent cultural stereotypes about gender roles both in the family and in the economic system. As a result, the childcare duties and educational disadvantages may become unsurmountable barriers for women-migrants in general and for refugee women in particular. Alongside with this, employment obstructions are added by disability. Thus not only more educated but also more physically fit migrants de facto have better employment opportunities at destination, while newcomers with medical conditions may have unrecognised healthcare needs that impede their successful employment.

As Triandafyllidou (2018) argues, the decision-making and the migratory trajectory of each migrant may be highly individualized, pointing to unique individual features and unexpected encounters. Therefore, peculiar characteristics that make each migrant ‘unique’ should be taken into account when thinking about his/her agency and integration. Hence in this report, we explore a range of ‘uniqueness’ of personal traits and circumstances that can be grouped either under the term of ‘*capabilities*’, in line with the well-known model of Nussbaum and Sen; or under the term of ‘*migrant agency*’, in line with the latest developments in migration

scholarship (Carling & Schewel 2017; Katz 2004; King et al. 2017; Koikkalainen & Kyle 2016; Oelgemoller 2011; Squire 2017).

In order to understand migrants' capabilities and agency, we do not only look at their lives over the last five years but also explore their more distant memories long before their migration. Analysis of their past experiences enables our better understanding of their motivation for emigration, of barriers and opportunities they were facing and of their individual capacity for change and resistance. Looking back into their past also enables us to explore in-depth the reciprocal relationship between their agency and the socio-cultural context.

1.2. Methodology: Narrative-biographic inquiry

A critical understanding of how MRAs efficiently use their skills and overcome integration barriers is to contribute to **a more responsive policy framework that would understand and address their needs, experiences and aspirations**. In this context, the micro-level research in WP6 (on migrants' individual barriers and enablers) - by using biographical interviews - takes a closer look at the needs of MRAs, with a specific focus on what migrants themselves consider to be barriers for and enablers of integration, so as to disentangle those factors that are necessary to inform the design of integration policies and programmes that are inclusive to their needs and voices.

Delving into everyday experiences of MRAs, and hearing their own voices is a very important part of our assessment of which policies may work – and why and how they may work - in steering labour market integration of recently arrived migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Given this, the SIRIUS project privileges an in-depth critical analysis of the experiences of MRAs through the Narrative-Biographic Interview Method.

1.2.1. Research design

The main purpose of this work package is to understand nuances and dynamics of labour market integration (LMI) from the insider (MRAs') perspective. Therefore, the work package has the following objectives:

- a) to analyse MRAs' insights into barriers and enablers of LMI;
- b) to analyse the difference/similarity between the official knowledge about LMI and the MRAs' experiences on the ground; and
- c) to create a comprehensive narrative of LMI that would present the findings to wider, non-academic audiences.

The overall analytical framework is critical ethnography, which conveys a critical inquiry into the relationship between victimization and empowerment (Creswell 2013: 90). In our case, it is the relationship between MRAs' vulnerability and their agency – the relationship between their insecurity (Waite 2009) and autonomous decision-making (Squire 2017; Triandafyllidou 2018). As De Fina and Georgakopoulou (2008: 385) note, critical ethnography 'pays a close attention to both micro- and macro-levels but always take the local level of interaction as the place of articulation of phenomenon to be explained'.

Taking a life-long perspective towards migrants' experiences, skills, and imagination of their migration or asylum project, the WP6 focuses on the 'critical' junctures in the life course of the migrant, the barriers they face, the factors that empowered them, their own understanding of both structural and subjective conditions and circumstances and who they make sense of their experiences. In our research, we ask three basic questions:

1. What were the most critical events and emerging reflections that helped migrants understand their needs?

2. How has the reality of labour market integration upon arrival and during their stay met their expectations of what life would be like in their host country?
3. To what extent have they felt 'able' to challenge the barriers faced, mobilised resources and achieve mobility steps in the labour market?

In order to answer these basic questions, the following sub-questions were further set.

- What critical events happen to people that affect their perception of labour market integration?
- What problems with labour market integration do people think they may have?
- How do they search for information on jobs and to what extent is their search successful?
- How quickly did they find their first job?
- To what extent are they able to learn new professional skills?
- To what extent have their qualifications been recognized?
- Why do they think the problems mentioned above and many others occur?
- How are they trying to resolve these problems?
- Why, in their opinion, the copying strategies they choose (do not) work?
- Who are the people that help MRAs or create barriers for them?
- How does this situation change over time?

The interviews paid attention to the most critical moments that create barriers and enablers for MRAs' integration and on the meanings that the MRAs assign to these encounters and experiences. The conducted interviews were semi-structured, each lasting about 2-3 hours and included the following questions to the informants:

- How did it happen that you are now here in this country? Tell me a little about yourself: I would like to get to know you a little bit more before we start our interview. Tell me something that you would like me to know for sure.
- How did you manage to get into this job (if the person has one at the moment)? Otherwise:
- Did you have any career in your home country? Tell me about your education and your prior job. What was your professional experience there?
- Why do you think you are not working at the moment? What prevents you from getting a job?
- Think about an event here in this country that has made you change your attitude to employment, justice or life in general?
- Has anything like this happened to you back home?
- What expectations/aspirations did you have when you were moving in this country? How have those changed over time?
- What has been the most unpleasant event that has happened to you here?
- Have you ever felt that people here may treat you or think about you not the way you would like to be treated? Why do you think it happens? And how do you try to cope with this?
- What are your professional plans/aspirations for the future? What are you trying to do to realize them? Why do you think it does (not) work?

- To what extent have your family members/local people/other migrants/colleagues been supportive of your or disruptive of your plans?

1.2.2. Narrative-biographic analysis

The applied narrative-biographic method has been elaborated by Norman Denzin (1989) and John Creswell (2013). In the most recent developments of this methodology, Denzin (2007) advocates multiple methods of biographical data analysis and presentation, including individual biographies (organized in the form of dynamic journey tales), composite biographies (organized in the form of narrative thematic analysis), a combination of micro-, meso- and macro-levels of analysis (cross-level narrative analysis, comparing biographies with literatures and policy studies), and the dramaturgical approach of ethno-theatre.

The primary focus of our analysis through the entire report was ‘turning points’ – or critical events that change people’s lives in terms of provoking them to re-think their attitudes and lives, or to develop their ‘epiphanies’ (Denzin 1989; Creswell 2013; Strauss 1997). The analytical accent was specifically placed on these turning points and emerging epiphanies, which were then grouped into narrative themes related to the main issues of labour market integration such as labour market entrance, recognition of credentials, public bureaucracy and networks of support. We analysed those critical events in their connection to specific labour market integration policies and practices with which migrants interacted.

In our research, we mostly emphasize the narrative thematic analysis (composite biographies) and its combination with data from other levels of inquiry, or cross-level analysis. At the same time, we also include individual biographies and ethno-dramatic representations (two or three dynamic migrant-tales and a short ethno-theatrical text from national team) as analytical additions to and illuminations of our emerging narrative-biographic themes. The purpose of these individual biographies and ethnodramatic texts, presented in the Appendices of each country-case chapter, is to foster an empathic appeal and to make our findings more interesting and accessible to wider, non-academic, audiences such as social partners, policy-makers and general public.

The applied method of ethnodrama, or ethnotheatre, has been recognized as a viable alternative method of representation to effectively engage with wider audiences (Denzin 2007; Saldaña 2005). The enclosed ethnodramatic texts are elaborated dramaturgical scripts that are comprised of selected interview quotes, field notes and mass media artifacts and that can be performed on stage. They allow the reader to visually imagine and, consequently, develop the empathic inter-subjective awareness about critical events and migrants’ reflections that structure their labour market integration.

1.2.3. Sample

We aimed at examining the whole life experiences of post-2014 migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers to understand the nuances and dynamics of their labour market integration during the post-2014 period. We were looking at migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who have recently arrived (during the last 5 years, from 2014 till 2019) in seven European countries (notably the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Italy, Switzerland, the UK).

In line with the basic requirements of the narrative-biographic method (Creswell 2013; Denzin 2007), **the main criteria for the selection of our informants were their ability and eagerness to share with the researcher.** Two basic sampling strategies were used. First, following our experiences with data collection from previous WPs, half of the informants were contacted directly through already approached organizations. This strategy guarantees that MRAs went through an experience related to labour market integration.

However, space was also be given to interviewees identified through different channels in order to minimize bias that is sometimes caused by the intermediary role of organizations. Thus the informants were also contacted through informal channels, including references of friends, colleagues and other social networks. Through preliminary conversations with potential informants and their referees, the teams made sure before each interview that the recruited interviewees had diverse experiences of labour market integration and a desire to share them in-depth. Following up on the experiences from the previous WPs, we increased a plurality of actors from diverse geographical, socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. This helped us to analyse the heterogeneity of the integration space shared by our informants.

In total, we have conducted 100 semi-structured narrative-biographic interviews with post-2014 migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in 7 countries, namely: 16 interviews in Greece; 10 in Italy; 11 in Switzerland, Finland and the UK each; 14 in the Czech Republic; and 27 in Denmark. The smaller samples in Italy, Finland, Switzerland and the UK were caused by the recent coronavirus and related quarantine throughout Europe and especially in these particular countries. In this context, an alternative and very effective approach to obtaining the narrative-biographic data was its collection from secondary sources such as social media stories and published migrant biographies.

The majority of our interviews were conducted by Skype or Facebook in order not to breach the requirements of the COVID quarantine.

1.3. Ethics

This work package carefully follows the ethical guidelines of the SIRIUS project as agreed with the SIRIUS Ethics Committee and additionally verified and confirmed by the national teams' university Ethical Boards. In line with the main ethical principles of the narrative-biographic method, we have fully respected the main ethical requirements of data collection and analysis, with a close attention to such ethical procedures as protecting the informants' privacy during the interview, avoiding irrelevant and obtrusive questions, and granting complete anonymization to all our informants. The two main principles of qualitative research ethics – ***rapport*** and ***confidentiality*** – became central in our ethics.

Our informants were interviewed either in the national language of their country of destination, or in English, or in their own native language. In the latter case, the interview was assisted by an interpreter, who was familiar with qualitative interviewing techniques. All our researchers and their interpreters had undergone training in qualitative interviewing including the training in data collection techniques in application to sensitive issues and vulnerable populations. Training workshops were additionally provided either within the SIRIUS framework or as part of the local university workshop programmes. Following the informants' permission as expressed in signed Letter of Consent, the interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English. The collected data are digitally kept in firewall protected office computers in the password-encrypted form.

All our researchers have managed to build a good rapport with their interviewees in the course of interviewing. Thus a comfortable and informant-friendly atmosphere was created during the phases of informant recruitment and data collection. The informants were asked questions in a very tactful manner and given the choice of not responding to any question they felt uncomfortable with. And they also had the total control over what kind of information they wanted to share.

Unnecessary questions about sensitive issues such as violence, trauma, racial prejudice and assault were avoided and asked only when the informant wanted to talk about such issues on her/his own initiative and in relevance to the theme of labour market integration.

In order to protect the informants' identities, none of their real names is mentioned anywhere. In all analytical texts, they appear under fictitious names and no other details of their identification are given.

1.4. Migrant agency: Harnessing opportunities and navigating turbulent circumstances

In this section we discuss how migrants exercise agency to seize opportunities offered by their country of settlement and mitigate the effect of turbulent social, political and economic circumstances. First we discuss modalities of their entrance to the job market at destination. Then we look at how migrants' labour market integration is affected by bureaucratic barriers in their host societies, including recognition of credentials and professional qualifications. We finally explore the role of networks and relational ties as well as individual strategies of resilience (such as volunteer work) in migrants' dealing with the integration barriers.

1.4.1. Entrance to the labour market

Migrants can enter the labour market in the conditions of informational transparency, with a full respect to their human rights. In such conditions of equity, migrant-newcomers should have the right to work and to obtain regular employment. In other cases, the only available choice for their less fortunate counterparts with no right to work is the irregular market. In either case, they join the labour market by occupying a position and fulfilling tasks that are often different from their previous professional experience back home. Newcomers usually find themselves overqualified at the moment of labour market entrance, hence they have to mobilize their personal and character related resources to deal with such a situation in a constructive manner.

The story of Maria, a migrant interviewed by the Czech team, is one of those falling in this latter category: she reached the Czech Republic without a formal permission to work. As an undocumented migrant, she had no other choice than accepting what she defines as *"the dirtiest job at the factory, and we were paid around CZK 32 per hour. No papers, nothing. This was based on a tourist visa which also was probably fake"* (cfr Czech chapter later in this integrated report). Managing this situation psychologically requires a mobilization of personal resources such as sense of commitment and long-term vision, but also a sense of duty for migrants with dependants and especially with children. It also demands that the newcomer should practice his/her resilience on a daily basis and should even anticipate a prospective failure in order to take the challenge for granted.

It is also important not to set unrealistic goals. Migrants' agency in this case intertwines with the segmented nature of European labour markets, which allocate employment resources according to an invisible division of workers as if in castes. Although labour market segmentation may not be per se a problem for migrants as it provides employment opportunities, still it may also turn out as a discriminatory process. It becomes a discriminatory milieu when migrants specialise in certain tasks and jobs (not always of their first choice and generally considered at the bottom of the moral hierarchy of work) while local populations are engaged in other professional (and often more desired) areas. In many high-income societies, jobs in sectors such as personal care, domestic work, agriculture, tourism, cleaning and waste collection, have been, in fact, delegated to migrant-newcomers along with locals with fewer qualifications in a systematic nature, which has led scholars studying it (Lhuillier 2005, Duffy 2011) to revitalise the path breaking concept of *'dirty work'* coined by Hughes in 1962 to illustrate the combination of moral stigmatization and in/our group boundaries making associated with specific tasks or jobs through which social stratification occurs.

The reaction of migrants can be repulsive in some cases. In others, they can develop coping strategies and prove themselves to be quite well-adjusting and pragmatic agents. This is shown in the story of Valerie, interviewed by the UK team: *“She was - in a way - forced to accept the only job available: working in a beauty studio (providing waxing and other beauty treatments) for a retailer company. She identified the job as related to the stereotyped idea of her culture. “I am working in something that is seen as related to our culture, so mostly Middle East people from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, are working in beauty company”. In her acceptance of a job that however reinforced a stereotyped idea of migrants laid her resilience. She needed to work to support her husband and kids, and she accepted that what she was offered was only employment in some specific sectors due to a stigmatised understanding of capacities and competences. To be able to contribute to her family income she accepted to take that employment even if in that sector there was “no plan of future development nor career” (cfr. UK chapter later in this integrated report).*

In a number of cases, migrant newcomers attempt to deny the fact of the labour market segmentation and its prejudicial nature, which might be reproduced by public officers who are in charge of the demand-and-supply match. As the case of another interviewee from the Czech Republic reports: *“I had to fill in a form on what jobs I was interested in or qualified for. I didn’t know what to write because I didn’t know what my opportunities were yet. The civil servant there then suggested examples like a cleaner, housekeeper, and so on. This upset me, and I told her, “I’m not looking for a cleaning job. I wouldn’t be here if I did! I could find that in 30 minutes by myself. I’ve only ever cleaned at home!” She then felt uncomfortable and explained it to me again. I don’t think she really cared what I wrote, I understand that now, but at that moment, it upset me.” (cfr. Czech chapter later in this integrated report).*

1.4.2. Recognition of credentials

Another factor that facilitates the labour market success is the recognition of educational attainment and skills. Although unanimously considered a key aspect of the labour market functioning, the mechanisms for the recognition of educational credentials and related skills acquired in third countries is a cumbersome and inefficient procedure in most of the SIRIUS countries (which is shown in the SIRIUS WP2- and WP3 Reports). As a result, newcomers are expected to start their employment search from scratch, as if they were deprived of any work-related form of education. In this migrant-hostile milieu, even MRAs with highly demanded qualifications such as health care operators have difficulties finding a job. In some cases, individual agency does not suffice to bridge the gap.

However, some migrants can still manage to find qualified employment, although it may mean an entirely different career. Thus Angela (interviewed by the Finnish team—cfr later in this integrated report) is a newcomer who has migrated to Finland as a family migrant. She actually joined her expatriate husband, who had been working as a doctor in Finland. She was aware that, in spite of her medical doctor education from her country of origin, she could not immediately practice as a doctor because she needed to learn Finnish and specifically the Finnish *medical* language. After the initial period of settlement, her level of Finnish was considered good enough to resume practicing, and she decided to start looking for employment. She asked a local clinic to hire her as an assistant doctor instead of a fully trained doctor. She thought that her still imperfect knowledge of Finnish would limit her responsibility over her patients’ lives. Unfortunately, the hospital did not need an assistant doctor. She was therefore obliged to put her medical career on-hold for some time.

During that waiting period, she decided to retrain as a nurse, and she is now successfully developing a career in that role: *“She wanted to see if she has what it takes to be practical nurse. She’s been told that the language demands are less stiff at this level, and she is also more comfortable knowing that she is not the one fully in charge of e.g., prescription which would require irreproachable comprehension and communication skills in Finnish. She started it sceptically but she has grown to like her possibly new profession. She knows that it won’t*

be easy and it will not happen overnight. She must go back to school and learn for years in order to be certified as a practical nurse. She must also continue Finnish language classes because the training, the exams, and the practice will be in Finnish. Slowly she is learning to like the path that her career has to take and this is why her story is one of versatility, resilience and resourcefulness (cfr. Finnish chapter later in this integrated report). This example shows also how gender issues combined with other labour market-related features generate a pattern of inclusion/exclusion dynamics which are successfully managed only if migrants deploy all their capacities and motivation as well as their emotional resources.

1.4.3. Volunteering

In other cases, the migrants' commitment couples with opportunities provided by local civil society organisations, and the experience of volunteering offered by CSOs becomes a valid surrogate of work experience in the country of settlement. This is shown in the story of Diana, interviewed by the Swiss team: *"The fact that I have managed to have this volunteer work that is very much connected to my work and has a regularity to it gives me the confidence that I have the abilities to work in the field here. I get positive feedback from them. I think now it's about seeing how a third party can see and value my work so I can get a job with a salary"* (cfr. Swiss chapter later in this integrated report).

However, volunteering is often viewed with scepticism by migrants who have experienced it as a way to prove their work abilities vis-à-vis the experience from the country of origin. There is a sense of discrimination connected with volunteering, which newcomers develop when they see that their prior formal work is valued less at destination. Thus the experiences of another migrant to Switzerland Lucia has left her with a bitter taste, and she no longer sees this option as a facilitator for her professional integration.

"[...] and I have made some approaches to do things as a volunteer, but in my experience, in reality it is very difficult to move from volunteering to real work [position], volunteers are not treated well, the interest of the volunteer is exploited, because they know that you need the experience, a certificate, and so they try to get all they can from you without anything in exchange [...]" (cfr. Swiss chapter later in this integrated report).

1.4.4. Networking

Volunteering is not only an important way in the labour market because it provides work experience in the country of settlement but also because it enables access to new personal networks and ties. Being networked is a key condition to get employment in all countries. Danielle, who was interviewed by the UK team, notes that accessing the UK job market *"is not just finding the link and applying for jobs. It is all about network connection and experience in the UK. So it is not easy to create personal connection if you are not here since you are born here"* (cfr. UK chapter later in this integrated report). Similarly, another migrant interviewed by the Finnish team commented that: *"the way to work in Finland is to know a friend who will recommend you to the company that is looking for workers. This way you can work with them for a very long time as they see how you work, because they are afraid of signing a long-term contract with you in case you are not suitable for the work"* (cfr. Finnish chapter later in this integrated report).

As noted by the Greek team (p.11), 'ethnic networks appear to be the main communication channel with the Greek labour market'. For example, Mohammed, a qualified meteorologist from Iran was able to find employment in Greece exclusively through such networks (cfr. Greek chapter later in this integrated report).

However, the 'network' solution does not work equally for all migrants. Qualified migrant women, especially those who arrive as dependent migrants from North Africa, are still often marginalized in their network membership and, consequently, in their job search. They

complain about constantly feeling the inadequacy of public services and the scarcity of the childcare resources. For example, a recently divorced woman who initially followed her husband as a family migrant from Yemen complains about having no access to the mobilization of her agentic resources: *"I think you will hear this from a lot of women you interview; due to the lack of support from your partner, you always feel like you are falling behind. And when you are falling behind, you don't feel that you are good enough. I have struggled a lot here. In my home country there are many other disadvantages. Illness. And the country does not work. In this country you have so many things offered to you, but at the same time you are sad. I am sad that things are not working out"* (cfr. Danish chapter later in this integrated report).

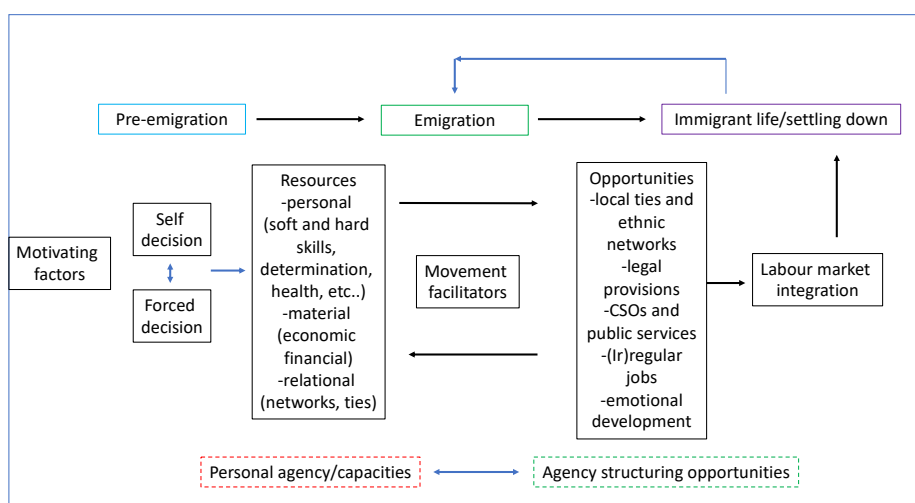
Thus migrant women, who are often side-lined in their access to networks and employment opportunities because of such an outstanding integration barriers as the childcare and family bias, face the main and seemingly unresolvable problem of *agency contamination*. The herein observed phenomenon of agency contamination takes place when one of the domains of agentic resources has been traditionally blocked for a specific category of migrant, causing the chain blockade of other types of resources. As a result, the whole space of migrant agency becomes contaminated with prejudicial barriers, and there is no way for the reciprocity between the migrant's agency and her vulnerability.

1.5. Conclusion: Agency dynamics

The reciprocity of the 'agency-vulnerability' relationship, which is an important condition for the success of labour market integration, is summarized in Figure 1-1. Showing a wide range of reasons that foster the migrant's decision to emigrate, Figure 1-1 illuminates the overall dynamics of migratory trajectory and migrant agency.

To begin with, the reasons for emigration can be related to the overall socio-economic and political conditions in the country of origin (a civil war, a natural disaster, an economic crisis, political repression and suffocation of individual freedom) or to more personal issues (willingness to explore a different way of life and to improve one's living conditions). Such decisions can emerge as an outcome of the autonomous process of reflection about life and life-chances. Such reflections can be supported by and shared with family members and friends. Alternatively, the person may experience the pressure of other actors involved (which is a typical case in migrant trafficking). Sometimes there is a mix of both paths in migrants' emigration histories where self-made decision mix up with a proactive external push. For example, the migrant may just want to improve his/her family conditions. In other cases, he/she may need to urgently pay the debt and may therefore move to a place where money can be earned quickly. Thus, motivations for and circumstances around the migrant's decision-making can be different.

Figure 1-1 Migratory trajectory and migrant agency



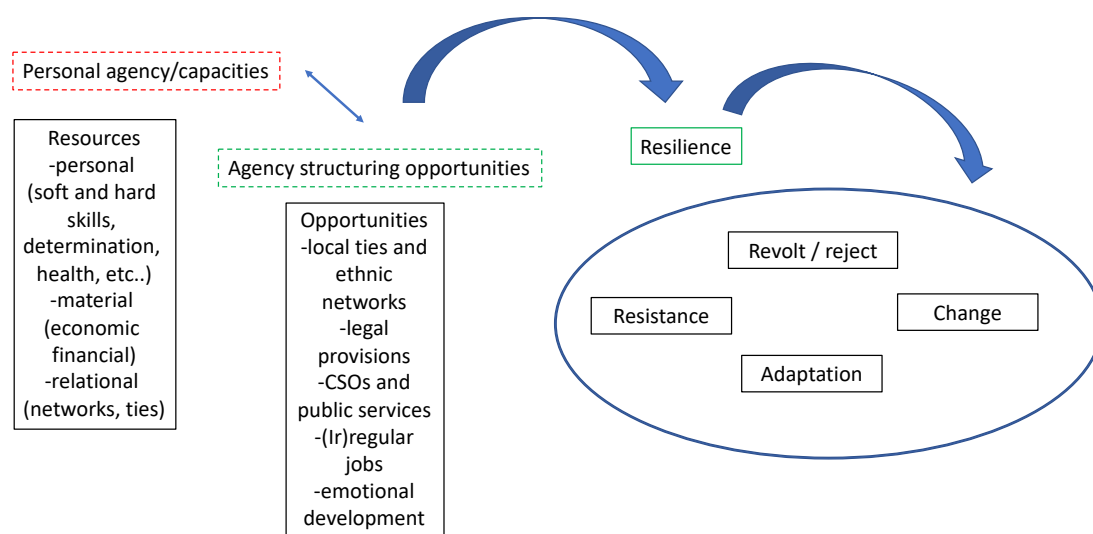
Yet whether the decision-making is voluntary or forced, the migration journey as such will not start unless the migrant manages to mobilize resources (or capital) available for his/her migration. The herein invested capital includes individual capacities (personality traits, soft and hard skills, physical and mental health, etc.), material resources (financial means to pay for the migration trip, travel documents and economic resources to enable settlement) and relational resources (availability of support networks in the country of origin and destination). Furthermore, motivations and resources must work together with movement facilitators, which may be sporadic and irregular (such as smuggling networks) or established and regular (such as a prospective immigration agreement of the host country with the country of origin). In the case of asylum seekers and refugees, the immigration pact can be made with the resettlement programmes and operators.

Once migrants have reached the country of destination or settlement, their personal resources are confronted with a set of opportunities that both the state, business and society deploy to facilitate the newcomers' employment. Some of the opportunities that exist in a given country are uniform for all migrants. For example, regulations that prevent asylum seekers from gaining employment apply to all migrants who have lodged an application for asylum. At the same time, the extent to which these opportunities affect different migrant categories can be different, depending on their own capacities. Some migrants are more capable agents than others in catching the opportunity, even if such opportunities are constraining rather than enabling. Therefore, the path of these migrants to labour market integration becomes smoother than that of many others.

Our findings show that there are, in fact, various combinations of personal agency and capacity at play, with contextual opportunities acting as both enablers of and barriers for migrant agency. This is summarized in Figure 1-2.

Some migrants react to change by rejecting the contextual requirements of the country of settlement, while others may be more persistent in their integration efforts. The mode of migrants' agency depends on their agentic resilience, which they have learned and mastered through their crucial events and epiphanies, through sometimes rather hard life experiences that underpin their non-linear migration paths.

Figure 1-2 Agency, contextual opportunities and resilience's outcomes



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Country reports

2 Czech Republic

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2.1 Background information on the national context: Country-specific critical issues

Since 1990, the Czech Republic has been an immigration country. The main routes of immigration were from post-socialist countries (Ukraine and the Russian Federation) and Vietnam (Kušniráková, Čížinský, 2011). Migration in the Czech Republic has mostly been one of labour as the Czech Republic is an industrial country currently with low unemployment. Government policies promote a vision of labour migration as being primarily short-term and regulated according to the economic needs of the country, without taking into account the long-term perspective of migrants or the necessity for their integration (see Czech Government, 2015). Despite the urgent need for foreign employees, migrants still face complicated administration, precarity in working conditions, and a lack of support from public bodies (Hoření, 2019). There is also a chronic lack of language courses (Hoření, Numerato & Čada, 2019). The integration policies have been hindered by a negative perception of migration since the 2015 migration crisis (see Čada & Frantová, 2019, Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, 2020).

As suggested in the previous SIRIUS WPs, the complex field of stakeholders involved in the labour market integration of MRAs features a variety of synergic but also contradictory approaches towards migration. These synergies derive from different values, attitudes, and preferences taken by different actors and from the external institutional and legal frameworks. Overall, the contradictions outweigh synergies and are articulated in particular alongside the six following dimensions: (1) administration services, (2) language provision, (3) public discourse, (4) labour market integration, (5) social and health care provision and schooling, and, finally, dealing with (6) the dark sides of employment related to working conditions and contracts.

First, among the problematic aspects are the administrative procedures defined by the legislative framework and the institutional infrastructure (see Koldinská, Sheu & Štefko, 2016). When it comes to legislation, the Act on the Residence of Foreign Nationals is perceived as complicated and contradictory (Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organisations, 2015: 5). Consequently, different regional offices can make different decisions when assessing the same or similar cases. This context creates burdens for NGOs who assist MRAs with administrative procedures (e.g. visas, residence permission, or working permits), as well as for some social partners, including the Chamber of Commerce who would welcome a much easier and straightforward recruitment process (Diro, 2018).

The field of labour market counselling represents another problematic area. Those MRAs who have only a short-term permit or visa are not expected to stay in the country without work. These groups of migrants are not, therefore, provided any assistance related to skills or career development. On the other hand, those with permanent residence can use the services of the

Labour Offices. However, their staff have no time, resources, language knowledge, and specific know-how with which to assist them effectively (Cogiel, 2018).

Assistance is also provided by the third sector. NGOs are among the key providers of administrative, legal, social, and employment counselling but are, in fact, in a difficult position to satisfy high demand beyond their capacities (Hoření, Numerato & Čada, 2019; Schebelle et al. 2014; Velentová et al. 2012). Their counselling is primarily focused on basic needs rather than on career development. It is also worth noting that several NGO representatives concur that such an approach undermines the agency of MRAs and prioritises lobbying and advocacy aiming to change the system rather than providing individual assistance (Hoření, Numerato & Čada, 2019).

Second, when it comes to the institutional provision of language courses, their capacity is limited, and the free places offered barely satisfy the demands of MRAs. Furthermore, the courses are unevenly distributed across regions, and language courses are not available in all areas of the Czech Republic (Bauerová, 2018; Blažejovská, 2012; Topinka et al., 2013). The scheduling of language courses which take place only at certain times represents another barrier which undermines the development of Czech language skills among MRAs. The problem of limited capacities in language courses is partially mitigated by NGOs, who are the key providers of language courses and translation services. However, even their efforts are often dependent on funding schemes provided by the public administration.

Third, the contradictions between actors and official texts, laws, and policy implementations are featured in the public discourse. More specifically, this discourse is reflected in the relatively hostile and xenophobic atmosphere in the country (Čada & Frantová, 2019; Centrum pro výzkum veřejného mínění, 2020), which is also reproduced at the institutional level. Integration policy practices have often been based on the assumption that foreigners represent a potential threat to the Czech population and should be controlled.

In addition to this securitised discourse, MRAs are viewed through instrumental, that is, technocratic and economic, discourses. Hence, MRAs are considered a cheap workforce, matching the needs of the sectors of the construction industry, cleaning and social services, or agriculture. This viewpoint has been commonly shared among employers and emerged as part of official policy documents, reproduced by the majority of political parties as well as by some social partners in the Czech Republic (Hoření 2019). However, beyond these instrumental perspectives, the social, personal, and familial needs of MRAs are marginalised.

The consideration of social, personal, and familial needs is, however, isolated. MRAs find some allies who tend to contrast this hostile and instrumental vision. Among the key actors struggling against xenophobia are representatives of CSOs who call for the need to understand the idea of integration more broadly, thus criticising the instrumentalised and securitised approaches towards integration which are prevalent.

It is worth adding that several NGOs have recently refrained from these advocacy-oriented efforts rooted in ideas of multiculturalism. They opted for this choice, referring to their precariousness and to the high volume of symbolic violence and threats to which they were being exposed. Stress on the multicultural approach has also recently been embraced by some leading members of the Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions, who, however, tend to favour an instrumentalised and work-related vision of integration, contrasting with the holistic vision of integration supported by CSO representatives (Gheorghiev et al. 2020). Some social partners representing the voice of transnational employers further problematise cultural difference.

Fourth, even the labour market integration mechanisms are limited, deriving partly from the already-mentioned, instrumentalised approach towards foreign workers (Čaněk 2016). A specific domain of labour market integration is featured by the recognition of skills and education, notably university degrees. Entrance to the labour market is hindered by the complicated and costly process of skills or degree recognition, delegated mainly to universities

or regional governments (Čada, Hoření 2018). Labour market integration is further hindered by a lack of requalification courses for foreigners. Labour Offices do not provide anything other than language courses to MRAs, and migrants with poor command of the language can attend only requalification courses for manual jobs (Hoření 2019).

The apparent structural problems with the recognition of skills and education are sometimes even silently tolerated. According to the testimonies of interviewed social partners, some employers hire migrants without asking them to present relevant work attestations to cope with shortages in the labour force (Gheorgiev et al. 2020).

Fifth, barriers to labour market integration are further deepened due to the low accessibility of social and health care services, as well as schooling (Hoření 2019). Refugees represent a specific case. On the one hand, they have access to benefits from the beginning of their stay. On the other hand, they are later struggling to live without them. NGOs are, however, key actors, who understand the need of MRAs for a broader societal integration – unless their migration projects are temporary only – and increase the awareness of MRAs with a variety of benefits and assist them in their administration (Hoření, Numerato & Čada, 2019).

Furthermore, the regional initiatives of the Centres for Support of Integration of Foreigners established by the Ministry of the Interior contribute to managing social and health care needs and, together with the third sector, provide the key actors who articulate the needs of MRAs, acknowledging a wider understanding of integration not confined to labour market integration.

Sixth, the labour market integration of MRAs is prevented due to the number of dark sides related to their employment, such as precarious conditions of work, low wages, recruitment through agencies, the uncertainty of income, as well as the enforceability of low wages due to the lack of language skills and the knowledge of their own rights (Multicultural Centre, 2013).

These barriers are tackled by some of the social partners, notably by newly emerging, transnationally-oriented labour unions who prioritise MRA employment in their agenda. Moreover, the needs of MRAs are also a part of the lobbying and campaigning of NGOs, primarily under the shield of a Czech umbrella organisation, the Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations (CMAO; Čaněk, 2016; Hoření, Numerato & Čada, 2019). NGOs, as well as some labour unions, play a critical role in dealing with the dark sides of the labour market by articulating the topics of working and human rights, conveying problems with human trafficking, and questioning the illegal approaches of employers and job intermediaries (Consortium of Migrants Assisting Organizations, 2015). Last but not least, labour inspection offices also represent important actors in tackling the dark sides of employments. However, increased monitoring, often targeting MRAs workplaces, could also be performed as a tool of securitisation and control, in particular, when carried out in collaboration with the police. Such an approach can undermine the trust of MRAs into monitoring tools.

To summarise, the key integration issues in the Czech Republic are related to the provision of administration and language services, public discourse, education and the development of working skills, the continuity between labour market integration and broader societal integration, and, finally, the dark sides of employment. To learn to what extent the knowledge gained so far is reflected in the individual experiences of migrant workers and refugees, these six dimensions were translated into a set of questions which stood as the basis for the conducted interviews. The participants were asked to reflect on their experiences in their workplace as well as with authorities, NGO representatives, or health care service providers. Furthermore, they share their experiences on how these interactions affected and changed them over time.

2.2 Methods

The recruitment process began with contacting various gatekeepers who come into contact with migrants through Czech language classes, legal assistance, or more complex asylum services. Among the contacted organisations were the Multicultural Center Prague, the Integration Centre in Prague, the Integration Centre in Brno, the CMAO, La Strada, Diaconia, and the Refugee Facilities Administration of the Czech Ministry of the Interior (RFA). Given the specificities of the Czech Republic as a host country, the sample we targeted was expected to include a significant number of economic migrants from third countries and complemented by refugees and asylum seekers.

Although most of the contacted institutions promptly reacted to our initial queries, they were able to provide little help with the recruitment of economic migrants, which could be explained by the limited contact between economic migrants and various assistance programmes. On the other hand, RFA was of significant help in providing contacts with asylum seekers they are working or have worked closely with. The search for economic migrants proved more effective when contacting individuals directly. This approach worked either through acquaintances or through various groups on social media, where potential participants were selected based on questions they were asking or comments they were leaving under migration-related posts. Finally, some of the participants themselves referred the interviewer to their acquaintances as they thought their experience was also relevant to the project. As a result of social distancing regulations related to the spread of COVID-19, we lost some contacts who were not willing to provide an interview online.

In total, 14 interviews were conducted (seven women and seven men), out of which three participants were asylum seekers (one from Venezuela, one from Syria, and one from Russia); the rest are generally referred to as economic migrants. Among the latter, four were from Moldova (two Russian speakers and two Romanian speakers), four were from Ukraine, one from Russia, one from Colombia, and one from Venezuela. In terms of participants' nationality, it is important to mention that two of the interviewed participants had double citizenship (Venezuelan-Spanish and Moldovan-Bulgarian). Although the initial decision was to exclude European citizens, we have finally decided to include these participants as their experience opens a particular case study for 'second grade' (as one of the participants put it) EU citizens. The participants' age group was quite broad, with the youngest person being 21 at the moment of the interview (an asylum seeker from Russia) and the oldest being in his mid-60s (an asylum seeker from Venezuela). All participants came to the Czech Republic within the last six years, with the exception of a woman from Ukraine who arrived considerably earlier. Her story was still important to include as she retrospectively reflected on her experience as an undocumented migrant at the time of her arrival. Among the economic migrants, we gave further attention to two participants who work in highly-skilled jobs (from Colombia and Russia).

The interviews were conducted in languages that the participants were most comfortable with (Russian, Romanian, English). One participant from Ukraine required the interview be conducted in Czech while those who opted for English had a perfect command of the language. Language, therefore, did not constitute a barrier in any of the cases. All participants gave consent for the interviews to be recorded (on a mobile phone, in most cases). Although some of the gatekeepers suggested that financial remuneration for the participants' time could represent a good incentive, none of the contacted potential participants raised this question – in some cases, the interviewer paid for the coffee or lunch. Many of the participants were interested in contacts with the NGOs and programmes assisting migrants that the interviewer could offer. Given the lockdown and the COVID-19 restrictions which came into force in the Czech Republic, eight of these interviews were conducted online.

Connecting with participants on online platforms did not pose any significant constraints to the course of the interview, with the exception of one participant (a woman from Moldova) who

seemed to be intimidated by what could have been another person in her room.¹ In these situations, the interviewer did not press in any way for further details or doubt her answers; the interview rather moved on to a topic she was more comfortable talking about, such as her new job as a cook and the good relations she had built with her co-workers.

The topics of trauma, abuse, and violence were particularly relevant in the interviews with refugees, such as Gael from Venezuela or Leonid from Russia. When talking about their experiences, they led the interview at their own pace, with the interviewer intervening only when there was a need for clarification. It is important to mention that prior to the interview, they had already told their story and described their traumatic experiences in detail to the authorities processing their applications for asylum. As a result, they were able to talk about their experiences in a more detached, but also well-structured manner.

2.3 Individual barriers and enablers: Analysis of interview data

In each individual story, the integration on the labour market was determined by a confluence of life circumstances, personal aspirations, as well as institutional and structural barriers. On a general level, one can identify shared aspects among the analysed experiences; these may include economic hardship, social insecurity, or safety and life-threatening circumstances. A closer look, however, reveals the unique ways in which migrants and refugees navigate through situations of insecurity, experience constraints differently, and make use of structural opportunities. In what follows, individual experiences with labour market integration will be analysed in relation to different elements of migrant and refugee life trajectories. We will first consider the motivations stimulating the start of the migration journey, barriers hindering their progress, enablers facilitating both the entrance on the labour market and, finally, the processes related to labour market integration.

2.3.1 The beginning of the journey: Hopes and expectations

The majority of the conducted interviews pointed to the fact that there had never been one single factor at the root of the participants' decision to leave their place of origin in search of a better life. Here, however, Leonid's story (9) stood out in that what forced him to leave Russia was almost exclusively his faith. As a 21-year-old Jehovah's witness in Russia, he faced either being prosecuted for extremism or severe physical abuse if he was forced to join the army. As an asylum seeker in the Czech Republic, his trauma and motivation to leave his country had a direct impact on his expectations and approach to labour market integration. *'The [permanent residence] permit itself is not that important for me. What's important is that receiving it would mean that I am safe. I'm not looking too much into career growth at the moment. I just want to have a calm life, not thinking about the police knocking on my door, have a place to myself, because I am a bit tired of living a refugee's life, and that's all.'*

In the cases of other interviewed refugees, their motivation to start their journey took more complex forms, with certain challenges similar to those of economic migrants. Naz (12), for example, fled the war in Syria and was granted asylum in the Czech Republic. However, she also talked about the lack of opportunities for women in Damascus. *'Studying English at university was not my choice; my application was decided for me, ... From the time I was*

¹ For example, when asked about the middle man who facilitated her arrival to the Czech Republic and whether she had to pay them, she first admitted that there was someone who brought her into the country in exchange for money. She was quickly instructed by someone in the room to retract her answer and said that 'she didn't pay anyone anything'. Similarly, per someone's instructions, she gave very vague answers on the status of her social and health insurance.

small, I wanted to move away; the traditions, religion, treatment of women, I didn't want that for my daughters.'

Similarly, his children's future and opportunities played a crucial role in the decision of Gael (14), a refugee from Venezuela, to apply for asylum in the Czech Republic. While he was being terrorised and constantly under threat for his political views, he also spoke about the dire economic situation of his family: *'I was very worried about me and my family, because I know this chain of living. First, you don't find food, then you get sick, and then you die. When I first came here, my initial objective was to save my family from starvation and, possibly, cheat my own death. And then get a job and try to live a normal.'* Alvaro (4), a young student who also fled Venezuela, mentioned that, besides being in danger for being an active member of a protest organisation, he ran from a total lack of opportunities given the current situation in the country. Although now he is doing a PhD at a Czech university, this was not a specific goal he had in mind: *'The situation was horrible, and I was ready to do here anything that I could – work, studies, whatever.'*

Situations of trauma and despair were also shared by participants who are generally referred to as economic migrants. After her husband died, Lida (7) from Moldova was left with two children and a lot of debt, with no other choice but to seek work abroad: *'I knew that I was going to a foreign country, among strangers, where I don't know the people or speak the language. But trouble and worries make you close your eyes and just go. And when you arrive, there's no warm welcome... like every person, I went through hardships and a lot of trouble.'* She took up any work that the recruitment agency had to offer.

For many of the interviewed economic migrants, opportunities for low-skilled employment played a decisive role in their decisions to leave, in particular for those with families and for whom career growth was not as much of a priority as was the mere fact of being able to work. Ina (6), for example, was even willing to sacrifice her career in Moldova for anything that the recruitment agency offered in order to join her husband, who worked a low-skilled job in the Czech Republic. *'I understood that before we lived in uncertainty – one of us here, the other one there; this is no way to live. I feel sorry for families who live like that. We need to aim at living together right from the beginning ... How many families are falling apart because of it.'* Anna (2) also willingly gave up her job as a pharmacist in a small Ukrainian town in search of a new life after her marriage fell apart. As she explained, *'I want to stay here [in the Czech Republic] because this is Europe, and there are more options here, and I have a purpose. I am ready to go through more or less legal means to reach it, but I want to have here a normal status, to feel safe.'* The search for a new life meant that Anna was not happy with working low-skilled jobs through a recruitment agency. She talked about feeling that she's being assigned to a specific category, even a 'class', that she's trying to escape by *'changing [her] social surroundings'* and is working towards becoming a therapist.

While there are clear differences between interviewed refugees and economic migrants in their motivations for starting the journey, which then are reflected in their expectations, priorities, and objectives, certain shared characteristics such as family trauma and economic hardship blur the line which divides the two groups. The decision to leave the country is prompted by a combination of circumstances that are shared among the majority of participants, a prominent example being fear over the future of their children.

2.3.2 Structural barriers and personal trauma

When asked about the challenges he is facing at the moment, Vasilij (8), a migrant worker from Zakarpattia, revealed several issues which were later mentioned by other participants as well: He had recently lost his job and had to pick up a low-paid position through a recruitment agency in order to keep his working visa. At the same time, he is not able to afford a place to stay by himself, so he is sharing an apartment with several other workers assigned by the agency. Furthermore, he is confronted with a hostile work environment. These barriers hindering labour market integration are not unique to Vasilij. They are quite symptomatic of

experiences shared among the majority of the interviewed participants, with some specific differences related to their social and legal status. Financial insecurity and a lack of access to resources, such as affordable housing, represent significant challenges for almost all participants. For the asylum seekers waiting for their application to be processed, the only affordable option is to stay in shared rooms at a dormitory managed by the city. Gael (14), for example, together with his wife and daughter, have been living at the dorms for almost a year, waiting for their asylum application to be approved.

On top of the financial limitations, attempts at finding a place to live are in certain cases hindered by hesitation on the part of landlords to rent to foreigners, reflecting the hostile and xenophobic public discourse, which intensified particularly during the so-called migration crisis. Ion (5), for example, described how difficult it was to find a place to live with his wife. *'When I tried to speak English to them, I was refused immediately. You could tell that they really did not want to have anything to do with foreigners. In the end, we also found a foreign couple which agreed to rent us the flat, because they were going back to Spain.'*

Other economic migrants are forced to stay in shared flats assigned to them by the recruitment company they work for. Ion (5) has experienced that for some time. *'The recruitment company offered me two options: I either stay at the dorms – and I heard that the conditions there are horrific – or in a flat. We chose the flat. But to tell you the truth, we stayed in a flat with three rooms, my wife and I in one room, and, in the other two rooms, there were seven more women living. Imagine one bathroom and one toilet for that many people ... They [recruitment agencies] find cheap flats, stack them up with beds and rent them out to a large number of people. We pay about CZK 4 500 for a bed. So, in total, they make CZK 45 000 for a place that costs about CZK 10 000. The agency then automatically takes out the rent from your salary.'*

Perhaps the most evident barrier across all interviews was insufficient knowledge of the Czech language. Language skills were reported as a concern by all participants as they believe that better language performance allows access to better work, education opportunities, and appropriate medical care. As one participant put it, *'Without speaking the language, you can't go forward.'* Sofia (10), a highly-skilled worker from Moscow, explained that her inability to speak Czech meant she could start only in a junior position, although she had worked in a senior role for many years back home.

The fact that opportunities for better-paid employment are conditioned by their level of Czech was also confirmed by other participants. Language prevented Naz (12) from searching for a job which matches her interests, as well as from becoming more involved at the school her daughter is attending. The Czech language becomes particularly important in migrants' communication with medical staff, particularly for those who are not assisted during their visits by friends or NGO representatives. Ina's experience (6) is particularly revelatory.

It was difficult to find a doctor when you don't speak the language properly, which I didn't in the beginning. My husband's Czech was better, but it's not very proper, because he never really studied it as one should. Sometimes it really seems like he's just speaking Russian! It was terrifying to be calling doctors from the list the insurance company gave us. We were calling doctors who were seemingly taking on new patients, but we were refused as soon as they heard us speak in our poor Czech. So, we just decided to go to the clinic. We went upstairs, where we assumed the director or the management was, and asked to talk directly to him. We explained the situation the best we could and were eventually assigned a GP. We were actually registered at the same doctor who initially refused us. After some time, the doctor retired, and he was replaced by a very young practitioner, and now they seem to be giving her all foreign patients, that poor girl!

On the subject of language, Victor (1), a migrant from Colombia who had previously lived in France for many years, explained that the problem also lies in what *'speaking Czech'* actually means in the Czech Republic. In his experience, *'the demanded standard is incredibly high'*.

He says, *'It's enough to have a strong accent to be disqualified, even if you do actually know Czech. In London, you can speak with the craziest accent and make many mistakes; they'll still say you speak English and assist you.'*

The lack of other skills, such as other foreign languages or technical abilities, represents an additional challenge in seeking better employment, with the main barrier towards achieving that being a financial constraint. Alvaro (4), for example, cannot go on summer courses and the study trips his PhD entails as he needs to work at a restaurant to support his studies. As he noted, *'If you don't work, you don't eat!'*

Furthermore, labour market integration is undermined by legal and bureaucratic barriers. The experiences shared by MRAs suggest cases in which social services failed to assist, were hostile or of limited competence (*'The department that deals with foreigners in the Czech Republic is not designed to deal with foreigners; they don't even speak English.'*), and gave incorrect information to migrants.

The presence of legal and bureaucratic barriers encourage employers to hire migrant workers through recruitment agencies and intermediaries. These employer strategies may have significant consequences for the migrants' financial and legal situation. In this case, migrants negotiate their employment with the agency only, with some not even being able to understand their work agreement as it is written in Czech. At the same time, employers save time and effort on the paperwork. As a result, the recruitment agency withdraws a significant percentage of the migrants' monthly salary. Ion (5), for example, explained that he tried to talk to the manager at the warehouse where he works. However, he was told that despite being a very good worker and the manager wanting to help him, it's the business owner who wouldn't want to follow through. In order to compensate for the money the recruitment agency keeps, migrants are forced to work long hours, as is well-illustrated by the following quote: *'Obviously, you can work less, but then the money is just ridiculously little, and then there's no point coming at all! Your only chance for a normal working day to be enough moneywise is to become employed directly by the employer.'* The migrants' capacity for negotiation is also limited by the fact that the legality of their stay in the country is conditioned by their employment; the received working visa must be permanently 'in use'.

Challenges to labour market integration for migrants and refugees arise not only from legal, financial, and linguistic barriers but also from the impact of their exposure to traumatic events and stressors, such as discrimination, separation from their families, or reclusion, which may occur in pre-migratory stages, during the migratory process, or even in the post-migratory period. Based on the conducted interviews, the ways in which personal trauma affects one's path towards labour and social integration are difficult to generalise and perhaps should constitute an individual subject of inquiry. Violence came to the participants' lives under the form of political instability, war, abuse and physical violence, or economic hardship, which was further perpetuated in the post-migration phase through additional difficulties, poor social networks and integration, lack of access to counselling services, and communication difficulties.

In relation to labour integration, stressors and anxieties are closely linked to disillusion with the applicability of certain skills, previous studies or work experience, and a resulting 'fall' in one's social status. This was often expressed in the breakdowns some of the interviewees experienced as they took up the low-skilled jobs assigned to them by recruitment agencies. This was either because of the physically draining character of the job, such as in Ina's case (6) (*'The agency found me a job at a car factory. I was working with cables. I cried, I think, for two months. It was very hard.'*), or the sharp contrast between the new employment and their previous life, as in Lena's case (3) (*'I thought to myself, just look at me, a police officer, washing glasses in a striptease bar.'*).

The relationships at work represent a significant source of anxiety and stress. In some cases, this took the form of distrust towards the migrants' work (*(...) we decided then to not say anything at all if it's so badly received by our supervisors. They probably thought that, look,*

foreigners are coming over and are giving us lessons. They wouldn't have any of that.' (5)) based on the attached stigma (5) (*'I think that the older generation also believes that we're caring some Soviet heritage, that we're representing the "Soviet man", and I'd like them to know that I have nothing to do with the Soviet Union. In fact, we as a nation and as a family suffered just as much, but it's really difficult to get rid of the stigma.'*).

Similarly, Daniel's experience (11) illustrates the dynamics of the relationships at the workplace. *'There was a certain fear and hostility towards foreigners. After a while, however, as we got to know each other better, the relations improved. At some point, the management decided to hire some convicts through a social program. They were wearing grey t-shirts, and I happened to be wearing one as well. One of the Czech co-workers noticed and suggested I change my t-shirt to an orange one so that I would be more like them. I stopped being the foreigner – that place was then taken by the convicts.'*

In some cases, migrants themselves internalised the stigmatisation of workers from Eastern Europe. This is expressed in attempts to positively identify themselves at the expense of migrants and refugees coming from other countries (*'Sometimes, like at the doctor's, they would listen to me and then ask, "Are you from Ukraine?" But I would proudly answer, "I'm not from Ukraine, I'm from Moldova!" Because I know for a fact that they like Moldovans here; they say they're hard-working and friendly. Czechs don't say bad things about Moldovans, and so I'm proud that I come from there.'* (6)). The question of race also arose as an issue that some of the interviewees were concerned with (*'Sometimes it's passive racism... they know I'm not black, but still not white enough.'* – Alvaro (4) from Venezuela; *'Some people warned me I might encounter racism, but this isn't my experience. But maybe it's because I'm not completely black. My wife is actually white; she can pass as a Czech.'* – Gael (14) from Venezuela).

Finally, an important element revealed during the interviews concerns several migrants' dual citizenship, which they acquired pre- or post-migration. This was primarily the case for migrants from Venezuela or Colombia who had acquired Spanish citizenship or migrants from Moldova with Romanian/Bulgarian citizenship. Although European citizenship should in theory resolve uncertainties concerning their legal status, in reality, much of their anxieties as third country natives remain. In Alvaro's case (4), the fact that he doesn't have an official permanent address in the European Union resulted in complications with his documents. In particular, the complications were related to his health insurance and affected his identity. *'I mean, I have a European passport, but I never say I'm Spanish because it would be a lie. Culturally, I'm 50% Spanish, but I don't feel Spanish. Maybe their [Czech co-workers] attitude would change if I said I was Spanish.'* Ion (5) describes a similar situation. While he was working in the Czech Republic based on his Moldovan passport with a working visa, his wife, also born in Moldova, had Romanian citizenship. Seeking work directly from employers, as her status would permit her, still came with a lot of stress and anxiety for her. She eventually decided to work through a recruitment agency just as her husband does. Being from a third country cognitively constrained her from taking full advantage of being a European citizen and seeking better and more secure employment.

2.3.3 Enablers: Agency and structural opportunities

Despite the aforementioned trauma, anxieties, and various structural barriers, migrants and refugees are not passive victims. In many of the experiences and situations shared during the interviews, they appeared as active decision-makers, albeit often with limited choices. They mobilise social and material resources, seek answers and assistance through different channels, identify the structural opportunities their environment is offering, and learn to rely on each other, as well as on natives and local resources.

Examples of structural opportunities arising from local resources are most importantly linked to the services provided by NGOs and other institutions – among them are free Czech classes,

which many of the interviewees have attended. Refugees like Leonid (9) or Gael (14) pointed out how vital the assistance they received from the refugee centre was for them, in particular, when they needed help going to the doctor. Daniel (11) describes his experience as follows: *'The NGO (Nesehnuti) had programs that helped us with the language and legal issues. The organisation found a volunteer who helped our family learn Czech. She was a professional. In a month, we were already able to find our way around. My wife kept going to Czech classes for migrants; the classes were for free. This helped our family a lot. These programs are very important.'*

On the other hand, certain participants are more sceptical towards assistance from specialised structures because of what 'seeking help' suggests about them (*'I know about organisations that help migrants, but I like being independent and counting on myself.'* – Lena (3)). Others, such as Anna (2), are able to scrutinise how efficient or inefficient the system in the Czech Republic is and draw conclusions for themselves. *'It was always fascinating to me how the foreign police pretends not to see certain things. If on my documents, my rent is CZK 15 000 and my official salary is CZK 12 000, does this not look suspicious to them? I mean, I'm thankful that this is not another issue I need to deal with, but it shows what a mess their system is as well.'*

Important opportunities arise from the social networks and the communities of which migrants become members. Most recruitment agencies which migrants from Eastern Europe contact are actually managed by Ukrainians. Their contact is almost always provided by someone in the migrant's social circle. Alternatively, they search for contacts and work offers on social media. Groups related to specific countries serve as platforms to share information, exchange experiences, and warning each other of mistakes others have made (see, for example, the group 'Moldovans in the Czech Republic' on Facebook).

Ina (6) has even created her own YouTube channel, where she posts short videos on various topics related to her experience as a migrant in the Czech Republic. Although he is trying not to remain stuck in his own community, it was his Latin American friends who helped Alvaro (4) find work in a Mexican restaurant and support his studies (*'They're not Czech, they're Latinos, so they treat me amazing.'*). The contacts and solutions the community provides are essential in stressful situations, particularly when migrants face uncertainties related to their legal status.

An example which occurred in more than one interview concerned the services of one specific person from Ukraine who provides fake employment in exchange for money to migrants who lose their jobs. The provided services allowed them to maintain the validity of their visa in exchange for a 'service' fee as well as a monthly contribution which would cover the social and health insurance an employer pays for his employees.

The importance of networks among MRAs is illustrated by the experiences of Leonid (9), who learned about life in the Czech Republic through some of his acquaintances already living there before applying for asylum, and Alvaro (4), who states that, without his brother, *'everything would have been impossible'*. Although it represents an important resource of information and reassurance in situations of uncertainty, copying the strategies of more 'experienced' migrants can often result in following the same path, leading to precarious employment.

Migrant agency is clearly illustrated in situations in which they try to escape the category of the low-skilled economic migrant. Lena (3), for example, is working in a coffee shop to support her small business until she's able to make enough based only on that. Anna (2) is taking psychology classes to become a therapist; she's already organising seminars inviting guests from Ukraine. Daniel (11) is currently looking into IT training to seek better employment options. Similarly, migrants resisted pre-assigned categories based on gender: At the centre for the unemployed, Ina (6) strongly objected when the clerk suggested she write down 'cleaner' as a job of interest to her. Lena (3) went for a physically demanding job at a warehouse, and vocally confronted the sexism she faced there daily. Ion (5), a male opposite, refused a job in construction where most men go, as he considered it unsafe.

2.3.4 Entering the labour market – what kind of work?

As already mentioned at the beginning of the analytical part, channels through which MRAs enter the labour market are conditioned by a myriad of factors. Among them, the MRAs' motivation for leaving their country and the resulting legal status in the destination country is of particular importance. All interviewed refugees were already living in the Czech Republic for more than six months and had reached a legal status which allowed them to enter the labour market, despite the fact that Gael (14) and Leonid (9) were still waiting for their asylum applications to be accepted. Both men mentioned the support the refugee centre has granted them in looking for a job; their efforts were, however, halted by the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown.

For economic migrants, the situation surrounding their efforts to enter the labour market was significantly different. Given their legal status, which was in most cases defined by their working visas, they have significantly less space to negotiate important aspects of their employment, as well as to choose a job which aligns best with their qualifications. Most conducted interviews among migrant workers pointed to the crucial role played by recruitment agencies in their experience of entering the labour market. For migrants in vulnerable positions, the 'help' provided by recruitment agencies in finding work which supports their legal status appears to be something of a 'necessary evil' they have to confront before moving forward. For most, agencies, but also intermediaries which provide employers with a workforce, are therefore the 'gatekeepers' of the labour market. It is also worth mentioning here that the legality of such entities has not become clear. From the migrants' perspective, these are individuals who provide them with a job in exchange for money and a monthly fee extracted from their salary. In a context in which they encounter administrative and bureaucratic barriers, have limited language skills, and face a hostile environment, recruiters are the only persons to which they can turn. As Maria from Ukraine suggested, *'So I got onto this bus. The driver put me in contact with a woman also from Ukraine. We met at a gas station, and it was scary; I had no idea what to expect. But she looked okay, she had her own car, and looked well taken care of.'*

In situations of uncertainty, where a migrant loses their job and, as a result, the legality of their stay is threatened, recruiters represent, somewhat ironically, a safety net they can fall upon. Such is the example of Vasilij (8) from Ukraine who found a job and a place to live with other workers through recruiters after he lost his job at a BMW factory. Vasilij also explained that he chooses to work through a recruitment agency, arguing that such a solution provided him with the flexibility of doing as much overtime as he wants because he needs to earn enough money, which at the moment is his primary goal. At the same time, most interviewed migrants have mentioned stories they heard about recruiters cheating people and taking advantage of their vulnerable situation by refusing to pay them their wages or simply disappearing.

Employment conditions mediated through recruiters are often expressed in low salaries, long hours, and physically demanding and exhausting labour. These conditions are well-explained by Ina (6), who said, *'You need to work like a robot to fill your quota. Sometimes there's no time to drink water or go to the bathroom. And in those three years, there was increasingly more work to do. The quota became larger, but the expenses, they also grew! There was less and less money.'*

Even more revelatory is the experience of Maria (13), who arrived twenty years ago at a very young age as an undocumented migrant. *'It was the dirtiest job at the factory, and we were paid around CZK 32 per hour. No papers, nothing. This was based on a tourist visa which also was probably fake.'* The precarity of her employment continued when she was being hired based on her trade licence, a practice which allows an employer to transfer onto the employee all the costs related to health and social insurance, with no certainty in regards to regular income or labour protection.

Although migrants are well-aware of the precarity of their employment, recruiters often appear as the only option to financially secure themselves, their families, sometimes even the families in the country of origin, all while working legally. At the same time, the costs of living, including the costs of housing, remain high in comparison to their income. Even the exploitation of the recruitment agency can often lead to indebtedness, as some have had to use all their savings to pay recruiters, often pre-migration.

Another important decision which some migrant workers face is a difficult choice between financial security and a path of self-fulfilment, work-wise. With the support of the refugee centre, Gael (14), a university teacher and a visual artist, managed to organise an exhibition for his art in Brno. Victor (1) studied architecture in Paris; however, the high living costs there did not allow him to pursue a career in this field, which he hoped to do in the Czech Republic. Here, however, he encountered the same financial insecurity and kept postponing taking a job in architecture in favour of more financially secure positions, such as in IT with a multinational company. Other participants refused to compromise and decided to strive for work which would match their aspirations and skills. Alvaro (4), who works in restaurants in order to financially support his PhD studies, noted, *'Choosing biology and the PhD wasn't out of necessity, it is a fulfilling path. The profession doesn't pay great. I would love to end up someday teaching at the university, but probably I'm not ready now.'* Lena (3) is working as a barista while designing and sewing pieces of clothing. Anna (2) regularly goes back to Ukraine to attend her psychology classes, which are cheaper there, while working in the Czech Republic.

In her interview, Ina (6) was reflecting upon the question of work and social prestige: *'I also didn't want to move because I had a good job. Between us girls, I liked dressing up for my job, I liked the status – you know how it is. And I knew that if I came to work in the Czech Republic, I could only get a job as a cleaner; the choice would not be great.'* She also spoke about an incident at the employment centre. *'I had to fill in a form on what jobs I was interested in or qualified for. I didn't know what to write because I didn't know what my opportunities were yet. The civil servant there then suggested examples like a cleaner, housekeeper, and so on. This upset me, and I told her, "I'm not looking for a cleaning job. I wouldn't be here if I did! I could find that in 30 minutes by myself. I've only ever cleaned at home!" She then felt uncomfortable and explained it to me again. I don't think she really cared what I wrote, I understand that now, but at that moment, it upset me.'* This testimony also points to stereotyping and stigmatisation of and by migrant workers, which frames certain jobs as more likely to be accepted by migrants and women migrants in particular.

The conducted interviews revealed that MRAs' decision to leave their place of origin in search of a better life was rarely determined by one single factor. Family trauma and economic hardship feature common characteristics which blur the lines that divide refugees and economic migrants. Their decision to leave their countries of origin is further determined by individual motivations, reflected in their expectations, priorities, and objectives. The decision to leave the country is, thus, necessarily prompted by a combination of circumstances. The fear for the future of their children represents a prominent example.

The majority of interviewed participants experienced similar barriers and enablers, with certain differences related to their social and legal status. Financial insecurity; lack of access to resources, such as affordable housing; and poor knowledge of the Czech language, taken together, represent significant challenges for almost all participants. At the same time, despite the encountered constraints, migrants and refugees are not passive victims whose agency is steered by structural circumstances. They often appear as actors capable of individual decisions, albeit often with limited choices. They mobilise social and material resources, and they seek answers and assistance through different channels. This approach helps them to identify the structural opportunities their environment is offering while also learning to rely on each other as well as on natives and local resources.

2.4 Critical analysis of the adequacy of LMI: Comparative analysis

The variety of approaches towards labour market integration and some of the contradictions identified in previous SIRIUS WPs (see the section Background) determine the capacity of stakeholders to address the MRAs' needs. Furthermore, to understand the complexity of MRA trajectories, previous experiences as well as future-directed hopes and plans must be taken into consideration.

The perspective of migrants suggests that stakeholders are not necessarily aware of the problems of MRAs nor their perception of LMI barriers, and enablers do not mirror the needs of MRAs. We further discuss the adequacy of LMI alongside the six following dimensions: (1) administration services, (2) language provision, (3) public discourse, (4) labour market integration, (5) social and health care provision and schooling, and, finally, dealing with (6) the dark sides of employment related to working conditions and contracts.

First, our analysis suggests that there are several contradictions between the interests of MRAs and institutional and legal frameworks. These contradictions derive from frequent legislative changes, contributing to the questionable categorisation of migrants. Moreover, the demanding conditions that MRAs must meet to obtain various permits (sufficient financial resources, housing) create spaces for semi-legal practices. At the level of administration offices, MRAs face a hostile environment, including slow and bureaucratic processes, which were perceived to be quite demanding and strict in relation to MRAs. As one (8) of the participants put it, *'It feels like people are divided in classes. If there's a job available, then, first, one needs to make sure that there aren't any Czechs interested in it. If there aren't, then next in line are people from Slovakia, Romania, Moldova – so the so-called countries from the second world. Afterwards, there's Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, etc.'* This practice is anchored in Czech law as *'the test by labour market'*. This law actually means that every free position must first be offered to Czechs, and only in cases where no Czechs are interested in the position can it be offered to migrants. As a result, migrants often depend on the willingness of an employer to go through this complicated procedure to hire them. In reality, most employers simply prefer to hire through recruitment agencies.

MRAs try to mitigate these problems with several strategies. Several MRAs appreciated the help of migrant communities and social networks. However, the role of migrant communities is not crucial as not all MRAs are necessarily members of these communities, often as a consequence of their own decision since most of them perceive 'immersion' into their own ethnic communities as a self-imposed barrier to integration in the host country. Furthermore, in order to cope with the complexity of bureaucratised administrative procedures, many MRAs approach paid intermediaries to assist them in dealing with their needs. The work of intermediaries sometimes exists in the grey zones, captured by semi-legal operators, who provide services particularly to the migrants from Eastern Europe and Vietnam.

Last but not least, the assistance of NGOs is, in some instances, crucial. The involvement of NGOs concerns, in particular, refugees and asylum seekers. Other MRAs, and economic migrants in particular, perceive the assistance of NGOs as a matter which further complicates the way in which they understand their own legal situation by going with them through complex administrative procedures and interpretation of the legislation. For others, unpaid help automatically places them in a social category which goes against their pride. In other words, NGOs are seen by some of these MRAs as organisations for *'poor'* migrants. It is also worth mentioning that NGOs providing assisting programmes to migrants have, in reality, a very limited penetration capacity, with many economic migrants not even being aware of the existence of such programmes.

Moreover, the migrants' capacity for negotiation is limited by the fact that the legality of their stay in the country depends on their employment; a working visa must be permanently *'in use'*. While some MRAs prefer to stick to the rules rather than openly oppose them, others seek

semi-legal ways to go around these restrictions, such as seeking fake employment until they manage to find a new official job.

The chaotic and loosely regulated system of subcontracting via recruitment agencies creates conditions for labour exploitation and lower standards of security. However, in a context where they lack language skills, encounter administrative and bureaucratic barriers, and generally face a hostile environment, recruiters and intermediaries from their communities are the only persons to which they can turn.

Second, as regards the barrier of language, MRAs argued that not all their linguistic needs had been properly considered. More specifically, they pointed out that employers generally do not provide them with adequate support, especially considering the schedule of factory workers. Moreover, MRAs indicated the lack of availability of advanced courses or courses for specific professions. A mixture of students with different mother tongues – including Slavonic speakers with a faster learning capacity – represents another language-related contradiction which hinders the social and labour market integration of MRAs in the Czech Republic. The language barrier is also related to the wider aspect of societal integration and education of children. As suggested by the stories of MRAs and similarly stressed by some NGOs representatives, there are high dropout rates at secondary school exams among students with migration backgrounds. Language barriers are also illustrated in cases where the capacity of migrant parents to become members of school communities alongside natives is very limited.

Third, in regard to the hostile public discourse as another barrier of LMI, several MRAs recalled their experiences of unfriendly behaviour on the part of staff from the offices of the Ministry of the Interior (OAMP). Hostile attitudes of public clerks represent significant burdens and sources of anxieties when they are expressed in relationships at work or during medical visits. Our evidence suggests that MRAs not only feel stigmatised but they furthermore tend to self-stigmatise themselves or each other. Some of the interviewed participants mentioned the problem of 'selective discrimination'. This discrimination regards situations in which migrants from Western countries are generally better accepted and pass as 'expats', than someone who speaks very good Czech, albeit with a thick Eastern European accent. Western migrants are commonly well-accepted, although they speak little or no Czech at all and, financially, are not necessarily better off. Moreover, the testimonies of migrants suggest that there are more subtle forms of selective discrimination even among the interviewed migrants from Eastern Europe. For example, several Russians did not want to be confused as Ukrainians, while certain Moldovans wanted to differentiate themselves both from Russians and Ukrainians.

Fourth, the labour market integration of MRAs can be enhanced by programmes targeting specific groups (e.g. Regime Ukrajina). Although these programmes represent a reaction to the problems of slow bureaucratic and administration procedures (e.g. residence permission, visa, work permit), especially for employers, their contribution should not be overestimated. Due to their selectiveness, these initiatives contribute to the creation of new inequalities among migrants based on national origins or integration resources. Furthermore, these programmes again reduce migrants to their 'economic' potential, indirectly discouraging a more complex approach to their integration in the host society.

Fifth, when it comes to health and social care, some MRA and NGO representatives acknowledged that assistance in these areas had not been systematically developed, often depending on individual officers who help migrants effectively. Moreover, the integration of migrants is hindered by expensive health insurance programmes. A number of MRAs remembered poor support for their children at elementary or secondary schools. Short term migrants have also limited access to social rights and benefits. Furthermore, once they start using them, their stay may be threatened.

Access to social and health care might be difficult even to MRAs with permanent residence who are entitled to this type of support. However, their access can be hindered due to language and cultural barriers. This lack of support in the areas of social and health care reflects the struggles which migrants can face when it comes to their sociocultural integration

more broadly. MRAs commonly suggested that personal, social, and familial needs are marginalised instead of being considered. For example, absent babysitting options represent another problem which excludes many primarily female MRAs from the possibility of attending Czech language classes.

Last but not least, sixth, as regards the dark sides of the labour market, empirical evidence from previous WPs suggested that MRAs commonly do not know their rights. More specifically, they are either not aware of the various benefits they can apply for, or they are hesitant to use them. Moreover, internalisation of the assigned category of an 'economic migrant' and the related marginalisation represents another barrier. Some MRAs are thus cognitively restrained from seeking better conditions and demanding their basic needs and rights be respected.

As regards the real problems that women, young people, refugees, or victims of abuse may have, with the exception of representatives of the third sector and some social partners, the awareness and social sensibility towards these specific needs is very low. In general, the MRAs' testimonies suggest that these particular topics are marginalised as part of the already marginalised topic of labour market integration.

As already suggested, the highest level of understanding of MRA needs is among NGOs and some selected social partners. While the NGOs help migrants to overcome administrative barriers, cope with language problems, resist the hostile public discourse, and emphasise the topic of social integration in addition to questioning several issues related to labour market integration, social partners and, in particular, labour unions contrast the risk of social dumping and call for stronger and stricter monitoring of employment contracts and, more generally, compliance with labour law in order to prevent the precarious employment of MRAs.

2.5 Conclusion

Our analysis of diverse yet somehow similar individual stories draws us to the following conclusions. The decision to migrate is primarily motivated by individual, political, and economic reasons. Migrants decide to leave for a journey as part of their search for a 'better life', wanting to avoid violence, abuse, persecutions, and war, imagining better opportunities for themselves, their families, or their children. This complex myriad of factors is interconnected in different ways, depending on priorities, hopes, expectations, and objectives. These are often related to unavoidable economic hardship, more or less temporary abandonment of professional and career dreams, and traumatic events related to pre-migratory, migratory, or post-migratory periods.

The migration journey is hindered by uncertainties related to social and legal status as well as to financial insecurity and the lack of access to resources, such as affordable housing. These uncertainties are further reinforced by a hostile and xenophobic public discourse, spread from everyday life situations to workplaces as well as public administration offices. They are often forced to keep apart their education degrees and work skills, thus experiencing downward social mobility.

Further weakened by insufficient knowledge of the Czech language, being stigmatised and exposed to traumatic events and stressors, such as discrimination; separation from their families; or reclusion, migrants and refugees are perfect vulnerable actors who are exposed towards the administrative and bureaucratic complexities of the integration process. If not helped by family or friendship networks, migrant communities, or NGOs, migrants and refugees risk becoming targets for recruitment agencies and intermediaries, often operating in the ambiguous and grey zones of the integration field where their vulnerabilities are abused.

Yet, migrants and refugees are far from being passive victims of these structural circumstances. They still manage to mobilise their resources and life experience and act as active decision-makers, albeit often with limited choices. The accumulated work and life experience with ethnic solidarity or third sector support altogether represent important enablers facilitating labour market as well as broader societal integration. By aiming to reach opportunities which arise from their social networks and communities, they also invest their free time into education and skills developments. This pathway is not standard, yet is still present among the experiences we heard.

Being on the labour market as a migrant often means to work for low salaries, long working hours, and to carry out physically demanding and exhausting labour. Integration in the labour market often depends on recruitment agencies who paradoxically represent 'safety nets' in times of financial instability. Similar to their everyday lives, the workplace is a social milieu of stereotyping and stigmatisation.

This overview does not necessarily remain unknown to key stakeholders, although it frequently passes unobserved. The representatives of NGOs, selected labour unions, and some public administration offices at both national and regional levels have increasingly aimed to stimulate a more pro-active and holistic integration agenda, undermined by the broader design of institutional and legal frameworks.

This critical analysis of the needs of migrants and refugees suggests several policy implications. More attention must be given to the little capacity which migrant assistance programmes have in terms of specialised language programmes and legal counselling. Furthermore, the complexity of administrative procedures should prevent the emergence of intermediaries and recruitment agencies who benefit from the vulnerability of migrants and refugees. Moreover, more consolidation of a common approach, as well as better coordination, is needed among stakeholders. The consultative role of NGOs, such as the CMAO, must be enhanced. Finally, the approaches to integration must be more complex and look beyond the economic potential of migrant workers.

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2.7 Annex I: Demographic information on MRAs

	Date of interview	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of origin	Migration year	Education (primary, secondary, tertiary)	Current occupation in the host country	Occupation in the country of origin	Languages the individual speaks
Interview 1,	1.3.2020	Mid-30s	M	Single	Colombia	2014	Tertiary	Working in IT	n/s	Spanish, French, English, Czech
Interview 2,	3.3.2020	Mid-30s	F	Divorced	Ukraine	2016	Tertiary	Unemployed	Pharmacist	Russian, Ukrainian, Czech
Interview 3,	22.2.2020	Late 20s	F	Single	Ukraine	2017	Tertiary	Barista	Police forces	Ukrainian, Russian, English, Czech
Interview 4,	3.3.2020	Mid-20s	M	Single	Venezuela	2018	Tertiary	PhD student	Student	Spanish, English, Czech
Interview 5,	24.2.2020	Late 30s	M	Married	Moldova	2019	Secondary	Warehouse worker	Working in the military abroad	Romanian, Russian, English
Interview 6,	25.3.2020	Mid-40s	F	Married	Moldova	2017	Primary	Unemployed	Director of Marketing cosmetics, department	Russian, Romanian, Czech
Interview 7,	26.3.2020	Late 30s	F	Widowed	Moldova	2018	Primary	Cook	Unemployed	Romanian, Czech
Interview 8,	28.3.2020	Late 30s	M	Divorced	Ukraine	2017	Tertiary	Warehouse	Various odd jobs abroad in Russia, then Italy	Ukrainian, Russian, Czech
Interview 9,	2.4.2020	Early 20s	M	Single	Russia	2019	Secondary	Unemployed	Student	Russian

Interview 10,	2.3.2020	Mid-30s	F	Married	Russia	2019	Tertiary	Marketing (Junior)	Marketing (Senior)	Russian, English
Interview 11,	28.4.2020	Early 40s	M	Married	Moldova	2017	Tertiary	Printing company (factory worker)	Graphic designer (newspaper)	Russian, Czech
Interview 12,	29.4.2020	Mid-30s	F	Married	Syria	2015	Tertiary	IT	Translator (English)	Arabic, English
Interview 13,	10.3.2020	Mid-40s	F	Married	Ukraine	2000	Tertiary (recently graduated in the CR)	NGO worker to (assistance migrants)	Unemployed	Russian, Czech
Interview 14,	31.3.2020	Mid-60s	M	Married	Venezuela	2018	Tertiary	Unemployed	University teacher	Spanish, English

2.8 Annex II: Summaries of conducted interviews

Interview number	Description, turning points (TP), quotations	Date of interview
1.	<p>Victor grew up in Colombia and moved to Paris after high school to study architecture. It took him many years to finish university, and he wasn't able to find a job in the field. Life in Paris was very difficult, so he was impressed with how easy life in the Czech Republic seemed during one of his trips around Europe (TP). He moved to the Czech Republic in 2014; however, he soon encountered a number of barriers. He had believed that here he would finally be able to pursue his career as an architect, but he has constantly been forced to choose financial security by working in other fields over his interests, especially as the living costs in the Czech Republic have kept rising. He doesn't believe he will ever become fully integrated in the Czech Republic and is growing gradually worried about his future here as his chances to work as an architect are diminishing.</p> <p>'Everyday I'm becoming poorer.'</p> <p>'You will never be one of them [even with citizenship].'</p> <p>'I don't know where else to go. Hungary is similar but so much more xenophobic.'</p>	1.3.2020
2.	<p>Anna is a woman in her mid-thirties from Zakarpattia, Ukraine. She first came to the Czech Republic on a Polish visa in 2016. She grew up in Zakarpattia and studied pharmacology in Lvov. She then got married and worked for 10 years in a pharmacy in the same city where she was born and grew up. The change in her life came when her marriage fell apart (TP). After the divorce, she did not want to stay there anymore and wanted to change her life. As she already had some acquaintances working in the Czech Republic, she thought she could try and move here as well. In the CR, she first worked a job assigned to her by a recruitment agency; however, she has always tried to achieve more and change her social surroundings.</p> <p>'Once I came here [to the Czech Republic], I understood that I don't like this option, this semi-legal way; I didn't want to live like that. I want to be living here legally. Because otherwise, you are no one here; you won't be able to find any job other than washing dishes or cleaning. I understood that within a month when I had to share a flat with five other people (TP). I knew I can't find a flat by myself, because I'm here illegally. I couldn't even sign an agreement because of my status.'</p> <p>'Can you imagine? After working in the pharmacy for 10 years, I took off my white coat and went on to wash dishes.'</p> <p>'In a way, there was something therapeutical in this change. Going from an intellectual-based job to manual work. I actually enjoyed those first months. I learned a bit of the language. I started understanding my surroundings better and understood that I want to stay here. But I wanted to do it differently, because I knew that some of our people are getting stuck in this work cycle for 10 years. I wanted a different life for myself.'</p>	3.3.2020

3.	<p>Lena is a woman in her late twenties. She is from Donbass, Ukraine. She studied in Donetsk to become a police investigator. The war in Eastern Ukraine changed her and her family's life completely. She realised that she was unable to pursue her career at home (TP). She moved to the Czech Republic with her parents in 2017. However, she couldn't settle for a low qualified job in the Czech Republic either. Despite all the barriers and challenges she's facing, she's striving to manage her own business and live a full life.</p> <p>'I thought to myself, just look at me, a police officer, washing glasses in a strip bar. But the truth was that my ego was so hurt. This was so humiliating. I felt extremely depressed.'</p> <p>'I'm really lucky with my boss here. He accepted me back without too many questions.' 'I feel comfortable at the moment, I have social and health insurance, and I'm okay with the money I'm being paid here.'</p> <p>'I know about organisations that help migrants, but I like being independent and counting on myself.'</p> <p>'Some people, when they hear I'm from Ukraine, their reaction is, "Well, thank God you're not from Russia!" That's such a weird thing to say.'</p>	2.2.2020
4.	<p>Alvaro is a young man from Venezuela. As the situation in the country became extremely difficult to navigate, especially since he was actively involved in protests against the government (TP), he decided to join his older brother in the Czech Republic in 2018. After a year of working odd jobs in restaurants, he got accepted into a PhD programme and was able to pursue his interest in studying biology (TP). His brother has been helping him with everything. Despite also having Spanish citizenship, integration related problems still persist.</p> <p>'It's horrible [for the asylum seekers], I don't really like the way they're doing it here. In Spain, it's actually more humane. Here, like in Germany, they send you for two or three weeks to... it's not a concentration camp, but it's an isolated place outside your environment. The only people surrounding you are also migrants. It's a six-month process, but in those six months, they send you there. My friend told me they send you there while they're studying your case.'</p> <p>'Because I graduated in my country, I wanted to continue working in science here. I'm a biologist. I was looking for something here but maybe in the public sector. I thought it was possible since I'm an EU citizen, but key positions in biology in the public sector here, you need to be Czech for that. In the private sector there weren't many positions for scientists. In Germany, there are more, but here not that many, perhaps more in the medical field, for doctors or pharmacists"</p> <p>'In principle, they should provide me with health and social insurance, but I'm not Czech. I joke about it with my Italian or other European colleagues. Despite the fact that I'm Spanish, I'm like a second grade Spanish, and a third grade EU citizen.'</p>	3.3.2020
5.	<p>Ion is ex-military from Moldova. He moved for work to the Czech Republic in 2019 as he understood that he had no prospects for a career in the military (TP). He has a working visa, which means he has to return to Moldova every three months. He works together with his wife long hours in a warehouse, a job he found through a recruitment agency.</p>	24.2.2020

	<p>'At first, I was a bit uneasy about it. I didn't really understand the process related to the documentation. I didn't know what was the common, proper procedure. But what reassured me was that I knew some people who found work through the same company and have been working for about a year now – that made me more confident.'</p> <p>'Obviously you can work less, but then the money is just ridiculously little, and then there's no point coming at all! Your only chance for a normal working day to be enough moneywise is to become employed directly by the employer.'</p> <p>'Everyone is looking for a better life even if that means taking jobs that are below your level of qualification. My last training was a military exercise in the United States. I spent a month in the desert at 40 degrees, with snakes and scorpions, in insane conditions, all while being given five dollars a day. These were survival exercises, so water and food was limited. My dad was laughing at me, telling me, "Son, at home, I'd pay you more to work in the garden, would give you a glass of wine, and you'd be sleeping in peace next to your wife!" So there was no point in doing it. I was arguing with people around me back home, explaining to them, "I lost so many years doing insane exercises, always on the road, and for what? For nothing."'</p>	
6.	<p>Ina is a woman in her forties from Chisinau, Moldova. She came to the Czech Republic in 2017 in order to join her husband, who had been working here for many years. They live in a small city close to the border with Slovakia. As she realised that it's important to keep her family together (TP) and, although she held a higher position back in Moldova, Ina accepted a low skilled job in a factory she found through a recruitment agency. She is determined to build a life with her family in the Czech Republic, despite all the sacrifices this entails.</p> <p>'This is my hobby; I always try to aim higher.'</p> <p>'From today's perspective, I see that the CR was really the best choice. We are both Russian speakers, although I speak Romanian as well, but the Czech isn't too difficult for me. Also, I feel like it's easier for us to adapt here than if we had left to Germany, for example. I would have spent more time reaching a level in the German language that would allow me to find a job.'</p> <p>'During this time, we were still living in Moldova"... I was scared to leave because of the children. I was worried it would be hard for them to move – they were 12 and 7 at that time. But if I knew then what I know now, I would have moved in a heartbeat. Now I know that there's nothing scary about it, and I encourage others.'</p> <p>'I also didn't want to move because I had a good job. Between us girls, I liked dressing up for my job, I liked the status – you know how it is... And I knew that if I came to work in the Czech Republic, I could only get a job as a cleaner; the choice would not be great.'</p> <p>'During the time we were here visiting, my husband was sharing a flat with a Romanian family who just welcomed a child. I was talking with this woman, and I asked her how much she paid for giving birth, and she says, "Nothing because I have insurance!" And I said, "Well, in Moldova I have insurance too, but I still had to pay 400 euro for an intervention. But okay, the insurance for you covered it, but surely you must have paid</p>	25.3.2020

	the doctor something?!" And she said again, "Nothing!" In the evening when my husband came back, I told him, "I want to live here." (TP)	
7.	<p>Lida is a woman in her late thirties from Moldova. She came to the Czech Republic in 2018.</p> <p>*This interview was conducted online. Lida was at her place. Although I wasn't able to see anyone else, there was obviously someone in the room that she constantly looked at before answering. Sometimes, seemingly at this person's instructions, she refused to answer at all.</p> <p>Lida lost her husband a couple of years ago (TP). She was left with two older children and with a lot of debt. She moved to the Czech Republic through an acquaintance who still seems to be helping her. She works as a cook in a restaurant, which closed during the lockdown. It is the first job about which she can say that she is happy with. Her main concern is the future of her children, who stayed in Moldova.</p> <p>'When I left my home, I thought that I was going to a foreign country, among strangers, where I don't know the people or speak the language. But trouble and worries make you close your eyes and just go. And when you arrive, there's no warm welcome... like every person, I went through hardships and through a lot of trouble.'</p> <p>'Now with the situation around the virus, I am looking for help, maybe some institution that helps migrants... I lost my job, but I don't want to go back in case the job shows up again... It would be difficult for me to come back to it.'</p>	26.3.2020
8.	<p>Vasilij is a man in his late thirties from Zakarpattia, Ukraine. He started to seek work abroad after his marriage fell apart (TP). He first went to Russia, where his income fell sharply after the war broke out. Then, in 2017, he decided to try in the Czech Republic and took on a job he found through a recruitment agency. He currently lives in a shared apartment with many other workers and pays the agency for it. He realises now that he'll probably never be able to start a family here (TP), so he is thinking of going back.</p> <p>'Czechs are always right.'</p> <p>'I will always be treated here differently; I will never feel here at home.'</p>	28.3.2020
9.	<p>Leonid is a 21yo man from Sankt Petersburg. Due to his faith, he was facing severe persecution in Russia. He was forced to flee and seek asylum in the Czech Republic in 2019 (as of 2017, Jehovah's witnesses are an illegal religion in the RF). TP</p> <p>'In 2018, the members' houses were being set on fire, the harassments continued in 2019 as well, and I decided to run.'</p> <p>'I don't really know what will happen now. I already received the official call to join the military service, but I know of other [Jehovah's] witnesses who weren't accepted to the ACS, who had to go to the army, and who had their kidneys beaten out of them. The law does not protect them in any way, and I'm really lucky I could avoid that... If they didn't go to the army, they would have been charged under 282.'</p>	2.4.2020

	<p>'Okay, I wanted to go to Canada. I didn't make it there. I wanted to go to France, but there I would have been homeless. I know that there you would have to wait for six months until you're even given a place to live. As a refugee I would have just slept in a tent outside, and I didn't want that.'</p> <p>'I understood that the Czech Republic, the Slavic language, I like that. The conditions for refugees are more or less okay. At least I have a roof over my head, food, health insurance.'</p> <p>'I am planning on looking for work in a repair centre for iPhones, MacBooks, and so on.'</p>	
10.	<p>Sonia is a highly-skilled migrant from Moscow. She moved to the Czech Republic in 2019 after she married a Slovak (TP). The political situation in Russia is another reason why she and her husband did not want to stay there (TP). She found work in a marketing company; however, because she doesn't speak Czech, she had no choice but to accept a position below her qualification, although most of the work is in English.</p> <p>'I didn't really experience any situations of discomfort here. I didn't feel I'm being discriminated against, apart from a situation when the police stopped me and my husband once in a park and mistook me for a prostitute. But the police here are still more civilised than back home.'</p>	2.3.2020
11.	<p>Daniel was born and grew up in Transnistria, a self-proclaimed autonomous region in Moldova bordering Ukraine. He worked for a newspaper there as a graphic designer; however, the salaries were extremely low (TP). His wife worked for an NGO supporting activists, and their family came under increasing pressure from the Transnistrian authorities to the point where it wasn't safe for them to be there anymore. In 2017, helped by some partners of the NGO in the Czech Republic, they moved to Brno. Daniel's job is well below his qualifications. He is trying now to acquire new skills in IT and move forward. He has also obtained Bulgarian citizenship.</p> <p>'Even if I had a European passport and could potentially work anywhere, my only option was to find work through a recruitment agency.'</p> <p>'I know Moldovans who have worked here for the past 14 years, but they're still stuck in this position. They still manage to find work, which is very low paid, through recruitment agencies. These people actually have permanent residence; they could go to the unemployment office.'</p> <p>'The problem is not the language, they speak Czech already very well. But they become used to this position, and they become stuck in it and don't believe they could find work on their own.'</p>	28.4.2020
12.	<p>Naz fled the war in Syria and applied for asylum in the Czech Republic in 2015, mostly because her brother was already here (TP). Another important reason was however the fact that she wasn't comfortable living in conservative environment, especially as a woman, and she did not want that kind of life for her daughters (TP). She is satisfied with the job that she has in a corporation; however, she wishes her husband found a better job as well. She is also concerned for his health. She would be ready to move to a different country if that meant a better future for her daughters.</p>	29.4.2020

	<p>'At school, they don't to speak in English with me, I always have to bring a friend.'</p> <p>'The most uncomfortable situation I experienced was at the police for foreigners, where they are extremely rude, shouting at me about my Czech.'</p> <p>'I hear that Germany or Austria has a better education system. If I ever move somewhere else, it will be for my daughters.'</p>	
13.	<p>Maria is an NGO worker from Ukraine, and she assists migrants. Although she came to the Czech Republic in the early 2000s, her story is revelatory in that she talks about her experience as an undocumented migrant. She arrived very young, leaving her daughter with her mother. She first worked a very difficult job at a factory, then slowly moved forward and has now graduated from university with a degree in social work, she will be pursuing her masters' next year.</p> <p>"Now everything is fine, but it is a happy ending to a very hard beginning. But I can say that I am proud of myself."</p> <p>"I still notice discrimination everywhere, from shops to state institutions."</p> <p>"Some other people still think and tell me I come from Russia."</p> <p>"My next plan, after I get Czech citizenship, I'd like to work for a state institution, like the ministry."</p>	10.3.2020
14.	<p>Gael is an asylum seeker in his mid-60s from Venezuela. He applied for asylum in the Czech Republic in 2018 with his wife and 18-year-old daughter. He studied fine arts in Caracas and England and worked at the University of Caracas. He had to escape the country as he was facing increasing pressures on his family because he was openly opposing the government's policies.</p> <p>'The thing is that I was openly opposed to the government, and I let people from the university know that I was opposed to the politics they tried to impose on the university. Things became very difficult me. They knew I opposed putting communist ideology in the minds of our students. This is why I had such a difficult time and was facing a lot of pressure where I worked.'</p> <p>'My initial expectation when I first came here was to save my family from starvation and, possibly, cheat my own death, and then get a job, and try to get a normal life.'</p> <p>'The first problem that I have is that I have to learn the Czech language. And then I can teach both English and Spanish.'</p> <p>'My wife fell in love with this country. She is already dreaming about us having a little house with two cats and a dog. Just have a normal life. My daughter would go to school – she has very good technical skills; she's great with computers. She would like to learn photography as well. I dream that she can learn, that would make her able to manage her own life in the future. I'm 62 years old, and I hope to live a long life, but sometimes I feel worried for her future. She's my only child. I want her to be safe. This is why we left, for her safety.'</p>	31.3.2020

2.9 Annex 3 – Individual biographies

Lena.

A. Narrative frame

The loss of an ideal is not an end in itself, but rather an essential part of one's journey, a point of new departure: After being forced to leave her home and career behind, a young girl from Ukraine is trying to create a new, decent life for herself while facing hostile environments and new challenges.

This is a story about lost ideals, learning, accepting, and embracing new goals. Lena's central epiphany came with the realisation that the 'mission' she was working hard for, that of becoming a good 'soldier', who would contribute to the eradication of corruption in Ukraine, was a lot more complex than she had naively predicted, and, ultimately, unreachable. Losing this ideal prompted her to search for a new life, which brought her to the Czech Republic. This transition was a traumatising experience. It was very difficult for her to get by with poorly paid jobs which were well below her level of qualification, isolated from the city, denying her a chance at a social life, and including sexism and discrimination. She ultimately managed to rise above this experience, having gained a new perspective and understanding of life. She remains as determined to reach her new goals as she was at the beginning of her journey.

B. Monomyth structure

Pre-dualistic life (background)

Lena is a woman in her late twenties. She was born and grew up in Crimea's Donbass region, in Ukraine. She studied in Donetsk to become a police investigator (IT specialising in listening devices) and worked in the police forces for a very short time upon finishing her studies. She chose this job because, at the time, she wanted to enrol in the fight against corruption in Ukraine, particularly that which concerns internal investigations — she wanted to specialise in 'catching their own people'. In August 2014, as the war with Russia broke out and the region of Donetsk became part of the self-declared Autonomous Republic of Donetsk (DNR), she was forced to make a choice: either to stay in Donbass and work for the new police forces of the DNR or leave home in order to seek a position in the Ukrainian Police Forces. She chose the Ukrainian side, and this meant that she lost all contact with the people in the structure back home – she was counting on their support for her career.

She was transferred to Western Ukraine where she worked for two and a half years as a police officer in charge of investigating people under home arrest, which wasn't exactly what she was aiming for, but she was happy for the opportunity. Her parents stayed in Donetsk, and she was still dealing with the trauma of having lived in a war zone, witnessing bombings and killings. She is now still dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder (she has a very difficult time when hearing fireworks).

Working as an investigator in Western Ukraine was both physically and mentally very demanding. She was working endless shifts, and her job often demanded dealing with murder cases. At the same time, she was very worried about her parents, who were still living in the warzone. Her parents stayed there because they still had a job. Her dad worked for the famous

Donbass Arena, owned by the known Ukrainian businessman Rinat Achmetov. The stadium was, however, soon nationalised by separatist forces, and Lena's father lost his job.

When she was nine, her parents visited the Czech Republic and worked there for a time; Lena, meanwhile, stayed in Donetsk with her grandparents. Eventually her parents came back, they found work, and their situation stabilised. 'On the material side, our life was good. It was comparable to what was considered middle class at that time in Ukraine, average (before the war).'

First call and backsliding – Attempts to change her life

Lena's parents still kept in touch with their Czech friends, who upon hearing about their difficulties after the war broke, suggested they move back to the CR. They offered to help with the papers they needed. Her parents suggested Lena join them. At the time, her situation at work became increasingly challenging. There were also certain issues with her relationship to her superiors. She decided to try and come to the Czech Republic as well in 2016. She was offered work as a seamstress in a factory which makes outdoor equipment in a small town between Brno and Prague. Her parents found work as well in a factory – all through her parents' friends help. Lena and her parents received work permits for two years.

The work was demanding physically but very well organised. She worked from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. regularly, and felt a sense of structure in her life. 'I felt like I finally have a life.'

However, the money was extremely little; after paying for all social contributions and rent she was left with about CZK 6 000 (approx. EUR 240). 'This was less than I was making back home, and there I was someone. Who am I here? No one.'

After a couple of months, she visited Prague, and she understood that this is where she should be living. Upon coming back to the small city and to her job, she felt hopeless and depressed about having no friends and not speaking the language. She started to look for a job in Prague. She started to research the Czech legislation and ways of finding a new job while still keeping her working visa. She looked at the positions the Ministry of the Interior was offering, sent her CV to places, and travelled to Prague for interviews. But the problem was that no employer wanted to hire her with that type of visa. At this point, she didn't have any job preferences. She was ready to apply for anything.

She found a position at a car components warehouse, where the employer was ready to go through the required paperwork.

Finding an apartment in Prague was a real struggle; she eventually found a room, which was still quite expensive, especially considering the deposit. She had to borrow money and also picked up small 'gigs' before her job at the warehouse started. These small jobs were found on the internet using the Russian social network VK – in Russian, these small gigs are known as *fushka*. One of these jobs turned out to be washing glasses in a strip bar (she didn't know the place was going to be a strip bar). Laughing, she recounted, 'I thought to myself, just f***ing look at me, a police officer, washing glasses in a strip bar.' 'But the truth was that my ego was so hurt; this was so humiliating. I felt extremely depressed.' 'But I thought, f*** it. It doesn't matter. At least I can make some money, and my parents won't think I'm in a total mess.' 'My knowledge of Czech was zero, and it was just because I was from Ukraine that I was able to understand it, but I was ashamed of speaking. The same with English. I had no complexes

about it, I just didn't want to look like a fool.' While waiting for the warehouse job, Lena worked for a bit as a barista as well –she also found this job on VK.

After a month, she began working at the warehouse, where there were only Czechs working. She was working both day and night shifts. Night shifts were physically the most difficult. They were absolutely exhausting. She was sometimes working the weekends as well. At the same time, she still needed to work as a barista because her first pay cheque would only be paid the following month. 'This was a very difficult time.' She left after a month and a half. The situation there was aggravated by relations with her Czech colleagues. She was very young and also almost the only girl working there. Sometimes she needed help with heavier stuff but was met with a very hostile attitude whenever she asked her colleagues to help. She heard them talking behind her back often. "Can you imagine? Grown men bad mouthing a 26 year old girl? For me, that was nonsense. I hadn't seen that even in the police forces.' 'At one point, I couldn't stand this talking behind my back, and I told the manager in half-Czech, half-Ukrainian, and half-slurring what I thought about it.' 'They actually apologised afterwards, but I still wanted to leave. I didn't leave in a scandalous way. I calmly told them why I was leaving and explained how they behaved like bastards.'

She found a new room that was a bit cheaper, and she became good friends with her flatmates. They're still friends. But she had two months to find a new job. She urgently started looking. Through some acquaintances, she reached out to Ivan (this name has appeared before in previous interviews). Ivan is a person (most likely from Ukraine) who provides services to migrants; these consist primarily of fake employment. This is not a unique practice among migrants who don't manage to find employment and risk having their visas annulled; they find someone who officially 'hires' them. However, they need to pay for the social contributions plus a fee 'for these services' themselves. Apart from a first payment (CZK 9 000), Lena paid this man a smaller fee each month to stay 'employed'. Also, at the end of the fiscal year, Ivan additionally kept some of the tax that the state returned (given the low fictional salary). In the meantime, she continued to work unofficially as a barista in various places. Her parents were helping a bit with the rent. Her life stabilised a bit. However, as the minimum salary grew, so did the amount of money she had to pay to stay 'employed'. In the end, this reached a significant monthly fee, which Lena couldn't afford anymore. At that point, the owner of the coffee chain she worked for decided to officially hire her and go through the necessary procedures. Lena carefully studied her situation, and carefully chose when to end the employment at Ivan's so that it would not affect her legal status. 'I made sure everything was properly done.'

Note: Ivan is an interesting character. He seems to be someone who found a hole in the system and learned how to make money off migrants, in particular from the Russian speaking community. However, based on how Lena talks about him, their relationship was somewhat symmetrical. Ivan was ready to consult on legal matters and kept his clients well informed about changes in the law (changes in the minimum salary). He provided suggestions on how to proceed best, even if that meant the loss of a 'client'. He does not give the impression of someone who exploits people who find themselves in vulnerable situations. 'He insisted I convince my employer to hire me officially – he said that to me!'

Second call and the ordeal – Life change initiated

Asking if she'd go back to Ukraine: 'Yeah, I'm still a bit drawn to it.'

After her first year in the Czech Republic, she received an offer to go back to Ukraine and work for the police in the area she initially specialised in. It was at a time where she was suffering depression. She decided to go back and try it. She went through all the required medical and physical checks. The last step was an interview with her soon to be supervisors. They asked her whether she had served in the forces before. She replied, 'yes', and they even presented her with the badge she used to have. She was asked why she wanted to come back. At this point, the interview turned into an interrogation. She started to be pressured on whether she was a spy for the separatist forces and if her interest is not an attempt to infiltrate the Ukrainian police forces. These pressures also took on sexist connotations. The interrogator was, in fact, well known for his misogyny, and his pressure and comments eventually drove her to tears. This reaction wasn't typical of her, but she was already in an emotional mental state after coming back from the Czech Republic, and he really pushed her over the edge. He took her aside to his office, where their conflict escalated. As a result, he locked her there with two more officers. 'He locked me in for the entire night with them, telling me I need to calm down before he lets me out.' 'At some point, I found some alcohol there and drank with these two officers.' 'This really cannot get worse, so why not.' He came back in the morning. 'He asked me if I calmed down, and I said, "yes", to which he replied, "Now f*** off. Goodbye." At this moment, I realised that I don't want to be part of this structure anymore.'

Killing the dragon – Overcoming barriers

Lena came back to Prague. Her job as a barista was still available to her.

It's a social job, so she already speaks Czech quite well. She communicates in Czech on a daily basis and does not see the necessity to dedicate more time to it, same with English.

Because her job as a barista involves talking to different people coming in, she has encountered people that made her quite uncomfortable. There is a woman who still comes in for coffee. During their first encounter, the woman complained about Lena's poor Czech. When she asked again about her order, she added, 'When you come to the Czech Republic, learn to speak the language properly.' She still comes, sits in between two tables, and comments on how Lena's Czech is gradually improving. 'Some people, when they hear I'm from Ukraine, their reaction is: "Well, thank God you're not from Russia!" That's such a weird thing to say.' By now, she has learned to tune out this kind of remark, or better yet, laugh at them.

She lives in a shared flat with friends right above the coffee shop she works at.

Lena also encountered corruption in the Czech Republic when she had an urgent medical issue and had to go to the doctor's; she didn't seem to be fazed by that.

Sacred marriage – A return of the pre-ordeal world – self-identity

'I'm really lucky with my boss here. He accepted me back without too many questions.' 'I feel comfortable at the moment. I have social and health insurance, and I'm okay with the money I'm being paid here.'

The job of a barista has a symbolic meaning here. Lena was talking about hanging out with friends in coffee shops back in Ukraine. Some of them were baristas. It was a culture she was very familiar with. There was, therefore, some familiarity she found in working as a barista in Prague. Her friends stop by to work on their laptops, or just to say hi. The place has come to play an essential role in her social life.

Regaining the lost kingdom – Integration

This is where she is at the moment; she is a barista.

Apart from that, she sews women's lingerie and promotes it through Instagram in her free time. She is becoming quite successful and would like dedicate increasingly more time to this. However, she's not yet ready to venture into it and let it become her main occupation. She doesn't want to put her legal status at risk. So the plan is to stay employed and become eligible for a permanent residence permit.

Home return – Overall well-being (or insecurity)

Lena doesn't look too far into her future. She remains open to new experiences. However, the stability of her legal and financial status is crucial to her. She is now waiting for her long-term residential permit before she takes any important decisions job-wise. She is now surrounded with a good circle of friends and identity-wise she finds herself in a comfortable social circle, a social comfort similar to the one she enjoyed back home.

2.10 Annex 4, Ethnodrama

Lena's story is illustrated through a short number of serialised episodes (think of an HBO or BBC short series). Although she went through several traumatising experiences, she resents being pitied. In fact, she talks about her life with a lot of sarcasm and humour. Whenever the story gets too dark, she always inserts a funny, daring, even inappropriate comment to make light of the situation. Similarly, the main character, also Lena, never takes herself too seriously. At the same time, throughout her experience, she expresses a wide spectrum of emotions. At times, she clearly feels pain and is very vulnerable; in other situations, she stands up for herself and shows strength and determination in rejecting the violence she is shown.

Each episode is a story told retrospectively from today's point of view. Our main narrator is Lena, who also plays the main character. Her life is thus told subjectively, through her own eyes and interpretation. She lets her imagination carry her. People and situations in her life are illustrated through fantastic characters, their features either exaggerated or illustrated through well-known figures.

Finally, Lena regularly breaks the fourth wall (looking straight into the 'camera') and addresses the audience directly, (which will be shown in []) often during her interaction with other characters; without them noticing, she make comments and jokes which only the audience can 'hear'. In this way, the audience becomes her trusted companion and her accomplice.

This is the pilot.

Lena is in the coffee shop sitting at the bar. It's still early in the morning and the shop is empty. She takes out some fabric from her bag and starts folding the lace for a new set. She also checks her Instagram account – someone has placed a new order.

A woman enters the coffee shop.

[Here's my favorite customer.]

Lena: Hello!

Woman: *no answer, just looking around for where to sit*

[*smirking* My nemesis.] Many short flashbacks of their previous interactions. In each of these short scenes, Lena looks intimidated, and the Woman says things to her, like 'That's not how

you say that in Czech!', 'I don't understand what you are saying!', and 'That's not how that's called!' As the flashbacks progress, the woman gradually becomes more terrifying and more difficult to understand. In the last flashback, she looks like a scary witch who doesn't even speak Czech anymore.

This is interrupted by the woman talking in real time.

Woman: I'll have an espresso to go.

Lena: An espresso coming your way! Would you like milk with that?

Woman: *no answer, sitting right in between two tables*

[Sure, make yourself comfortable.]

Woman: No milk... Not many people come to your shop, do they?

Lena: It's like that most mornings, people just order takeaway and leave for work.

Woman: Hm... I see your Czech is finally improving...

[Blank stare]

The woman takes her coffee and leaves.

Lena: And a good day to you!

no answer

[Tough love.]

Lena sits back and continues folding the pieces of lace.

[You think this was bad, wait until I tell you about my time at a heavy machinery warehouse]

Throwback to her time in the warehouse. Lena is asleep in the changing room. She is woken up by her alarm clock which shows 3:30 a.m.; her 15 minute break is over. She steps out from this dark room into a large warehouse. Someone immediately calls her name. A large man in a work uniform points to a shelf filled with large closed boxes.

Man *angrily*: Where have you been? Are you slacking off at work again? Bring those down. They need to be delivered. Hurry up!

[This is Zdenek. He's my biggest fan.]

The shelf is a bit high. Lena manages to grab one box but quickly learns it's too heavy to be brought down. She looks around for help. The men went outside to smoke. She decides to go and ask one of them for help. As she comes closer to the exit, she hears them talking. 'Useless, why would they hire a chick who can't do anything. The manager must have found her sexy.', 'She's constantly nagging for help and the way she speaks...', 'Yeah... What the hell? How difficult is it to learn to speak properly.', 'She's always just sitting alone, except for when she needs help. Like it's my fault she can't make up a sentence.', '...just people coming over here, expecting us to understand their language', 'Good thing she's pretty *laughing*.'

[That's it. I'm gonna kill someone.] Lena punches the door open, scaring the men. She now looks bigger and stronger than them. She delivers a confident monologue that makes everyone feel embarrassed and and ashamed. They gradually become smaller, and she becomes more confident.

This throwback is interrupted by a guy entering the coffee shop in the present time.

Lena: Hi! What can I get you?

Guy: Americano to go, please.

Lena: Sure thing, right away.

Guy: Oh, that's an interesting accent.

[Here we go]

Guy: Where are you from?

Lena: Ukraine.

Guy: Oh. At least you're not from Russia, thank God!

Lena just gives him a perplexed look. [What the hell??]

Guy: You know with the war and all...

[Worst. Small talk. Ever]

Some more patronising comments from the young man about the war brings in another flashback. She's with her dad back home in Ukraine. Her dad says, 'They took away the stadium too. They said they don't want me there anymore.' Lena is trying to encourage him. Their conversation is interrupted by the sound of bombing outside their house, which then takes the form of the bell that rings when someone enters the coffee shop. This brings her back to the present day. One of her friends came by.

Lena: The usual?

Friend: Yes! As fast as you can, please, I'm sooo late for work today!

[*smiling* She always is.]

Lena: How is that going?

Friend: Ah, it's fine. I'm sort of losing motivation to be honest. Do you know that moment when you're working hard for something, and when you finally get the chance to do it, it turns out to be a total disaster? Well, that's not your case. You make the best coffee in the neighborhood! Gotta go, thanks!

Lena is left with a sad look. Her friend's words resonate with her ... *Do you know that moment when you're working hard for something, and when you finally get the chance to do it, it turns out to be a total disaster ...*

[Yeah, I do actually...]

Flashback to her in Donetsk wearing officer clothing.

End of the first episode.

3 Denmark

Liv Bjerre, Michelle Pace & Somdeep Sen

3.1 Migrant labour market integration practices and discourses

This report sets out to analyse the main barriers and enablers of migrant labour market integration from the perspectives of MRAs. Moreover, it compares these to current, official understandings of migrant labour market integration (LMI) as these are expressed in policy discourses and interviews with policymakers, civil society organizations, and social partners. *What are the needs of MRAs seen from their own perspectives? How do these correspond to official understandings?* These are the questions we set out to answer. As a first step, this section is thus dedicated to a brief overview of the main aspects of Danish LMI practices and discourses. The discourse analysis presented here is primarily from Sen, Bjerre and Pace (2019).

3.1.1 Refugees and their family members as a burden and the ‘work first’ strategy

As pointed out in earlier analyses of Denmark’s migrant LMI policy, the notion of asylum seekers, refugees and their family members as a burden to the Danish state is at the core of the current policy discourse and has been translated into an understanding of LMI as being synonymous with gainful employment (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 177). In continuation hereof, a labour market integration strategy focusing on ‘employment first’ has been developed (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 179-180, Bredgaard & Thomsen 2018: 18).

The main enabler of labour market integration – as expressed in the policy discourse and interviews with representatives of the (former) Danish government, the ministries, other official institutions working on immigration-related issues, as well as by civil society organisations (CSOs) contracted by the state to provide integration services – is thus to secure a swift introduction into the Danish labour market² (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 177, Sen & Pace 2019a: 78). While this emphasis on employment seems to suggest that migrants have the qualifications and skills to contribute to Danish society, the strategy has resulted in a policy focusing on employment without considering the migrants themselves – their skills, aspirations, and wishes – which leads to a loss of the migrants’ agency together with a missed opportunity to recognize the potential value of migrants’ skills and qualifications for the Danish labour market, as we have also argued elsewhere (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019:184).

This simplistic focus on making sure that refugees and family migrants are not burdening the Danish welfare state by taking ‘any job’ from ‘day one’ has been problematized by some of the former opposition parties and social partners, by CSOs with a loose (financial) “tie” to the

² This has been done by, for instance, changing the definition of ‘job ready’, by introducing the Basic Integration Education Programme [Integrationsgrunduddannelse (IGU)] and by reducing a new, low social assistance (*integrationsydelse*) (for further elaboration see Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 177ff.).

Danish state and its integration efforts³, and by migrants themselves (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019, Sen & Pace 2019a: 81). First and foremost, above-mentioned parties question the accuracy of the characterization of the skills and qualifications of asylum seekers and refugees as not valuable to the Danish economy. Moreover, in their view, LMI entails more than just having a job (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019, Sen & Pace 2019a: 81). For them, the lack of skills/qualifications assessment is thus among the major barriers to successful labour market integration together with the complicated procedures of skills recognition⁴.

Social partners are also occupied with the migrants' (lack of) professional and language skills, and some organizations, as well as some employers and migrants themselves, add the lack of ability to speak Danish to the list of major barriers to LMI (Bredgaard & Thomsen 2018: 20; Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 179). At the same time, they question the concept of 'work first' and the idea that language-, cultural- and social skills will follow, more or less automatically, from being employed (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 197). Another barrier to labour market integration expressed by some social partners and by municipal integration consultants is cultural differences, e.g. different understandings of punctuality or social obligations at the workplace (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 200). These differences are associated with costs for the prospective employer and can result in discrimination in the hiring process as well as discrimination during encounters with job centres (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 191). Yet, Danish labour unions also express a wish to make sure that everyone has equal access to the labour market and they engage in activities focused on ensuring that foreign labour stays in Denmark, e.g. in 'cultural understanding and integration at the workplace' events, or in activities aimed at securing employment for spouses of foreign workers (Sen & Pace 2019b: 59).

Beneficiaries of integration services along with CSOs, social partners, the former government and members of the former opposition parties also stress the importance of a social network when it comes to getting a job in Denmark (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 182, Sen & Pace 2019a: 87, Sen and Pace 2019b). Networking services, including professional networking and diaspora networks, are perceived by MRs to be particularly beneficial, among others because they are perceived to be flexible, allowing them to account for the specific needs and aspirations of individual migrants and thus granting individuals agency to determine their path to integration (Sen & Pace 2019a: 88). In addition to CSOs, unions play a significant role in organizing professional networking events (Sen and Pace 2019b: 66).

3.1.2 (High-skilled) labour migrants as an asset and the 'no help' "strategy"

When it comes to high-skilled migrants arriving in Denmark through one of the work schemes (as well as their family members), the official understanding is very different. Right at the centre of the Danish policy discourse, side-by-side with the notion of refugees and their family members as a burden to the Danish state, is the perception that high-skilled migrant and their family members are beneficial to the Danish state (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 183). Moreover, they are perceived as easily integrated into the Danish labour market, and thus only require a very limited number of services, if any⁵ (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 183-185). Currently, little is done in order to facilitate employment and integration into society for this group of immigrants. Even language courses are today only available upon payment for non-refugees (although

³ In Denmark, CSOs can be considered "structurally tied to government" (Henriksen & Bundesen in Sen & Pace 2019a: 68), and while CSOs are involved in policymaking and implementation they are also increasingly involved in the provision of public integration services (Sen & Pace 2019a: 72).

⁴ One of the main barriers to recognition of foreigners' qualifications (especially for refugees) is the need to provide documentation of diplomas/certificates and having these translated into one of the Nordic languages.

⁵ The current work permit schemes for people from Non-Nordic, Non-EU and non-EEA states are also conditional on the individuals securing a job before they arrive in Denmark (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 184)

highly subsidized⁶) (Newcomer Service 2020). Although, the discourse implies that no services are needed, interviews with high-skilled migrants arriving through the (former) green card scheme⁷ and family members of labour migrants tell a different story, as they also struggle with entering the labour market (for highly skilled jobs) (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 198); An aspect, which we will return to below.

3.1.3 Danish LMI practices and discourses – the impact

Despite the distinction between the burdensome refugees and the valuable non-refugee migrants in the policy discourse, all types of migrants potentially face a hostile public discourse environment towards migrants (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019). Furthermore, many Danish companies are dependent on (skilled) foreign labour, and thus push for easier access to Denmark. However, the hostility towards migrants has the potential of making the task of recruiting and retaining (especially high-skilled) labour very difficult (Sen & Pace 2019b). Moreover, the discourse potentially has an impact on several other aspects of the process of LMI. In the following sections, we will thus explore the personal experiences of LMI in the light of this “dual strategy” of LMI. By means of narrative-biographic interviews with refugee and non-refugee migrants, respectively, we will unfold the lived experiences of LMI as they are shaped by the current discourses and practices catering in diverse ways to the different categories of immigrants in Denmark.

3.2 Method – narrative-biographic interviews

Data for this report was collected through 27 semi-structured interviews amongst 14 (6 female, 8 male) refugees (6 Afghan, 2 Eritrean, 2 Iranian and 4 Syrian) as well as 13 (10 female and 3 male) non-EU, non-refugee migrants (2 Indian, 1 Pakistani, 1 Brazilian, 1 American, 1 Yemeni, 2 Nepalese and 5 Bangladeshi). Of these, 19 arrived prior to 2015 and 8 arrived post-2015. Efforts were also made to incorporate a wide array of life/career trajectories amongst interviewees regarding their labour market integration in Denmark. Interviewees included refugee and non-refugee respondents who have secured (or are on track to secure) gainful employment that is keeping with their skills and qualifications. Interviewees also included individuals who were unable to find employment that “matched” their skills and qualifications and were compelled to take on unrelated (and often, low-skilled) jobs. They included individuals with varied immigration/visa statuses as well. Refugee interviewees included those who had been granted asylum in Denmark individually as well as those who had been granted residency in Denmark as family members of refugees. Non-refugee interviewees included individuals who were in Denmark on work/high-skilled visa schemes as well as individuals who had “followed” their partners to Denmark on a family reunification visa. Together, these varied life/career trajectories and visa statuses are meant to account for a variety of lived experiences of integration in the Danish labour market.

Recruitment of interlocutors occurred primarily through “snowball sampling”. As is often the case with this recruitment method, contact was in most cases first made with a former MRA interlocutor who had already been interviewed for the project. These former interlocutors then provided the contact information of interested potential interviewees. For the purposes of this report, these gatekeepers were critical in facilitating access/recruitment in the field. Other

⁶ While language courses are free to refugees, the participant fee for non-refugee migrants is 2,000 DKK per module plus a refundable deposit (1,250 DKK) to start the tuition (Newcomer Service 2020).

⁷ The Danish Green Card scheme was introduced in 2008 and repealed from June 2016. It was a points-based work permit scheme which granted migrants a residence permit for three years (based on a point system) for the purpose of seeking work and working in Denmark. The visa can be extended, meaning that there are still several green card holders in Denmark (New to Denmark 2020).

interviewees were approached through personal contacts or through NGOs who assisted in establishing a relationship between the researcher and potential interested interviewees. Through these first contacts, snowball sampling was applied to get in touch with further migrants willing to share their stories.

Interviews conducted for this report were aimed at gaining a better comprehension of MRAs' own perceptions of their labour market integration needs. This then required that interviewees reveal their expectations and plans regarding their life in Denmark. Moreover, during interviews, they were asked to identify critical events, turning points and epiphanies that shaped their lived experience(s) of labour market integration (or lack thereof). Since much of this information demanded that interviewees extensively reflect on their life/professional trajectories in Denmark and divulge experiences, events and feelings/realizations that may be deeply personal and sensitive, a narrative approach to interviewing was adopted: Instead of a structured, "question-answer format", interviewees were allowed to narrate their life stories and perspectives on their experiences in Denmark.

These collated narratives included references to events of the interviewees' preference, personal, sensitive and emotional themes – for instance, death of family members, domestic violence, trauma. While some interviewees narrated how family members had been blown up by car bombs, others were clearly marked by revisiting certain bad memories. In case of the latter, interviewers showed compassion, and interviewees were offered to pause. After the interview, interviewees⁸ were offered the possibility to talk to a professional (paid by the project). None of the interviewees accepted this offer/deemed this necessary.

Efforts were made to build a rapport with the interviewees and, during the interview, provide for a "safe space" wherein they could narrate their lived experiences of labour market integration in Denmark. Rapport-building requires the establishment of a sense of commonality and uncomplicated "lines of communication" between the interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, when possible, interviews were conducted in a language that the interviewee felt comfortable speaking, and in a setting where they felt comfortable. Interviews with American, Eritrean, Brazilian, Yemeni, Iranian, Nepalese and Syrian interlocutors were conducted in English or Danish. Interviews were conducted in Hindi with Indian interviewees, in Bengali with four of the Bangladeshi interviewees and Urdu with one Afghan and one Pakistani interviewee. The other Afghan and Bangladeshi interviewees were interviewed in Danish and English, respectively. The language was dependent on the DK team member, as some interviews were conducted by Somdeep (male) from India while others were conducted by Liv (female) from Denmark, to incorporate gender sensitivities in the interview process.

It is, in fact, the establishment of this rapport that then led interviewees to divulge past experiences of trauma and suffering. From an ethical perspective, efforts were made to ensure the focus of the interview remained solely on the topic at hand – namely interviewees' labour market integration in Denmark. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, on occasions interviewees did reveal (traumatic) experiences related to their life in their home countries as well as their journey to Denmark or experiences of discrimination and rejection in Denmark. The interviewers interfered as little as possible, yet, they carefully read the (body) language of the interviewee and gave supportive feedback when needed (e.g. supportive head nods or acknowledged statements on the individuals' right to choose a partner, to wear a headscarf or to struggle to support their children). Moreover, interviewers made sure to finish all interviews on a happy note. While precautions like these were taken to ensure that interviewees were not left traumatized by the interview, we were also aware that the rapport with the interviewer could also lead to an expectation amongst interviewees that the interviewer would provide them with assistance in regard to their labour market integration in Denmark. While interviewers remained open to answering any queries of the interviewees that required them to draw on the findings of this project, efforts were also made to ensure that the relationship

⁸ 9 (out of the 27) interviewees received this offer.

between the interviewer and interviewee was not transactional. Accordingly, post-interview assistance was limited to the context of the project.

Interview questions followed the guidelines provided by SIRIUS WP6 lead partners. These were formulated to ensure that interviewees did not feel (mis)judged and/or attacked by the tone of the interviewer. To this end, “why” questions were avoided⁹. Instead, a far more narrative and descriptive line of questioning was pursued¹⁰. All interviews were recorded on the interviewer’s phone with the consent of the interviewees¹¹.

3.3 Individual barriers and enablers: Analysis of interview data

In Danish policy discourse, labour market integration refers to the way immigrants secure gainful employment, as mentioned above (cf. section 2). Expectedly, securing gainful employment was also central to many refugee and non-refugee migrants interviewed for this report, as several interviewees expressed their motivation for taking on a job or pursuing an education. Yet as they narrated the manner in which they gained access – or have attempted to gain access – into the Danish labour market they also revealed that their experience of labour market integration (or lack thereof) encapsulated much more than the quest to secure a job. In general, the way interviewees encountered barriers and enablers in the Danish labour market laid bare to a palpable “gap” between how they expected to pursue life in Denmark – both professionally and personally – and their actual lived experience in the host society. Specifically, our interviewees experienced a disjuncture between their expectation of integrating into the Danish labour market on the basis of their skills/qualifications and the complicated nature of the process of this integration. The latter compelled them to negotiate their expectations of/from their professional (and personal) life trajectory in Denmark and to navigate/adopt Danish cultural codes and norms. Further, they were led to re-evaluate the value and relevance of their skills and qualifications in view of the precise needs and demands of Danish employers. The “broad strokes” of this disjuncture were evident, for instance, in our interview with a 32-year-old Afghan refugee. When asked about his life trajectory as a refugee in Denmark, he said, “I came to Denmark more than ten years ago because there were many security problems with the Taliban. After getting asylum, I went to language school for three years. While in language school I worked at a fast food restaurant. I worked there for six years. After that I have been working as a delivery person for a catering company. That’s it: I don’t have any other life, no family. But I hope to be married soon and bring my family here”. But when asked how this present life compared to how he had imagined/planned his life in exile, he added, “In Afghanistan, because of the security situation, I couldn’t continue my education. We had a small plot of land and I used to work on the land. So, I really wanted to pursue my education here and then start a small business”. But the barriers this interviewee encountered in his efforts to pursue his aspirations meant that he had to entirely recalibrate his life trajectory

⁹ “Why” questions may make the interviewee feel that he/she needs to justify his/her choices and decisions.

¹⁰ Interviewees were asked to simply relay “...what was important in their lives” in order for the interviewer to better understand “their world” (Westby 1990, 106). Of course, in narrating their priorities, interviewees often divulged their reasons and rationale for their choices and decisions.

¹¹ The recording of the interview can have a significant impact on data collection. Some have argued that the presence of a recording device can render the interlocutor insecure and hinder their wholehearted participation in the interview (Fernandez and Griffiths, 2007; Given 2004, al-Yateem 2012). Yet, the interviewers’ notetaking can also make her/him seem aloof and/or distracted to the interviewee. For the interviews conducted for this report, the interviewer’s phone was used as a recording device. Since the presence of a phone is not uncommon, interviewees were largely unphased by the presence of the recording device during the interview.

in Denmark. And, as he went on to explain, his life panned out very differently: “When you come to Denmark, you may have many plans and many things in your mind. But here your plans will not work, and it is very complicated. I could not get an education because I did not have the language skills. If I wait to learn Danish, then it will be too late to get an education, and I have to pass 9th and 10th grade¹². I also have to work and earn a living to start a life and family. My heart was in education, but it was not possible. Maybe I can do it later in life” (Interview 5).

As we go on to demonstrate below, refugees frequently face barriers in the labour market. These barriers, consequently, functioned as significant instigators of turning points in their lives as they routinely led our refugee interviewees to abandon their professional aspirations/goals and embark on an entirely different life trajectory. However, a similar “gap” between expectations and the lived experience of labour market integration was also described by non-refugee migrants. This was evident, for example, in an interview with an Indian engineer, who came to Denmark as an employee of an Indian-owned consultancy company and is currently employed at a Danish IT services company. Admittedly, his is a “success story” – having secured a job in a relevant sector. Yet, he too recognised that integration in general and labour market integration in particular is about much more than securing a job on the basis of his skills and qualifications. Instead, he recognised, success in the Danish labour market is often contingent on the job seeker’s professional network. This realisation was a major turning point in the way he pursued his professional aspirations in Denmark. And, as he went to explain, he now made a conscious effort to develop a professional and social network of Danish friends and colleagues. Our interviewee said, “I made quite a good network of friends here. And it involved being invited to their homes for Christmas dinners or for some normal get-together. Then we also invited Danes to our home to see if they like India food, if they have ever tried it or show them what an Indian household looks like”. This network paid dividends when our interviewee decided to find a job in a Danish company. Through a friend in his network, he was able to secure an interview at a Danish IT services company. And, to his surprise, the focus of the interview was not on his qualifications. He recounted, “I prepared for a week for this interview...I expected they would grill me technically...But the manager said ‘I don’t want to hear what you know, or you don’t know. I trust that you know all of this because you have mentioned it in your CV. I want to tell you how this company treats its employees, listen to what the company can offer you. Go home, have a discussion with your family and then come back and tell us if you think this company is a good fit for you”. Later the interviewer admitted that since our interlocutor was highly recommended (by his friend), his job interviewer did not deem it necessary to assess his skills and qualifications. Summarising his experience of the interview, our interviewee concluded “this proves that in Denmark references and recommendations matter” (Interview 17).

Although this “gap” between the planned/expected path to labour market integration and their *actual* lived experience is different for those MRs who are less successful than the Indian interviewee above, the “gap” featured prominently in a majority of our interviewees’ accounts, refugees and non-refugees alike. But what is also evident from the two accounts above, is that it appears in vastly different ways and the manner in which it affects MRs’ lived experience of labour market integration is often determined by their individual disposition and positionality – be it visa status, educational background or previous work experience. With this in view, interviewees’ experiences of labour market integration can be characterized under three broad themes for the purpose of this report¹³. First, feelings of stress and anxiety featured

¹² Often refugees’ educational qualifications from their home country are not recognized in Denmark. Therefore, they are required to enrol in a high school education certificate program that is usually reserved for refugees. Having received this certificate, they are considered eligible to enrol on a bachelor’s degree program in Denmark.

¹³ Several other themes are prominent in the interviews, e.g. the role of language, having a network, access to information and discrimination/racism. These topics are subsumed under the three major themes, yet only briefly touched upon here.

prominently in interviewees' accounts of their experience of labour market integration (or lack thereof). Second, and frequently related to their experience of stress and anxiety in the quest to secure gainful employment in Denmark, interviewed MRAs felt that their skills and qualifications were not valued in the Danish labour market. Third, with refugees and non-refugees alike, feeling de-valued in the labour market, many interviewees felt demotivated to pursue their professional/career aspirations in Denmark. Further, some chose to entirely abandon their (professional) goals and pursue employment in unrelated (low-skilled) sectors as a means of earning a living and securing permanent residency in Denmark. In the end, we conclude, interviewees establish coping mechanisms to navigate the barriers they face in their efforts to secure gainful employment in Denmark.

3.3.1 On Stress and Anxiety

During an interview with a refugee from Eritrea, our interviewee largely considered his life to be 'on track', with regard to his personal and professional aspirations in Denmark. In all, he could be considered a 'success story'. Nonetheless, when we asked him to relay some of the challenges he faced while trying to integrate into Danish society, he said, "Adapting to this country's people is difficult and very stressful. Of course, this a developed country, with big cities and nice buildings. But socially it causes a lot of stress. In Eritrea we lived a social life. You greet everyone. Even someone you don't know. It is very different here" (Interview 7). As was the case for this interviewee, trauma, stress and depression can, in general, be considered a characteristic feature of the lives of migrants. A high percentage of refugees, often fleeing violence in their home countries, suffer from PTSD (Silove et. al. 1997; Ssenyonga et. al. 2013). Yet, both refugees and non-refugees suffer from stress and anxiety if faced with political, economic, social and cultural barriers to their integration into host communities (McCoy et. al. 2016; Hammer 2006). Furthermore, Lindert et. al. (2009) have argued that the unavailability of economic opportunities in the country of immigration plays a significant role in the rates of depression and anxiety among refugee and non-refugee migrants. In the same vein, MRAs interviewed for this report frequently described their attempts to pursue their professional aspirations in Denmark to be stressful and marked by anxiety – not least because of the vast disparity between how they imagined life in Denmark to be and their *actual* lived experience.

Such sentiments were also palpable in our interview with a refugee from Afghanistan who had arrived in Denmark five months prior to the date of the interview on a refugee family reunification visa. Sitting alongside her husband – also a refugee – during the interview she began by recounting her life in her home country: "There was no stress in my life back in Afghanistan. We would go to university, go to our courses, then come home and there was no stress". In contrast, while describing her present life, she said, "When I decide to come to Denmark [after marriage] I did not think that there would be so much stress in my life. When I arrived here...like my life was in Afghanistan we were very happy and relaxed. We didn't have this kind of stress". In terms of the 'kind of stress' she experiences in Denmark; this interviewee was largely focused on the stringency of the integration process and the (strict) conduct of the municipality authorities. She said, "If I go anywhere, they [the municipality] say 'why do you go?', 'you need to come here and explain to us why you went'? Anywhere we go, they ask questions. They don't help us. If they help us, then then ask a lot more questions. I mean, they imprison you. They will say, 'we will help'. But then they will ask, 'Why did you do this? Where did you go? Why did this happen?'. It is correct to say that in many ways our life is good here. But in other ways it's also not very good. It is only stress that prevents you from moving forward. So, it is very difficult here" (Interview 1).

When asked to relate a particularly stressful encounter with the municipality, her husband explained that recently they had been reprimanded by the authorities for travelling to Sweden

without seeking their approval¹⁴. They didn't seek the approval, he explained, because they did not receive any financial support from the municipality. He said, "we thought because we are not getting any more help from them, they won't bother us anymore. Then 2 or 3 days ago we got this letter. We have to be very careful about our economy and sometimes we do calculations to see where we can get things the cheapest. So, we went to Malmo. Now [the municipality's control group]¹⁵ contacted us and asked us why we went to Malmo. We don't have permission. As if, we are prisoners. They have called us for an interview this Friday. They even said they will tell our unemployment insurance fund. It was a long letter saying how much we spent, what we bought etc. This is the kind of stress we go through". While such stresses, evidently, are an inevitable facet of the lives of refugee interviewees, they nonetheless have a significant impact - not least in altering the way in which a refugee viewed her/his life (and future) in exile. So, when asked how such experiences affected their efforts (as a couple) to pursue their professional aspirations, he replied, "We had a lot of motivation. I wanted to finish my education, get a PhD and have success through education. Sometimes I think I have to do this because I have to support my family. But it is a struggle. You lose motivation before even trying to have a life here" (Interview 2).

In a similar way, a refugee interviewee from Syria also found the stress and anxiety-laden integration process to be a significant barrier to his career/professional aspirations in Denmark – a barrier that significantly altered the linear life trajectory that he had hope for in exile. As a university student living in Syria in the midst of the civil war, he was concerned about the diminished career prospects in the country. He said, "I thought there is no more life here and there is no more future here...Everybody is killing everybody...there is chaos around the country here". He then fled Syria and hoped that eventually he would "go to Europe to find my future there and continue my education". Yet, in Denmark he found it particularly taxing to simultaneously learn the Danish language and pursue a university degree. And often, the stress of having to both become proficient in Danish and have a successful career in Denmark prevented him from successfully achieving either. Immediately, after being granted asylum in Denmark, and while also attending a language school, he enrolled himself into an 18-month pre-university engineering program. He had hoped to enrol into a BA program at the end of the 18 months and continue his education that had been stalled by the war in Syria. Yet, things didn't go as planned. He said, "After six months I gave up. Going to [language] school, then university, I had no time in the week. Maybe I had three or four hours with my family". He then further explained, "I hate the education and life here. It was too hard for me. When I started at the university, I had to study all the time. Then I had to use my Danish language education at the university. This was too hard for me to learn Danish and learn math, physics. In the second semester I had to take chemistry and English at a high level. I thought I needed more time to learn Danish". A few months later, our interviewee, encouraged by his family, attempted to pursue his education (in Danish) once again – this time at a technical school. Yet the second attempt was not successful either. He elaborated, "we had a project and we had an oral exam. Because of my accent during my presentation and because I didn't understand what they asked during the exam, I failed. I asked them 'what next?' They said you have to start from the beginning" (Interview 9). Unable to contend with the stress of both learning Danish and pursue a university education, our interviewee decided to drop everything.

Admittedly, the particularly stringent requirements of the integration process reserved for those who have been granted asylum in Denmark and the members of their families granted access through the family reunification scheme, made it particularly difficult for our interviewees to pursue their career/professional aspirations. Yet, occasionally, feelings of stress and anxiety also featured prominently in non-refugee migrants' lived experience of labour market integration in Denmark. This was the case during an interview with a software

¹⁴ This incident occurred before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁵ Every Danish municipality has a "control group" that is tasked to monitor the use (and misuse) of welfare benefits and financial assistance disbursed by the municipality.

engineer from India. He arrived in Denmark on a visa scheme reserved for highly skilled professionals that allowed them to enter the country *before* securing a job. At the time of the interview, he had been in Denmark for three years and, while having held short-term employment in relevant sectors as well as odd jobs in order to make ends meet, he had yet to secure a permanent position as a software engineer.

Recounting his decision to leave India, he said, "I'm a software engineer from Bangalore. I heard about this green card scheme. I heard it was an easy process and thought it was a good opportunity to build my career in Denmark. Denmark is a very good place. It is the happiest place in the world. People are very helpful". Yet, his *actual* experience of the Danish labour market did not meet his expectations. He continued, "There is a lot of competition in India and [there are] hierarchies. Denmark is flat. If you have an idea, you can work on it and find a solution. This is how I thought before. When I came here, they always talked about language. Language is important and we should respect their culture. The problem is that you cannot stop your career for language. Career is first and language is next. Here they are saying language first and the career is next. Because of this Denmark is shrinking. And it's building boundaries around itself. I will learn Danish, but you have to give me support to learn the language. But there is no support". The anxiety that he felt in his search for gainful employment in Denmark was evident when we asked him about the ways in which he navigated the barriers he faces in the labour market. He said, "It is very difficult. I came here when I was 27. I am almost 30 now. You can ask me to have 10 years' experience, skilled in all programs and you want me to learn Danish. It is not easy...how can you expect me to do everything...Someone like me should stay here and I can take the country far. I am strong and I can work hard. I can give back to this society. I have a strong determination to get a job. I cannot go back to India. I will be a zero there. So, this country should support me for the growth of Denmark". When asked to explain why being back in his home country would make him 'a zero', he explained, "If I want to go back to India, yes definitely there will be problems. If you apply for a job, they will ask you about your previous work experience. I have nothing to show for the last three years." Compounding his trials in the Danish labour market, and with limited sources of income, this interviewee also lived in an apartment where he shared a room with three other men. Describing the stresses of his living situation, he said, "It is busy all the time. You can't use the washroom. You can't use the kitchen because there are four people living. So, you wait for your turn. You cannot happily relax even in the restroom. You have to rush all the time. It's never ending" (Interview 10).

While feelings of stress and anxiety, like those described above, were related by a significant majority of our interviewees, female migrants, especially those with family responsibilities and without a husband to share these responsibilities with/willing to share these responsibilities, often experienced the task of making ends meet as extremely impossible. One of our interviewees, a mother of two from Yemen who had divorced her husband and the father of her children expressed it in the following way: "I think you will hear this from a lot of the people whom you interview; due to the lack of support from your partner, you always feel like you are falling behind [...] And when you are falling behind, you don't feel that you are good enough [...] I have struggled a lot here. In my home country there are many other disadvantages. Illness. And the country does not work. In this country you have so many things offered to you, but at the same time you are sad. I am sad that things are not working out". She continues to talk about how the combination of lack of support and a high number of requirements is challenging for her and the way in which it affected her life as a female refugee: "You are controlled by many things. The rules in the country. [...] You need to do this, and this, and this in order to get a permanent residence permit, for example. Meaning that many people are overworked by all the requirements. At the same time, I get it. You cannot make special rules for me and other rules for others. But I still tell you this: If I received support from my ex-husband, these rules wouldn't even be a problem," (Interview 20). It is worth mentioning that her husband migrated to Denmark as a young boy and grew up in Denmark, meaning that he could have provided the "direction" and information which many migrants request, and which

she only received in small doses from counsellors, friends and teachers after her arrival in 2008 (they married while she lived in Yemen).

It is also important to recognize that the feelings of stress and anxiety are an outcome. Meaning such manners of experiencing labour market integration (or lack thereof) are a result of both the particularities of processes of integration (including those officiated by municipality authorities) as well as the broader structures and norms of the Danish labour market. To this end, as we go on to discuss below, an important instigating factor (of stress and anxiety) is the manner in which many of our interviewees feel de-valued in the Danish labour market.

3.3.2 On being de-valued in/by the Danish labour market

During our interview with an Afghan refugee - a bachelor's degree student at the time - our interviewee expressed a certain expectation that her skills and qualifications would not be valued in the Danish labour market. When asked to explain why she expected that this would be the case, our interviewee replied, "mainly the challenges for me in Danish society [has to do with] me wearing the hijab. I applied for some jobs at a make-up store. It was a simple job and they rejected me because I was wearing a hijab." She added, "They said it was not because of my background. But they wanted people who were open because they want to attract customers" (Interview 3). In October 2018 the Danish Minister of Immigration and Integration at the time, Inger Støjberg, announced a 21-point programme that would ease (immigration) bureaucracies and procedures in order to assist Danish companies in "attract[ing] and employ[ing] foreign labour". The minister added, "Foreign labour is beneficial for all Danes in the form of increased growth and more kroner in the public purse" (quoted in Barrett 2018). Ironically though, this high value placed on "foreign labour" was not reflected in the experience of the Afghan refugee mentioned above. In fact, as we go on to elaborate through the experiences of other refugee and non-refugee interviewees, many found that their skills and qualifications were de-valued in Denmark.

This feeling of de-valuation was palpable in the way a Brazilian interviewee experienced the Danish labour market. In keeping with the work-study norms of Brazil, she had begun working for a large international advertising agency while still a university student. Describing her career trajectory in her home country, she said, "I got into university when I was 17 and I started working when I was 18...I was working at big advertising agencies". Following a family tragedy¹⁶, she decided to leave Brazil and received a scholarship to pursue a master's degree in Denmark. With over 2000 applicants from around the world, she was the only one from South America to have received the scholarship. She added, "So when I came here, I was already working. I was a manager in a big agency and had big clients like [mentions a big international sports brand] ...big, big names, international names". Once in Denmark, due to student visa regulations, she was not allowed to work full-time. Yet, when searching for a part-time position and despite her extensive experience, she felt undervalued by Danish employers when she applied for jobs during her second year of university in Denmark. She explained, "Apparently I had a very unusual CV for my age. I was 24, I had worked since 2004 and this was 2011...And then I left Brazil when I was at a big agency, I was a manager, I had a department, I had big accounts and I wasn't acquainted with the unofficial laws of Denmark. Later I learned about *Jante Lov* [The law of Jante]¹⁷. I was sending CVs and people would call me and listen to me. I don't think I was being arrogant; I was just taking pride [in my achievements] ...I am not saying that I am better. I'm just saying that I worked hard. I say that I am driven, hardworking and see things through...later I realized that they [i.e. employers]

¹⁶ In a way, this tragedy was epiphanic as it led to the interviewee rethinking her life trajectory in Brazil.

¹⁷ Janteloven, or The Law of Jante, is a set of unspoken social norms. It is a code of conduct known in Nordic countries that characterizes not conforming, doing things out of the ordinary, or being overtly and personally ambitious as unworthy and inappropriate.

think that I am showing off, I'm bragging...people thought I was lying". These experiences (and failures) had a significant effect on the manner in which this interviewee pursued her career (and job search efforts). And with the realization that her conduct was being considered arrogant and arrogant by potential employers, , our interviewee decided to significantly downgrade her qualifications in her CV. She added, "things only changed after three years of looking for jobs...I was at an office with Danes and looking around seeing people who were coming for interviews - they were 28 and looking for an internship. That's when I stripped all the "manager" and only had "intern" [in my CV]. Instead of big clients, I only wrote one client. Then people started calling me" (Interview 16).

A non-refugee interviewee from Bangladesh also felt de-valued in the Danish labour market. Admittedly, she did not feel de-valued by Danish employers in her pursuance of her career aspirations in Denmark. Nevertheless, she felt unable to live "up" to the norms of Danish society in general. This was a significant barrier and affected her life trajectory in Denmark as she was unable to pursue her professional aspirations in the country. She explained that she followed her husband to Denmark, who, after a short stint as a PhD student in South Korea, arrived in the country on the green card scheme - hoping to eventually pursue his doctoral studies at a Danish university. Our interviewee joined her husband via family reunification almost two years later. She explained, "Before coming to Denmark I was a teacher in Bangladesh. I had ten years' experience teaching. I first came here for three months on holiday to visit my husband. Then he had some trouble with his heart and while I was here, he had a bypass surgery. I extended my holiday for two more months before returning back to Bangladesh". Eventually, she decided to move to Denmark with their three-year old and quit her job as a teacher.

However, a significant turning point in their lives was triggered by the fact that, in Denmark her husband was unable to secure an academic position. Instead, he was compelled to pursue odd jobs in order to make ends meet and live up to the financial requirements for qualifying for Danish permanent residency. When asked about her efforts to revive her career in Denmark as a teacher, she replied, "actually, when I first came here, I was very worried about my husband's health, so I was focused on that. At the same time, I felt that without a job I was useless here. In Bangladesh I was pursuing my master's degree and working as a teacher at the same time. So, I am not used to staying at home and within a month of moving here I started working as a housekeeper. I thought to myself if my husband, being so educated, can do odd jobs, so can I". She admitted, however, that working as a housekeeper was more strenuous than expected: "It was very tough. Every night I would pray so I could get through work the next day...we didn't need the money, but I didn't want to stay home, unemployed. I also didn't learn Danish when I first came to the country because my husband kept saying we will leave soon. Maybe with Danish I could have done something else". When asked about her efforts to revive her teaching career in Denmark, she said, "No, I haven't tried. I just feel that I will not be able to succeed in this country. Interacting with people in this society and taking care of [Danish] kids will be very tough for me. But I am trying to find some kind of "light" job that I can do after a little bit of education where I can work at an office, where I can tell people [what I do]". Speaking of the stigma of having odd jobs, she added, "No one in my family knows about my job. When my parents visited us, they kept asking me about my job. But I didn't tell them anything. If I tell them, they will say we should return home. Also I come from a family where my father didn't even want us to work at a bank because you have to deal with too many people...so if he gets to know about my job he will be very hurt and will want me to go back" (Interview 13).

There is a vast disparity among non-refugee migrants in terms of the extent to which they feel (de-)valued in the Danish labour market¹⁸. Yet, for many of our refugee interviewees, the

¹⁸ See, for instance, the difference in the experiences of Interview 10 and Non-Refugee Interview 8 cited above.

mechanisms that de-value their skills and qualifications are written into the very foundations of the process of being integrated into Danish society. This was the experience of a Syrian refugee who had fled his home country while still a university student. Remembering his decision to leave Syria he said, “My life [in Syria] was between university and working with my dad in the farm. When I finished my first year at university, the situation in Syria was very bad. There was ISIS in my city. Sometimes I couldn’t go to university because there was war everywhere”. He first fled to Turkey and, after a year living and working as a designer in Istanbul, he left for Europe. He said, “I called some friends who live here. They said Denmark is good for education...so I came to Denmark in 2015”. After being granted asylum in the country, he clearly communicated his professional aspirations to municipality authorities. He said, “they asked me ‘what do you want to do?’ I said I was a student of economics in Syria. So, I want to continue my education here...they said, ‘wow that is fantastic that you want to do that here’. I said I hope you can help me. They said absolutely”. Yet, significant shift in our interviewee’s (hoped for) professional trajectory as a refugee occurred when he was assigned to a language school. Here he realized that the integration education was not concerned with nurturing his aspirations of pursuing a university education in Denmark. He said, “it was important for them to just teach you how to speak Danish during work. Not for university or academic [purposes]...they also said you should work. If you don’t work in Denmark, then you have no respect”. Our interviewee felt equally devalued during a presentation by a representative of a Danish municipality at his asylum centre: “my teacher said that there is a woman from the municipality who will come to talk to us. I said okay, maybe she will tell us about Danish rules...how to find our way here. But she said ‘in Denmark it is not modern if you go to the toilet and you wash your a**¹⁹. You should use [toilet] paper.’ Oh my god, what is this subject she is talking about. Then she said, ‘you shouldn’t be four or five guys from the Middle East walk together because our girls are afraid’²⁰. But what did we do to them? We told her but we think there are also a lot of women in the Middle East”. With such experiences being the norm in his interactions with Danish municipality authorities and having received little by way of support for pursuing a university education in Denmark, our interviewee eventually took on a job as a cleaner (Interview 8).

While not as palpable, another refugee interviewee from Afghanistan also felt similarly devalued in Denmark. Relating his experience in Denmark, he said, “I was an electrical engineering student in Afghanistan. But there were many problems, security problems and I came here”. When asked about his career aspirations in Denmark, he replied: “I wanted to go to university and continue my education. But it is very difficult. First, I have to learn Danish. Also, they don’t recognize my high school education. I tried so much with the municipality, but they said I have to go to high school again”. This, for our interviewee, was a significant barrier and altered the aspirations (and expectations) in Denmark. He was not keen on returning to high school and said, “I can’t spend more time on this. Now I just want to earn money and start a business. I want to be married and have a family soon” (Interview 4). Several other interviewees voiced the same struggle with getting their skills assessed and recognized. A female refugee interviewee from Afghanistan waited more than eight years to get her BA degree from Afghanistan recognized: “I have fought very hard for the recognition. From 2010 to 2018”. Then, when her hard work finally paid off, she felt valuable. Unfortunately, it did not last long, as a period of time with unsuccessfully sending out applications made her feel devalued again. She recalls: “I was very, very happy. I thought ‘finally, now I can work as a teacher. But since 2018, I have sent thousands of applications, but I have not gotten a job. So, I lost hope” (Interview 19).

¹⁹ There is a preconception among Danes that people in the Middle East use bidets (a common practice in the Arab world) in order to cleanse themselves with water after using the toilet. Here, water is commonly used instead of, or together with, toilet paper for cleaning after defecation.

²⁰ In the wake of the European “refugee crisis” there was a vibrant public Denmark on the perceived incongruity of the Danish social and cultural norms with those of the incoming asylum seekers. See Zucchini (2016) for further reading.

Our interviewees are thus confronted with the lack of appreciation of their skills, or with a lack of trust in the validity of their skills either 1) in the meeting with employers, 2) in the meeting with representatives of Denmark in the form of e.g. case workers, language school teachers and representatives of the municipality, 3) by a lack of assessment of their skills or 4) by the mere type of (low skilled) available jobs (as in the case of our non-refugee interviewee from Bangladesh above).

It is expected that refugee and non-refugee interviewees who faced barriers while pursuing their professional aspirations in Denmark felt that their qualifications, skills and goals were not being valued in the country. But when seen together with the above-discussed feelings of anxiety and stress that often accompany interviewees' lived experience of labour market integration, the consequences can be significant. One such consequence – as is evident from the above-cited interviews – is that many are left de-motivated to pursue their aspirations and instead take on employment in an unrelated (low-skilled) sector.

3.3.3 On pursuing a *different* life trajectory

With many of our interviewees encountering an anxiety-laden stressful path to labour market integration wherein their skills and qualifications are de-valued, they face a difficult choice; either continue pursuing their career aspirations or, as is often the case, take up gainful employment in an unrelated (in terms of their skills/qualifications) sector. Overall, three types of 'responses' were represented by our interviewees: 1) continue to pursue a job that matches his/her qualifications, 2) abandon his/her professional aspirations and hope that at least the next generation will succeed or 3) give up and stop pursuing a career in Denmark. Interviewees like the software engineer cited above insisted on not letting the barriers they faced in the Danish labour market alter their (professional) life trajectory and decided to continue pursuing the "ideal" job. During the interview, he said, "It's...very difficult. But I came [to Denmark] for my career and I will not give up. I think there is a chance and something good will happen. I'm not married, so I have some flexibility and can put in all the effort it will take". When asked whether his parents were aware of the challenges he faces in Denmark, he replied, "They actually don't know the complete situation. If they knew the scenario, they will ask me to come home immediately. But I won't tell them anything. I am applying for jobs. I believe something good will happen" (Interview 10). A refugee interviewee from Eritrea took a similar approach to the "gap" between his planned (career) trajectory and his *actual* experience of the Danish labour market. He had fled Eritrea at the age of 18 and, now as a 24-year-old, he was pursuing a two-year higher secondary education program which would qualify him to be admitted into a bachelor's degree program. Our interviewee hoped to become a medicinal chemist. Yet, while currently "on track" to become a chemist, he has, in the past, worked as a cleaner. When asked, how it felt working in a low-skilled, unrelated sector (in terms of his career aspirations), he said, "It was fine...when you have nothing, it's better to do something. It's okay, it is also work" (Interview 6).

Yet, it is also evident from the interviews cited above that the barriers in the Danish labour market have also served as significant turning points in the lives of our interviewees as many chose to abandon their professional aspirations in Denmark. The above-mentioned refugee interviewees, for instance, chose to take on jobs as a cleaner or a delivery person when unable to access educational opportunities in Denmark. Non-refugee interviewees felt that they were unable to overcome the cultural barriers in Danish society and therefore abandoned their plans to, for instance, become a teacher at a Danish school. This was also the life trajectory of a non-refugee migrant from Bangladesh who works at a canteen. She had a master's degree in food and nutrition sciences and planned to eventually enrol in a doctoral program. While working as a research assistant at a medical college in Dhaka, she was admitted to a second MA program in global community health in Oslo. After completing her education, she returned

to Bangladesh. Yet, having lived in Norway, she was now keen on pursuing a PhD abroad. She explained, "After living in Norway, I started thinking about things differently. I noticed the kind of pressure that children faced in school. Also, at work I saw that it is not always about qualifications. You have to play politics to go far in your career". Disenchanted, she applied for the Danish green card scheme hoping to pursue a doctoral degree at a Danish university. After her arriving in Denmark she searched for a research position for two years. She said, "I contacted some professors. Many of them answered. I even had a project on iron deficiency. They said that they will let me know if there is funding for a PhD. I would regularly send them emails but eventually they stopped answering. After two years I decided to start working in catering services". Reflecting on why she was unable to find a job in a relevant sector, she said, "maybe Danish language is a requirement. If I had learned it immediately after coming to Denmark it would have been helpful. Now it has been six years and there is a big gap in my CV". We then asked her why she decided to stay in Denmark despite being unable to find the 'right' job, it became apparent in her response that the barriers she faced in the Danish labour market had entirely altered her aspirations (and expectations) with regard to her professional and personal life in Denmark. She replied, "I could have easily returned home. But somewhere in me I have some hope that maybe something will happen. But when I feel completely demoralized, I think even though nothing has happened for us, something good will happen for my children. This is how I mostly think about the situation. Sure, I have not been able to achieve much. But my children will definitely do something with their lives" (Interview 11).

Expecting to face barriers in the labour market, a non-refugee migrant from the US chose not to pursue a professional career in Denmark either. With 15 years' experience in editing and teaching academic writing, she came to Denmark because her husband was offered a tenure-track position at a reputed university. Before arriving, she was cognizant of the fact that she would have limited employment opportunities because she did not speak Danish and because academic writing courses are not widely offered at Danish universities. She therefore pursued a PhD program at a Spanish university for which she travels once a semester to Spain. Yet, our interviewee added, she did spend the first six months looking for a job in Denmark. Nonetheless, her experiences in this period confirmed her premonition that she would not be able to pursue her 'ideal' career path in Denmark. She said, "it's pretty rough to live in Denmark on one income...I spent the first six months having these coffee meetings with people and joined a professional networking organization...redid my CV a million different ways for a million different jobs so that my experience matched the job I applied for. Most of it didn't get anywhere". When asked if she was currently searching for a job in Denmark, she replied, "I'm not...the whole process was discouraging for me. I realized that I would have to give up my career and do something totally different. I recognize that I'm in a very privileged position to be able to even make a choice like this, but my choice was that I don't want to do anything different". She was further de-motivated by watching other MRAs being unable to secure gainful employment in Denmark, and finally, when asked why qualified migrants like her were unable to find a job, she opined, "it's not just finding a job that suits you. I also applied for jobs that didn't suit me...and I have talked to a lot of people...you are told not to stand out. They are not looking for the person who can do the job best...as long as you can do the job the same as everyone else that's what they want. That's comforting...but then you realize if everyone is at 0. Then I'm already at -5 because I don't speak Danish and I'm not a Dane". She then, in a hesitant manner, concluded, "I think language and... I hate to say this, but I feel like people here would be more likely to hire a Dane" (Interview 18).

As is evident from the interviews above, interviewed MRAs have a vast variety of lived experiences of the Danish labour market that have led them to reconsider and rethink their professional aspirations and trajectories in Denmark. Admittedly, as we go on to demonstrate below, interviewed MRAs find coping mechanisms that help them weather the barriers they face in the labour market. Further, we conclude such changes in MRs' life trajectories have consequences – for both migrants as well as the Danish labour market.

3.4 Concluding Remarks

Expectedly, facing an anxiety-laden path to LMI, a devaluation of their skills and qualifications as well as being forced to reconsider their professional aspirations, interviewed MRs develop coping mechanisms in order to be able to encounter and navigate such challenges. But while interviewed MRs often seem to find ways of obtaining a place in the Danish labour market - even when it is not in the manner that they had planned for - such altered trajectories have consequences for both the migrants and the host country's labour market, that need to be considered further. For one thing, an altered (career) trajectory can be considered a "loss" for migrants. As most take up employment in un-related, low-skilled sectors, their experience of labour market integration in Denmark represents a "loss" in terms of a career trajectory that is in keeping with their skills and qualifications. Additionally, it also represents a "loss" for the Danish labour market. While a migrant employed in an unrelated sector still adds to the workforce, the labour market is nonetheless unable to benefit from the (often, specialized) skills and qualifications that they bring to Denmark. The consequence of this is a highly skilled, yet under-valued migrant labour force that is unable to contribute to the Danish economy and society to their utmost potential. Moreover, following from this devaluation is a loss of personal worth at a much deeper level, which potentially affects not just MRs' ability to keep a job as well as their mental health in the long run, but could also affect future generations when they witness their parents' experience with the Danish labour market. The situation often seems despairing, to reiterate some of the quotes from above: "I am sad that things are not working out"; "So I lost hope".

3.4.1 The effect of COVID-19

While in the process of conducting the last interviews for this research, Denmark closed down to prevent the spread of COVID-19²¹. It is still too early to say how COVID-19 will affect the labour market integration of migrants in Denmark in the long run. In the short term, we can already see that COVID-19 has affected many MRAs' job situation, financial standing, status, and integration prospects. A few days after Denmark went into lockdown, the first analyses showed that the sectors hit the hardest by COVID-19 are the service sector, the (passenger) transport sector, and retail (The Danish Chamber of Commerce 2020). These are the largest employers of migrants in Denmark (OECD 2020) - meaning that many migrants' job situation was affected by COVID-19 right from the start of the lockdown. A recent study by the Economic Council of the Labour Movement confirms this. The study shows that twice as many non-western migrants as ethnic Danes have registered as unemployed between March 9 and April 19, 2020: 12,000 non-western migrants to be exact (Drivsholm & Wang 2020). Thousands of migrants have thus lost their jobs (ibid), and at the same time, finding a job (especially in one of the affected sectors) has proven even more difficult under the current (lockdown) conditions.

Although the unemployment rates currently are rising faster than during the so-called financial crises, this does not necessarily mean that the corona crisis will be as severe on the Danish economy. This time around, we are not facing the same structural difficulties (Wang & Drivsholm 2020). It is, however, difficult to say how many job openings will be available when Denmark fully opens up again, and non-western migrants are at risk of not finding a job, due to their comparably short experience in the Danish labour market and smaller network, amongst other important factors (Drivsholm & Wang 2020).

Among our interviewees, there are also several who have already felt the negative effects of the pandemic. One of our female interviewees from Bangladesh (on a green card spousal visa), who worked in the restaurant industry as a waitress was laid off right from the start of the lockdown without any compensation. Another of our interviewees, a female dental

²¹ Denmark was among the first European countries to introduce lockdown measures, starting on 13 March.

assistant from Iran, had been told to stay home. At the time of the interview (2nd May), she was still paid although unable to work, but she was expecting to be laid off soon and to not be able to find a new job afterwards.

Moreover, with thousands of immigrant employees having been fired, been told to stay at home or asked to work fewer hours (Wang & Drivsholm 2020), many MRAs on temporary visas, green card holders, and those applying for permanent residency permits are at risk of being forced to leave Denmark or to have their application for permanent residency rejected. This is because they need to demonstrate a minimum annual income before they can extend their visas to stay in Denmark or apply for permanent residency. COVID-19 will thus not only affect migrants' chances of integrating into the labour market but also their residency status in the country.

Furthermore, those applying for permanent residency or citizenship find themselves facing an additional dilemma if they are jobless, as they have to choose between receiving social benefits and ensuring a successful application. To apply for citizenship or permanent residency, one must not have received social benefits within the last two or four years²², respectively. If an applicant receives benefits for even a month, he/she will have to wait 4 years to reapply for permanent residency.

One of our interviewees, a refugee from Afghanistan, found herself in this dilemma. Due to COVID-19, she was prevented from carrying out her work as a hairdresser. She was not willing to jeopardize her citizenship application, as she has been struggling to fulfil the many demanding criteria. She thus only had one option: to lose her livelihood from one day to the other. Luckily, her bank has helped her with a loan. But many other migrants are not as fortunate. COVID-19 has thus meant that some migrants are put in an extremely vulnerable financial position or that their status and chance to politically integrate has been hampered. Financial assistance to certain sectors and policy changes can help mitigate the consequences of the pandemic crisis. Companies have been offered wage compensation schemes from the state in order to encourage firms not to make their employees redundant²³, and on 21st of April, the Danish Parliament has passed a law suspending the so-called 225-hour rule²⁴ concerning unemployment benefits due to COVID-19 (during the period from 9th March to 8th July 2020). Yet, income and work requirements for foreign workers, or permanent residency or citizenship applicants, have not been waived.

Moreover, the closing of language schools, job centres, libraries, etc. has hampered newly arrived refugees' contact with Danish society as these places are often the only contact point they have (Bendixen 2020). Isolation is one of the potential outcomes of this. At the same time, internships and integration courses have been put on hold. Distance learning might also affect migrants in the education system differently than ethnic Danes, as the language barrier might play a more crucial role here (irrespective of teachers' abilities). The long-term consequences of interrupted courses and internships, the impact of drop-out rates as well as of distance learning is still unknown as at time of writing.

²² In order to apply for citizenship, one must not have received social benefits within the last two years, or for more than a total of four months within the last five years (Udlændinge og Integrationsministeriet 2020), and in order to apply for permanent residency, one must not have received social benefits within the last four years (Ny i Danmark 2020).

²³ The government is compensating firms for 75 percent of wages of up to 4,000 euros per month (\$4,347).

²⁴ The 225-hour rule requires recipients of social assistance to have worked at least 225 hours within the past 12 months.

3.4.2 Diverging perceptions and inadequate services

The LMI services provided by Danish public authorities are designed to support a swift introduction to the Danish labour market. Yet, as the previous section has shown (cf. section 4), the current LMI strategy comes at a high price of stress, anxiety, feelings of de-valuation, and inadequate use of migrants' skills - these being some of the main outcomes of our analysis of labour market barriers and enablers from the perspectives of migrants. What does this tell us about the appropriateness of the representation of immigrants in the Danish policy discourse? And about the adequacy of the current integration services? In this section, we return to the Danish migrant LMI practices and discourses and compare these to the experiences of immigrants.

3.4.3 The inadequate "burden discourse" and its implications

The notion of (non-western) asylum seekers, refugees and family migrants as a welfare burden to the public finances is associated with the idea that migrants not only prefer to rely on social assistance but choose Denmark as a destination country because of the generous social benefits. This argument is from time to time brought forward in the policy discourse, most recently in the wake of a study from the Rockwool Foundation showing that welfare benefits reduction has a positive effect on male refugee's labour market participation in the short term (Arendt 2020). In this context, the Minister of Immigration and Integration, Mattias Tesfaye (from the Social Democrats) stated: "We have to admit that especially for many refugee women, money from the municipality has ended up as a right, disconnected from participation in Danish society" (quoted in Wang 2020). And asked about the level of social assistance, he continues "It [social assistance] must not be higher than in our neighbouring countries, because we do not want more people choosing to seek asylum in Denmark" (ibid.). This perception of immigrants as having an interest in passively receiving benefits rather than working stands in stark contrast to migrants' own stories as well as to some of those hiring migrants. As mentioned above, securing gainful employment was a key aspiration of all migrants interviewed for this report. One could attribute this to the circumstances under which the interviews took place (a research project on labour market integration). However, this does not mean that being employed or studying, and thus being able to contribute to the Danish society, was not important to our interviewees. In many cases, the wish to "do something" overruled the wish for a suitable job (matching the migrant's skill level), as expressed in the quote above (cf. section 4, Interview 13) and by several other interviewees. For instance, a 32-year-old woman from Bangladesh with a BA in finance who, when asked about her (former) job as a sales assistant, replied: "It was okay. It is better to do something than nothing, you know. I wanted to do something. Because I do not like to stay like this [referring to her current situation as unemployed due to COVID-19]" (Interview 26). Most of our interviewees had very active work- or study lives before arriving in Denmark, and they wanted to maintain this lifestyle after their arrival. This was evident in an interview with a female accountant from Nepal on a spousal visa who, in response to the comment that managing to find a job after two months in Denmark was fast, said "But I don't think it was fast [...] It felt like a long time searching. I knew nothing about Denmark, and I had to stay at home for two months, and it was so boring" (Interview 25). Some employers and CSO also emphasize that migrants are hardworking and want to contribute, as put by UNHCR's spokesperson in Denmark, Elisabeth Arnsdorf Haslund: "It is our experience that all refugees want to contribute" (UNHCR 2017).

The "burden discourse" is thus far from an appropriate portrayal of asylum seekers, refugees, and their family members, yet, stating the opposite is not an attractive political move, as expressed by a spokesperson of a former opposition political party represented in the Danish Parliament: "Saying that migrants have certain skills that are valuable to Denmark is not an attractive political discourse. However, if you say that migrants are a burden, this is more in tune with the current political climate" (Interview 2 in Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019). Moreover, the negative portrayal of immigrants might foster a hostile environment towards foreigners in

general, as well as remove focus from the additional steps needed to enable successful LMI of immigrants.

On the other hand, the notion of (high-skilled) labour migrants and their family members being easily integrated into the Danish labour market and thus in need of no, or very limited, assistance, is also not adequate, as shown above. Three of our interviewees are green card holders, meaning that they arrived in Denmark without a job offer on their hands. Today, one is unemployed and the other two work odd jobs. This was also the case for our six interviewees arriving on a green card spousal visa, of whom three currently are unemployed, two have odd jobs, and one is a student. They all express a need of assistance due to a lack of knowledge of the Danish labour market; of not knowing where to go or whom to ask to get a foot inside the door. While the green card scheme was repealed in June 2016, there are still thousands of green card holders in Denmark²⁵, as green card holders at that time were not affected by the repeal. Also, family members reunified with former and current migrants entering through one of the current work permit schemes are, in most cases, left to find employment after their arrival in Denmark (for a full list of the current work permit schemes see Pace, Sen & Bjerre 2018).

These inadequate representations seem to have informed LMI strategies which, in the perception of the migrants, are characterised by 1) stringency in the integration process and strict regulations enforced by municipal authorities when it comes to people who have been granted refugee status as well as their family members and 2) a passive attitude when it comes to labour migrants and their family members. Both LMI “strategies”, have shown to cause stress, anxiety, and a feeling of worthlessness. While this is due to a lack of involvement and support in the latter case, it is caused by excessive involvement of the state and by high requirements in the former. Moreover, the distinction between the burdensome refugees and the valuable non-refugee migrants in the policy discourse potentially creates a hierarchy of immigrants.

3.4.4 Insufficient assessment procedures and a need for more individualized approaches

Despite, or perhaps because of, this two-pronged LMI “strategy”, refugees and non-refugee migrants alike end up with a feeling of being devalued in the process. Our analysis showed a disjuncture between the MRs expectations of integrating into the Danish labour market based on their skills and qualifications and the services aiming at getting them into employment. This discrepancy results in the migrants feeling misunderstood and unappreciated while unemployed or in a job that does not match their skills and qualifications. As a consequence, several of our interviewees abandoned their professional aspirations and have taken up employment in an unrelated sector (in terms of skills and qualifications) (cf. section 4.3). To overcome this barrier, one of the enabling factors stressed by MRs as well as by the different stakeholders, is having a social as well as a professional network. Although various formal and informal CSOs provide networking services (Sen & Pace 2019a: 74), one needs to be aware of these services in order to benefit from them. Our interviews indicate that not enough is done in order to reach out to labour migrants and their family members.

When it comes to refugees, the narrow perception of successful LMI as being synonymous with securing gainful employment seems to have informed the integration services provided by the Danish state. Refugees view this to be a way of getting them into any kind of employment, without much consideration of their aspirations, skills, and qualifications. For instance, the Basic Integration Education programme (*IGU*) was introduced on 1st July 2016 as a means of making sure that the qualifications and skills of refugees and their family members ‘match’ the requirements of the Danish labour market (Rambøll 2018). Yet, as pointed out by Floros and Jørgensen, the IGU is not a real education as it does not stipulate

²⁵ The Danish Green Card Association (DGCA) has more than 8,500 members on Facebook.

specific educational plans and goals. Instead, it is grounded in an employment- and active labour market policy (Floros & Jørgensen 2020). The Syrian refugee quoted above, who was confronted with the sole focus on employment in Danish language classes also shows that the integration bureaucracies are not concerned with immigrants' aspirations. The focus on *any* job in contrast to the *right* job leaves the MRs demotivated and without agency (cf. section 4.2), and make many immigrants pursue an alternative life trajectory to the one planned (cf. section 4.3). Further efforts towards accommodating the integration services to the individual's aspirations would thus be appropriate, starting with a clear assessment of the migrant's aspirations together with an assessment of the migrant's skills and qualifications. Moreover, there is a disjuncture between the unions' wish to make use of skilled labour (cf. Section 2), and the lack of procedures ensuring that migrants' skills and qualifications are recognized. Several of our interviewees have not even tried to get their degrees recognized while others have fought for years. Currently, the (lack of) use of the procedure for recognition of skills and qualifications works as a barrier to successful LMI, but could be turned to an enabler if used, as also expressed by the unions: "Part of the solution could be that municipalities, Danish Refugee Council and the other authorities become better at immediately registering the skills of refugees before they are introduced to the labour market after completion of the introductory course" (former chairman of the Danish Trade Union Confederation, Harald Børsting, May 28, 2015). In addition to including migrants' aspirations, skills, and qualifications, our analysis showed the need to consider the "whole" person, including the migrant's positionality, when aiming at successful LMI. As expressed by a refugee from Afghanistan when recalling her encounter with the authorities: "I was pressured a lot by the municipality at that time. In different ways. For example, they kept pushing me to take on a cleaning job at a nursing home. But I could not handle that psychologically. I arrived from a war and was not feeling well. I have experienced a lot of stuff. [...] They [case workers] cannot understand us. When you have experienced war, blood, and problems, you cannot look at a person who is ill or weak. It [working at an elderly peoples' home] was hard on me and made me revisit my bad memories. I have seen so much blood and deaths with my own eyes. [...] They [case workers] should pay attention to people and what they have experienced. But she [the case worker] pushed me." This incident took place in 2011, yet, with the current "work first" policy, the problem is most likely more severe. Part of the current strategy of swift labour market integration is to declare a larger share of migrants 'job-ready'; meaning, declaring them capable of taking on an ordinary job right away (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 177). With the 2016 tripartite agreement between the government and the social partners, the language requirements for "job-readiness" were lowered. At the same time, the assessment of refugees and family migrants in the integration programme as job-ready was introduced as a general rule (The Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing and the Social Partners 2016: 3). In combination with a pressure of swift employment, there is a risk of not sufficiently including the individual's needs and goals when declaring them job-ready right away, and thus a risk of adjusting the migrant to the service instead of the other way around, hereby stripping the migrant his/her agency and potentially initiating counterproductive initiatives.

3.4.5 Concluding remarks

When comparing the experiences of migrants to Danish migrant LMI policy practices and discourses it becomes apparent that an inadequate representation of refugee and non-refugee migrants alike, together with the "work first" strategy, are among the main barriers to developing LMI services enabling successful labour market integration. Although swift employment is in everybody's best interest, securing quick access to a job should not be done at the expense of individual assessments of migrants' skills and qualifications, or without consideration of migrants' needs and aspirations.

3.5 Conclusion

In this report, we have focused on the perspectives of migrants on the barriers they face in their efforts to secure gainful employment, critical experiences they have had in the Danish labour market as well as turning points that have helped them identify their needs and shaped their goals and aspirations concerning labour market integration. We have compared their understanding of successful LMI to the official understanding of migrant LMI and evaluated the appropriateness of the representation of immigrants in the Danish policy discourse and the adequacy of the current integration services.

First, the migrants' stories questioned the sharp dichotomy between 1) the burdensome refugees, who need incentives, control, and assistance to integrate into the Danish labour market and 2) the contributing labour migrants, who are capable of integrating into the Danish labour market without assistance. Both representations are inadequate, and they furthermore foster a sharp distinction between types of migrants. This is not to say that there are no structural differences. Refugee and labour migrants, by definition, belong to different categories with varying rights to entry, residence, and to economic and social entitlements. Thus, refugees and labour migrants are positioned differently and do not have the same access to, for instance, language classes (which is free to refugees but subject to payment for non-refugees), or to family reunification (labour migrants can bring their families as a general rule while refugees must meet several requirements). Nevertheless, refugee and non-refugee migrants alike face several of the same barriers (e.g. a lack of recognition). To avoid a hierarchy of immigrants, we suggest that all immigrants alike are given equal rights. Additionally, we recommend increased outreach, not exclusively, but in particular to non-refugee migrants. The notion of the easily integrated labour migrants and their family members was challenged by our interviewees, and especially migrants reunified with labour migrants seem in need of greater assistance and direction in finding employment matching their skills and qualifications.

Secondly, the burden discourse and its negative connotations of the skill-less migrant unable to integrate into the labour market unless strongly incentivized and controlled has the potential of creating a hostile environment towards migrants in general. To move away from abovementioned perceptions of both types of migrants, we recommend that focus is shifted from the burden perspective to the resources that all migrants bring. That is to say, we recommend a shift to a bottom-up process of LMI that nurtures the skills and qualifications of MRAs to the benefit of the Danish economy, as also suggested earlier (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 203) and stressed by unions, MPs from former opposition parties and CSOs. Our interviews show that migrants are not sufficiently included in their LMI process, their voice is not heard, and they are not sufficiently respected and valued. The interviewees' experiences of labour market integration were characterised by four broad themes which all addressed the need of (trust-based) inclusion and recognition (or the negative consequences of failing to include and recognise the migrants): feelings of stress and anxiety as MRAs attempted to secure gainful employment in Denmark; feelings of their skills and qualifications not being valued in the Danish labour market; feelings of demotivation to pursue their professional/career aspirations in Denmark, and expressions of the importance of MRA networks as a vital support system in the Danish labour market.

Refugees and non-refugees alike expressed feelings of stress and anxiety connected to the process of labour market integration. Extensive control, lack of trust, and a high number of requirements (reserved for those granted asylum) were among the factors creating a barrier to successful LMI. High requirements for integration in general, e.g. in the form of high requirements for permanent residence or citizenship, and a financial pressure of (not) making ends meet, was also shown to stand in the way of successful LMI. Especially female migrants with young children and without a support system seem to be in a precarious situation, struggling to make ends meet. We thus recommend lowering the level of control in the integration process, and we urge policymakers to reconsider the need for the current requirements, given that the high level of requirements is detrimental to successful LMI. Lack

of control and requirements should not be interpreted as a need for less involvement, in fact, many interviewees – not just non-refugee migrants - expressed a need to be directed or guided in the right direction. Moreover, in line with the recommendations of The Nordic Council of Ministers (Nordisk Ministerråd 2018), we recommend that integration programmes are designed to meet the needs of women with children in particular.

Another important instigating factor of stress and anxiety is the vast disparity between how our interviewees imagined life in Denmark to be and their actual lived experience. Faced with the perception that their skills and qualifications are of no use to the Danish labour market, that they do not possess the needed skills, and/or with an unsatisfactory assessment of their skills, migrants feel de-valued. Moreover, refugees experience that they are met by services aiming at getting them into any kind of employment, without much consideration of their aspirations, skills, and qualifications. Accordingly, we recommend that LMI services are built on an understanding of labour market integration as not just securing *any* job, but securing the *right* job, corresponding to the migrant's aspirations and education. We suggest that the "right" direction is defined in collaboration with migrants, including her/his aspirations and needs, rather than being determined by municipal authorities and simply imposed on migrants. We thus recommend that the existing system of skills assessment is treated by municipal authorities as an important precondition for 'matching' MRAs with jobs, contrary to the current practice (Sen, Bjerre & Pace 2019: 203).

Finally, our analysis shows that, in response to the anxiety-laden stressful path to labour market integration wherein migrants' skills and qualifications are de-valued, migrants are compelled to take low-skilled jobs. Furthermore, many migrants abandon their professional aspirations and instead work towards better chances for the second generation or give up on pursuing a career in Denmark. These alternatives to migrant's original wish of pursuing a career not only come at a loss for migrants but also for the Danish labour market, unable to benefit from the skills and qualifications that migrants bring to Denmark. In addition to the above-mentioned recommendations, we thus suggest that a procedure of recognition of skills is introduced, which is designed to meet the realities of migrants' lived experiences, among others accounting for the fact that refugees' access to original certificates and documents is often hindered for years, if not impossible. With the acknowledgement of migrants' skills and qualifications there is a chance of reinstalling aspirations, the feeling of value and a wish to pursue a career where one can fulfil one's potential in the LMI process.

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3.7 Annex I: Demographic information on MRAs

Interviews (Past Beneficiaries)										
Pseudonym of Interviewee *	Date of interview	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of origin	Migration year	Education (primary, secondary, tertiary)	Current occupation in host country	Occupation in country of origin	Languages the individual speaks
Interview 1	08-01-2020	30	M	Married, no children	Afghanistan	2012	Tertiary	Unemployed	Government Employee	Dari, Pashto, English, Farsi, Urdu, Danish, Arabic
Interview 2	08-01-2020	27	F	Married, no children	Afghanistan	2019	Secondary	Unemployed	Student	Dari, Pashto, Urdu, Farsi
Interview 3	09-01-2020	22	F	Single	Afghanistan	1999/2018	Tertiary	Student	N/A	English, Danish, Urdu, Dari, Pashto, Farsi
Interview 4	15-01-2020	31	M	Single	Afghanistan	2010	Secondary	Food Delivery	Farmer	Danish, Urdu, Dari,

										Pashto, Farsi
Interview 5	15-01-2020	22	M	Married	Afghanistan	2015	Secondary	Food Delivery	Student	English, Danish, Urdu, Dari, Pashto, Farsi
Interview 6	06-02-2020	24	M	Single	Eritrea	2013	Secondary	Student/Postal Worker	Mandatory Military Service	Tigrinya, Arabic, Danish, English
Interview 7	12-02-2020	24	M	Single	Eritrea	2013	Secondary	Student/Retail Worker	Mandatory Military Service	Tigrinya, Arabic, Danish, English
Interview 8	03-02-2020	24	M	Single	Syria	2015	Tertiary	Unemployed	Student	English, Arabic
Interview 9	10-02-2020	24	M	Divorced	Syria	2015	Secondary	Café worker	Student	Danish, English, Arabic, Kurdish
Interview 10	09-01-2020	30	M	Married	India	2016	Tertiary	Unemployed	Engineer	English, Telugu
Interview 11	27-01-2020	38	F	Mother of 2, married	Bangladesh	2013	Tertiary	Cafeteria Worker	Researcher	English, Bengali, Danish
Interview 12	06-02-2020	34	F	Mother of 1, married	Bangladesh	2011	Tertiary	Supermarket worker	Teacher	English, Bengali

Interview 13	28-01-2020	36	F	Mother of 1, married	Bangladesh	2010	Tertiary	Housekeeping	Teacher	English, Bengali
Interview 14	03-02-2020	36	F	Mother of 1, married	Bangladesh	2012	Tertiary	Student	Researcher	English, Bengali
Interview 15	13-02-2020	42	M	Father of 2, married	Pakistan	2010	Tertiary	Postal Service worker	Engineer	Urdu, English, Danish
Interview 16	19-02-2020	35	F	Divorced	Brazil	2011	Tertiary	Unemployed	PR Executive	Portuguese, English
Interview 17	20-02-2020	34	M	Father of 2, married	India	2013	Tertiary	Engineer	Engineer	English, Danish, Hindi, Malayalam
Interview 18	21-02-2020	36	F	No children, married	USA	2015	Tertiary	Unemployed	Editor	English, Spanish
Interview 19	04-26-2020	54	F	Mother of 4, divorced	Afghanistan	1998 + 2010	Tertiary	Interpreter, hairdresser	High school teacher	Farsi, Danish
Interview 20	04-30-2020	36	F	Mother of 2, divorced	South Yemen	2008	Secondary	Student	Student	Arabic, English, Danish
Interview 21	05-02-2020	53	M	Father of 2, Married	Iran	1990	Primary +	Parc attendant	Dubbing	Persian, English, Danish
Interview 22	05-02-2020	47	F	Mother of 2, married	Iran	2000	Secondary	Dental assistant	MA Literature in	Persian, English, Danish

Interview 23	05-05-2020	55	F	Mother of 3, married	Syria	2014	Tertiary	Canteen staff	Accountant	Arabic
Interview 24	05-07-2020	41	F	Mother of 2, divorced	Syria	2012	Tertiary	Journalist	Journalist	Arabic, English, (Danish)
Interview 25	05-10-2020	29	F	Married	Nepal	2017	Tertiary	Packing boxes at online supermarket	Accountant	Sino-Tibetan, (English)
Interview 26	05-14-2020	32	F	Mother of 1, married	Bangladesh	2013	Tertiary	Waitress	University student	Bengali, English
Interview 27	05-25-2020	28	F	Single	Nepal	2015	Tertiary	University student	Working at airline company	Sino-Tibetan, English

3.8 Annex II, Summaries of conducted interviews

Interview number	Short description of the interview	Date of interview
Interview 1 & 2	This interview was conducted with an Afghan couple. The initial plan was to conduct the interview with the wife (Refugee Interviewee 1) who had arrived in the country only five months ago. Yet, she arrived at the interview with her husband (Refugee, Interview 2) who I had interviewed earlier. Being interviewed together meant that conversations about the wife's individual aspirations often drifted into discussions about their collective struggles as a married couple in Denmark. Admittedly, this was an unplanned "set up". Yet it also gave us a glimpse into a significant orientating facet of her life - namely, the family unit (and marriage) that led her to give up her life in Afghanistan for her life in Denmark. Accordingly, much of the interview traversed the theme of contrast; that is, the contrast between her life at home and now her life in Denmark. She said, "I left Afghanistan five months ago. There was no stress in my life back in Afghanistan. We would go to university, go to our courses, then come home and there was no stress. When I decide to come to Denmark [after marriage] I did not think that there would be so much stress in my life. When I arrived here...like my life was in Afghanistan we were very happy and relaxed. We didn't have this kind of stress. But here it is like they imprison you. Even if you want to go ahead in your life it is so difficult here". This was a key turning point seeing as one would expect that life for a refugee would be more stressful in her home country than in exile. But in Denmark, she explained, she felt burdened by the bureaucratic nature of the process of being integrated. Having to report to municipality authorities and being reprimanded for minor infractions made her feel imprisoned in Denmark. Furthermore, the constant fear of abiding by/unknowingly violating the rules and regulations that govern the lives of refugees created a level of stress that in some ways paralyzed her from pursuing her educational and professional aspirations in Denmark. This is ironic, considering the fact that she has yet to begin her job search and is, for now, focused on learning the Danish language. Yet, her experience of integration thus far is such that even before pursuing a job, she seems to have lost the motivation to integrate into the Danish labour market.	8/1/2020
Interview 3	This interview was conducted with a (former) Afghan refugee, who received Danish citizenship only a few years ago. It was her father who was initially granted asylum in Denmark. Afterwards, she joined her father with her mother and four siblings. She lived in Denmark for 11 years before moving back to Afghanistan for 9 years. She returned to Denmark in 2018 to pursue a university education. When asked about the barriers she imagines she will face while pursuing a career in the Danish labour market, she replied, "mainly the challenges for me in Danish society [has to do with] me wearing the hijab. I applied for some jobs at a make-up store. It was a simple job and they rejected me because I was wearing a hijab." She clarified, "They said it was not because of my background. But they wanted people who were open because they want to attract customers". Our interviewee noted that her family members often discouraged her from applying for such jobs where it is indeed very likely that a hijabed woman would not be granted the position. Nonetheless, she persisted and explained, "I want to apply for all chances I have and take all the chances I have and won't let my hijab be a limitation for pursuing my career." In the end, our interviewee added that her ability to cope with barriers is very much dependent on her social network. And, it is her circle of open-minded friends who "respect different traditions and different religions" that serves as an important support system.	09/1/2020
Interview 4 & 5	This interview was conducted with two Afghan refugees. While the initial plan was to conduct the interviews individually, they insisted on being interviewed together. During the interview it became clear that Interviewee 5 was not comfortable speaking English and needed interviewee 4 to translate. Seeing this we chose to conduct the interview in Urdu as both interviewees were proficient in the language. The interview itself took place in the back of interviewee 4's car. At the time of interview, both did deliveries for a catering company and, at the beginning of our conversation, they were curious about how (or, if at all) the interview would help them get a better job in	15/1/2020

	<p>Denmark. After hearing more about the project, they agreed to continue with the interview.</p> <p>Both interviewees were living a life in Denmark that was in stark contrast to how they had imagined life to be in exile in Europe. And, both had to “give up” their aspirations and instead work towards making a living in Denmark. This was evident in the way interviewee 4 described his experience in Denmark. He said, “I was an electrical engineering student in Afghanistan. But there were many problems, security problems and I came here”. Then, with regard to his career trajectory in the Danish labour market, he added, “I wanted to go to university and continue my education. But it is very difficult. First, I have to learn Danish. Also, they don’t recognize my high school education. I tried so much with the municipality, but they said I have to go to high school again”. This, for our interviewee, was a significant barrier to pursuing his “ideal” career path. He said, “I can’t spend more time on this. Now I just want to earn money and start a business. I want to be married and have a family soon.”</p> <p>A similar “story” was relayed by interviewee 5. He said, “I came to Denmark more than ten years ago because there were many security problems with the Taliban. After getting asylum, I went to language school for three years. While in language school I worked at a fast food restaurant. I worked there for six years. After that I have been working as a delivery person for a catering company. That’s it I don’t have any other life, no family. But I hope to be married soon and bring my family here”. Then, also insinuating that his life turned out very differently compared to how he had imagined, he said, “When you come to Denmark, you may have many plans and many things in your mind. But here your plans will not work, and it is very complicated. I could not get an education because I did not have the language skills. If I wait to learn Danish, then it will be too late to get an education, and I have to pass 9th and 10th grade. I also have to work and earn a living to start a life and family. My heart was in education, but it was not possible. Maybe I can do it later in life.”</p>	
Interview 6	<p>This interview was conducted with a 24-year-old refugee interviewee from Eritrea who had fled conscription in his home country when he was 18. In many ways, his story is a “success story”. While the journey to Denmark was difficult, he has been relatively successful in “making a life” in the country. In the days after being granted asylum in Denmark he had secured a job as a translator, working with immigration officials on asylum applications. Within 18 months of being in Denmark, he had also learned Danish. Currently he is working towards securing his Danish high school certificate which would in turn allow him to enrol into a bachelor’s degree program at a Danish university. But while he was well on his way to becoming a medicinal chemist, our interviewee has also had jobs (say, as a cleaner) that have little to do with his aspired for career. He is also currently employed by a postal services company. Nonetheless, Interviewee 6 chose to have a positive outlook towards working in a low-skilled sector and, during the interview, said, “It was fine...when you have nothing, it’s better to do something. It’s okay, it’s also works. Actually, I respect all [kinds] of work...But there is always better work. For example, if I find better work [than what I have now], I will also move.”</p>	06/2/2020
Interview 7	<p>This interview was conducted with a refugee from Eritrea. Back in Eritrea he was both pursuing an education with the hope of becoming a teacher and helping out in his family business. Speaking of the limited professional opportunities in his home country, he said “I had a teaching [qualification] certificate...I was not getting enough results. I was also in business with my family. But I could not see a life. There was no future, even if you are a teacher with the highest degree”. Eventually, seeing this lack of prospects he decided to leave Eritrea for Europe. After leaving the country he walked for 5 days before reaching Ethiopia. After spending a week at a refugee camp in Ethiopia, he made his way to Europe via Sudan and Libya. The entire journey from Eritrea to Denmark took him three months. After his arrival in Denmark, our interviewee enrolled in Danish language courses. He spent 1,5 years in language and subsequently began working towards receiving a Danish high school certificate. Nonetheless, he didn’t want his professional development while he was enrolled in a study program. He said, “It is difficult to just be in school. It is also not nice. You should have money to live, have clothes. So, I started working”. When asked about his (tertiary) educational and career aspirations in Denmark, he said, “Business, I was</p>	12/2/2020

	<p>good in business in Eritrea. So, I want to take economics and finance classes in business school". In the end, while he would consider himself 'on track' to achieving his career goals, our interviewee nonetheless considered life (as a refugee) to be challenging. He said, "Adapting to this country's people is difficult and very stressful. Of course, this a developed country, with big cities and nice building. But socially it causes a lot of stress. In Eritrea we lived a social life. You greet everyone. Even someone you don't know. It is very different here". As means of overcoming this challenge, he added, he joined a social club that met weekly and helped him grown his network among Danes.</p>	
Interview 8	<p>This interview was conducted with a Syrian refugee, who left his home country while still a university student. But while he expected his skills and qualifications to be valued (and nurtured) by integration authorities in Denmark, his experience in the country was largely coloured by a feeling of being de-valued. Recounting his journey from Syria to Denmark, he said, "My life [in Syria] was between university and working with my dad in the farm. When I finished my first year at university, the situation in Syria was very bad. There was ISIS in my city. Sometimes I couldn't go to university because there was war everywhere". To be sure, after being granted asylum, our interviewee had very clear expressed his (career) aspirations to the integration authorities. He said, "they asked me 'what do want to do?' I said I was a student of economics in Syria. So, I want to continue my education here...they said, 'wow that is fantastic that you want to do that here'. I said I hope you can help me. They said absolutely". But when he began his Danish language education at the municipality-assigned language school it became clear to him that his aspirations would not be prioritized. He said, "it was important for them to just teach you how to talk during work. Not for university or academic [purposes]...they also said you should work. If you don't work in Denmark then you have no respect". He also felt devalued during a presentation by a representative of a Danish municipality. Recounting his experience, he said, "my teacher said that there is a woman from the municipality who will come to talk to us. I said okay, maybe she will tell us about Danish rules...how to find our way here. But she said 'in Denmark it is not modern if go to the toilet and you wash your ass. You should use [toilet] paper.' Oh my god, what is this subject she is talking about. Then she said, 'you shouldn't be four or five guys from the Middle East walk together because our girls are afraid'. But what did we do to them? We told her but we think there are also a lot of women in the Middle East."</p>	03/2/2020
Interview 9	<p>This interview with a young Syrian refugee. He escaped Syria after his first year of university when, in the midst of the ongoing war, he felt that he had few opportunities to build a career in his home country. He said, "I thought there is no more life here and there is no more future here...Everybody is killing everybody...there is chaos around the country here". As a result, Ahmet decided to leave Syria, with the hope that he would eventually "go to Europe to find my future there and continue my education". Like other refugees at the time, he embarked on the arduous path to Europe via the Mediterranean route and arrived in Denmark in 2016. After being granted asylum in the country our interviewee was keen on learning the language and starting an education alongside his fiancé from Syria who had also fled her home counter and was living Turkey. But it is at this point that he experienced the first turning point in his life in exile. While he had applied for family reunification for his fiancé and, within a few after being granted asylum, gotten married, the length processing time of refugee family reunification visas had taken a toll on the relationship. He said, "I married her and came back and was waiting for the papers. We had some problems and she didn't want to be with me anymore". He added, "One time she called me [and said] if you don't get me to you now to Denmark, then we shouldn't be together. I said okay, you are with your family and I am with your family". Our interviewee had to now entirely rethink his life in Denmark. This was difficult for him. Furthermore, having to both learn Danish and simultaneously pursue an education in Danish proved to be a daunting test. Eventually, he was overwhelmed and decided to work instead. But having held several odds jobs over the next two years, he wasn't entirely satisfied either. Eventually he decided to begin his education again. And this time around he planned approach his education with a different mindset. He said, "I am not thinking about the rules anymore. I am not thinking about how they want to change our life here. I have stopped thinking about a lot of things</p>	10/2/2020

	that I thought about before. Those things make me tired. They used all my energy from moving on or making the right choice.... I stopped thinking about the government, political bad things. I can't control any of these things. I cannot change any of these things. So, let me build my life, build myself and have my own goals, my own life. And then if I can I will help anyone who needs help and if I can make any difference in life then I will do it without anybody stopping me. But first I need to build myself".	
Interview 10	This interview was conducted with an India computer engineer. He had arrived in Denmark as part of a now-discontinued visa scheme reserved for highly skilled individuals. While the visa allowed visa holders to enter the country without acquiring a job prior to their arrival, many ended up working low-skilled jobs unrelated to their (high-skilled) sector in order to make ends meet. It was no different for this interviewee as he was yet to find permanent employment. When asked about his experience attempting to find a job in Denmark he expressed his frustrations regarding qualifications demanded by Danish employers. For one thing, he was disillusioned by Danish employers' expectations that candidates would plan/develop in a way that precisely fit the needs of the company. This, he noted, was an unrealistic expectation and would limit him from having wider job prospects in the labour market. Additionally, he found the focus on the development of language skills a significant barrier to migrants integrating into the Danish labour market he said, "here they are so focused on having all the technical skills and Danish language. They will never grow. Language should be in the back. It cannot be in front. Skills should be in the front. Language should only be something to use to communicate, to understand each other. Nothing more than that. See, in a country like India. We have 16 regional languages and maybe 20 unrecognized languages. But we use English because we are practical. Danish people are focusing more on language. But we have to be practical. What is the use of Danish if I leave?". Yet, probably the most alarming aspect of the interview were his views on refugees and the kind of support that the Danish state was providing to those that had been granted asylum in the country. He considered himself as far more valuable to the economy of the Danish state; as opposed to refugees, who he considered to be largely a burden on the resources of the state. In making this argument, said "There are a lot of refugees coming here. They are getting support from the government and they are using the system. They get a lot of help from the municipality and they are just relaxing with the money. The government is not forcing them to do anything. I have seen many, many cases where they are misusing resources like this. They misuse the housing that they get. They misuse the help they get with transportation. You can also see how these people are using libraries. They are just gangsters. They are coming here, making some fun and nonsense and then going. I saw this at the library yesterday. There were a group of people who came here, and they were fighting each other. These people are not good people. This people are pulling Denmark back, but they get support. This is not the right way". The irony of this, as is evident in our ethnodrama, is that the challenges he faces in securing gainful employment in Denmark are not that different from those faced by refugees. Yet, being on a high-skilled visa scheme he considered himself to have a greater potential to contribute to the society than refugees.	9/1/2020
Interview 11	This interview was conducted with a non-refugee migrant from Bangladesh, who came to Denmark on the green card scheme. Her life trajectory abroad began with a stint as a master's degree student in Norway. After her studies she returned to Bangladesh where she worked as a research assistant at a medical college. Nonetheless, she aspired to pursue a PhD degree abroad. She said, "After living in Norway, I started thinking about things differently. I noticed the kind of pressure that children faced in school. Also, at work I saw that it is not always about qualifications. You have to play politics to go far in your career". Eventually, she applied for the Danish green card and her application was approved. Keen on beginning her career as a researcher, this interviewee reached out to several research institutions after her arrival in Denmark. While many responded and she had several meetings with potential employers, little of substance resulted from these efforts. After searching for a research position for two years, she began working in catering services. While reflecting on the reasons for her not finding a relevant research position, she said,	27/1/2020

	<p>“maybe Danish language is a requirement. If I had learned it immediately after coming to Denmark it would have been helpful. Now it has been six years and there is a big gap in my CV”. When asked about her forthcoming plans and if, at all, she planned to pursue a career that matches her skills and qualifications, she said, “I could have easily returned home. But somewhere in me I have some hope that maybe something will happen”. For now, however, her primary concern is her children. And, her aspirations in Denmark have changed from being focused on her own career to being focused on the education and future of her children in Denmark</p>	
Interview 12	<p>This interviewee was a schoolteacher in Bangladesh before moving to Denmark. Prior to her arrival she was also pursuing a master’s degree, with the hope of securing a better job in Bangladesh. However, her career plans changed when she got married. She said, “Things change when you get married and your life gets connected with someone else and you have to follow his direction.” Her husband had a master’s degree in Information Systems from a Swedish university. After marriage he moved to Denmark in 2011 with our interviewee on the Danish greencard scheme. Both were unable to find a job in Denmark that matched their skills and qualifications. Our interviewee said, “It was very difficult. The kind of jobs we had to do, we could never even think about doing such things in Bangladesh...For example, I worked as a housekeeper. It was very difficult. And, we had to do everything so fast.” Hoping to get a better job, our interviewee began learning the Danish language. However, with the birth of her child, her language education was stalled. Eventually, two years later, she completed her Danish language education. Yet, our interviewee soon realized that irrespective of her qualifications and her persistent attempts to meet the needs of the Danish labour market, she would be told that she would need to do more. She explained, “I finished the language but still employers said no, that’s not enough. So, I tried to get my Danish high school certificate. In the meantime, they changed all the visa rules and I had to continuously work to abide by the financial requirements for extending my visa”. When asked how such experiences affected her, she replied, “Of course, I get depressed sometimes. How can do more than this. I have friends who were university teachers when I left Bangladesh. Now they are professors. I feel like I am going back in my life”. In the end, explaining how Denmark did not match her expectations, she said, “I didn’t realize it would be that difficult. I thought this would be a good place for women, there is less corruption and don’t need to know people to get a job. I had many dreams. But here you are constantly told you are not good enough. Your education is not good enough. You learn the language. But then your pronunciation is not good enough.”</p>	6/2/2020
Interview 13	<p>Thematically, the ‘story’ of LMI narrated by this interviewee was centred on her feeling of being de-valued by Danish employers. From Bangladesh, this interviewee “followed” her husband to Denmark who had been granted residency under the green card scheme. He had hoped to pursue a PhD in Denmark. In Bangladesh our interviewee was a teacher, with a decade of professional experience. For this reason, already with a stable career in Bangladesh, she wasn’t too keen on moving to Denmark. Yet, it was her husband’s health problems that eventually led her to moving to Denmark. She explained, “I first came here for three months on holiday to visit my husband. Then he had some trouble with his heart and while I was here, he had a bypass surgery”. Unfortunately, with her husband being unable to find employment in his sector, she soon took on odd jobs to make ends meet. This affected her self-worth. She said, “I felt that without a job I was useless here. In Bangladesh I was pursuing my master’s degree and working as a teacher at the same time. So, I am not used to staying at home and within a month of moving here I started working as a housekeeper. I thought to myself if my husband, being so educated, can do odd jobs, so can I”. However, working as a housekeeper was strenuous: “It was very tough. Every night I would pray so I could get through work the next day...we didn’t need the money, but I didn’t want to stay home, unemployed. I also didn’t learn Danish when I first came to the country because my husband kept saying we will leave soon. Maybe with Danish I could have done something else”. When asked about becoming a teacher in Denmark, she said, “No, I haven’t tried. I just feel that I will not be able to succeed in this country. Interacting with people in this society and taking care of [Danish] kids will be very tough for me. But I am trying to find some</p>	28/1/2020

	kind of “light” job that I can do after a little bit of education where I can work at an office, where I can tell people [what I do]”.	
Interview 14	<p>This interviewee was a junior lecturer in history at a university in Bangladesh and moved to Denmark a few years after her husband received the Danish green card. An IT engineer, her husband began working on a part-time IT project while also working at a restaurant. In this period, she kept her job in Bangladesh and would travel back and forth between Denmark and Bangladesh. It was only after her daughter was born that she began living in Denmark. In her early days in the country, she was unhappy staying home. She explained, “I didn’t want to just sit at home. I wanted to work. I felt suffocated at home.” Eventually, realizing that it would be difficult to find a researcher/academic position, she took on a packing job with a catering service. She said, “A friend of ours said that there was this packing job. It was very hard. Every day I thought to myself I am not cut out for this.” During this period, our interviewee took language classes as well. Yet, there was immense uncertainty about their residency in Denmark. She said, “They were changing all the visa rules and we were very unsure whether we would be able to stay in the country. There was a lot of confusion and I couldn’t continue with my language education.” Eventually, once her husband found a job that matched his skills and qualifications, she enrolled in a master’s degree program at a Danish university. Recounting her professional struggles in Denmark, she said, “I knew before coming here that it would be a struggle. I knew that I had to come with the mindset that I would need to develop skills”. Nonetheless, despite being somewhat aware of what she would encounter in Denmark, life in the country has been difficult. She said, “Every day I think about going back. I have a long education in Bangladesh. I have my own colleagues, friends, professors. I also built my own house. All of this is my own. Here all I have is my husband and my daughter. I am just here for them. Actually, I am here for my daughter and her future”.</p>	3/2/2020
Interview 15	<p>This interview was conducted with a non-refugee migrant from Pakistan. With an MA degree in human resources management, this interviewee came to Denmark on the greencard scheme. But as is often the case with individuals who applied for this scheme, he was unable to find gainful employment in a relevant sector. In order to make ends meet and meet the financial requirements of the scheme he worked odd jobs. For a period, he also worked as a taxi driver. In this period, he has become a vocal advocate for the rights of vulnerable, economic migrants in Denmark. He has engaged in the Danish media in public debates, organized public awareness campaigns and lobbied with Danish political parties. Regarding his activism, he said, “I have personally suffered a lot in Denmark. I know people here who are struggling to make a life in Denmark. So, I am working to make sure that Danes know what we go through”. Speaking of his personal struggles integrating into the Danish labour market, he added, “When I look at the regulations and all the visa rules I feel sometimes that Danish authorities don’t care about me. My position is that laws need to be based on rights – they need to take into account the rights and interests of the people they affect”. In summarizing his trajectory in Denmark, he said, “I work for [anonymized postal service company]. It is not directly in human resources, but I hope eventually I will work in the company with tasks that are relevant to my education. It is sad that I have had to wait so many years to find a decent job in Denmark. And if the laws and rules were more helpful I think I could have reached this level much quicker.”</p>	13/2/2020
Interview 16	<p>This interview with a non-refugee interviewee from Brazil revolved around the theme of “devaluation”. In Brazil she worked for a large, international advertising firm and came to Denmark with significant industry experience. Yet, following the death of her father and a work-related burnout she decided to leave the country. She applied and received a prestigious scholarship to pursue a master’s degree in Denmark. Speaking of the experience she brought to Denmark, she said, “So when I came here, I was already working. I was a manager in a big agency and had big clients like [mentions a big international sports brand] ...big, big names, international names”. Yet, in Denmark, the visa requirements did not allow her to work fulltime. Further, her work experience was not valued by potential employers, “Apparently I had a very unusual CV for my age. I was 24, I had worked since 2004 and this was 2011...And then I left</p>	19/2/2020

	<p>Brazil when I was at a big agency, I was manager, I had a department, I had big accounts and I wasn't acquainted with the unofficial laws of Denmark. Later I learned about <i>Jante Lov</i> [The law of Jante]. I was sending CVs and people would call me and listen to me. I don't think I was being arrogant; I was just taking pride [in my achievements] ...I am not saying that I am better. I'm just saying that I worked hard. I say that I am driven, hardworking and see things through...later I realized that they [i.e. employers] think that I am showing off, I'm bragging...people thought I was lying". In the end, facing such barriers in the perception of potential employers, she decided to de-value her qualifications. She said, "things only changed after three years of looking for jobs...I was at an office with Danes and looking around seeing people who were coming for interviews - they were 28 and looking for an internship. That's when I stripped all the "manager" and only had "intern" [in my CV]. Instead of big clients, I only wrote one client. Then people started calling me."</p>	
Interview 17	<p>In many ways, this interviewee, an IT engineer from India, could be considered a "success story" and one of only a few (of our interviewees) who have been able to secure gainful employment in a relevant sector. Furthermore, he has been largely successful in achieving his aspiration, with regard to his LMI in Denmark. Nonetheless, as was the case with most of our interviewees, here too there was a "gap" between his expectations (in relation to LMI) and his experiences in the Danish labour market. Most significantly this gap was apparent in the extent to which a job candidate's skills and qualifications were the sole determinant in the successful securing of a job. To this end our interviewee recognized that far more than one's qualifications, success in the Danish labour market is often contingent on the job seeker's professional network. Describing his own networking efforts, he said, "I made quite a good network of friends here. And it involved being invited to their homes for Christmas dinners or for some normal get-together. Then we also invited Danes to our home to see if they like India food, if they have ever tried it or show them what an Indian household looks like". These networking efforts paid off, when he was able to secure a job at a Danish IT services company on the basis of his relationship with a professional acquaintance. In the end, the interviewee concluded that his success proved "that in Denmark references and recommendations matter."</p>	20/2/2020
Interview 18	<p>This interview was conducted with an American, non-refugee interviewee. She had accompanied her partner, who had secured a tenure-track position at a reputed university in Denmark. Prior living in Denmark they, as a couple, had lived in Hong Kong and New Zealand. Professionally, our interviewee had 15 years of experience as an editor and has also taught academic writing at universities in the US, Hong Kong and New Zealand. Before arriving in Denmark, she was well aware that, since English is not the primary working language at Danish universities, there would be fewer relevant jobs openings on offer. For this reason, she enrolled into a PhD program at a Spanish university. She follows the program remotely and travels to Spain once a semester. That said, in her first months in Denmark, this interviewee did try to find a job. Recounting her experiences, she said, "it's pretty rough to live in Denmark on one income...I spent the first six months having these coffee meetings with people and joined a professional networking organization...redid my CV a million different ways for a million different jobs so that my experience matched the job I applied for. Most of it didn't get anywhere". Speaking of her decision to now stop looking for a job in Denmark she added, "the whole process was discouraging for me. I realized that I would have to give up my career and do something totally different. I recognize that I'm in a very privileged position to be able to even make a choice like this, but my choice was that I don't want to do anything different". Finally, noting the insurmountable nature of some of the barriers MRAs face in the labour market, she concluded, "it's not just finding a job that suits you. I also applied for jobs that didn't suit me...and I have talked to a lot of people...you are told not to stand out. They are not looking for the person who can do the job best...as long as you can do the job the same as everyone else that's what they want. That's comforting...but then you realize if everyone is at 0. Then I'm already at -5 because I don't speak Danish and I'm not a Dane."</p>	21/2/2020
Interview 19	<p>This interview was conducted with a 54-year old refugee from Afghanistan. She arrived in Denmark for the first time on a refugee spousal visa in 1998 together with</p>	26/04/2020

	<p>her four children. After six years in Denmark, the family decided to return to Afghanistan. Yet, due to the ongoing war, and after she divorced her husband (who was abusive and violent), she decided to return to Denmark together with her children in 2010.</p> <p>She has a BA in language and literature from Afghanistan and more than ten years of work experience as a teacher. During her first years in Denmark, she took language classes and afterward was successful in finding a job matching her skills, first as a teacher at the local asylum centre and as a contact person for an Afghan family (both with the Danish Red Cross), and later, after the asylum centre closed down, she found work at the local school. Overall, her (work) life is characterized by a number of ups and downs, though.</p> <p>After the divorce, she was looking forward to her new life in Denmark, and within the first weeks back in Denmark, she also succeeded in getting a “really great job at the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) as a contact person [for newly arrived refugee families]”. The contract was only for one year, though, and afterward, she experienced difficulties finding a suitable job. Feeling pressured by the municipal authorities to take on low skilled jobs in cleaning and elder care, she decided to become self-employed. With the help of friends, she could pay for a one-year hairdresser education. Since 2011 she has also worked as a freelance interpreter but had to supplement with hours in a hair salon to make ends meet. At the same time, she was taking care of her kids, of which one developed severe depression and has been hospitalized for years.</p> <p>With the rise in the number of asylum seekers in 2015 and 2016, she was offered a lot of work as an interpreter and could almost work full-time as an interpreter. Unfortunately, later that year (2016), she was involved in a car accident and got a whiplash (associated disorder). She fought to get back on her feet, and in 2018, when her degree from Afghanistan finally got recognized (after eight years), she was once again feeling optimistic. Yet, after sending “thousands of applications” without being invited for any interviews, she “lost hope”. She is currently still working in the hair salon and as an interpreter, but again, she had to stop working when Denmark closed down due to COVID-19.</p>	
Interview 20	<p>This interview was conducted with a woman from Yemen, who came to Denmark in 2008 on a spousal visa. After her arrival, she had two daughters (one year apart), and afterward, she has worked as an assistant in a kindergarten, she has studied (9th grade and at the Danish general adult education programme/Voksenuddannelsescentre (VUC)). She is currently studying to become a nursery/kindergarten teacher.</p> <p>Like many of our other interviewees, she did not have an easy life. To use her own words, when describing the last couple of years of her life: “I got divorced, had a bad relationship, failed my driver’s license test, and lost three of my brothers”. Luckily, she was offered support then, not from the municipality but a counsellor at the VUC. “If I had not received this support, I would not have finished”, she continues.</p> <p>She is a fighter, and has “bumped back” whenever she was “hit”, but getting this far in life has been a struggle, which has affected her quality of life: “I think you will hear this from a lot of the people whom you interview; due to the lack of support from your partner, you always feel like you are falling behind [...] And when you are falling behind, you don’t feel that you are good enough [...] I have struggled a lot here. In my home country, there are many other disadvantages. Illness. And the country does not work. In this country, you have so many things offered to you, but at the same time, you are sad. I am sad that things are not working out”. She continues to talk about how the combination of lack of support and a high number of requirements is challenging for her: “You are controlled by many things. The rules in the country. [...] You need to do this, and this, and this in order to get a permanent residence permit, for example. Meaning that many people are overworked by all the requirements”.</p> <p>At the time of the interview, she is home with her two kids because of the “pandemic lockdown”, struggling with the distance teaching and group work, yet extremely</p>	30/04/2020

	cheerful and with a lot of drive to succeed and to ensure that her kids have everything they need.	
Interview 21 & 22	<p>This interview was conducted with a couple from Iran. He arrived as a resettlement refugee in 1998. They met over the Internet, got married, and in 2002 she arrived on a spousal visa.</p> <p>In Iran, he was working with dubbing (changing the speech on films and television programs to Persian) for a TV channel. In Denmark, he continued his artistic profession and worked dubbing commercials for foreign markets, and as an actor. However, after they got married, he took on the responsibility of the family provider and stopped his “arts” as he calls it. He was then working many different low-skilled jobs over the years. Today he is working as a parking attendant. He is happy with his job and nurtures his interests in his spare time, e.g. by cutting short films.</p> <p>She holds a MA in psychology and Persian literature and has work experience from working as an assistant in a dental clinic and a dermatological clinic while studying. She expected to easily find a job where she could apply her knowledge and skills once she arrived in Denmark but did not know how to work the Danish labour market. In the end, this “broke” her, to use her own words. She did not receive any assistance and feel like she was just left to herself after she arrived “Nobody told me what to do, how to get my papers recognized, or anything. We lived in a small town, so nobody told me anything. So, I was just at home every day. It was so boring. [...] It is like my dreams chattered [...] I could not apply my knowledge or anything, so I had to start from scratch. It was very tough”. She feels that society failed her, and looking back, she is sad that she ended up being very passive for a period of about ten years. In 2003 and 2006 she had their two children and continued to stay at home with them. The big turning point came in 2007 when she got engaged in the local church. Finally, somebody helped her and showed her a direction. Both she and her husband finally found a network here, and also started to improve their Danish in their many interactions with Danes at the church. Among others, the local priest helped a lot. Unfortunately, our interviewee's education was not recognized, but after starting a few different educations, she decided to become a dental assistant (2013). She had great internships while studying, but unfortunately, she has only been able to land short-term positions since she graduated in 2015. In her experience, her “accent, age, and background” are the factors working against her.</p>	02/05/2020
Interview 23	<p>This interview was conducted with a Syrian refugee and mother of three. She came to Denmark in December 2013 to visit her oldest daughter, who had married a Dane, but then decided to apply for asylum as the situation in Syria worsened. In March 2014 she was granted refugee status. Later, she was able to bring in her husband and her youngest daughter, while her middle daughter had to apply for asylum herself due to her age at that time (18).</p> <p>She does not speak Danish or English that well, so her two youngest daughters assisted us during the interview and provided interpretation when needed. Despite her lack of Danish skills, she is well integrated into Danish society, and she is involved in a ray of social activities, several of which she has started herself, among others a migrant community in the local church, communal dining, an organisation for women with monthly activities, and a catering firm bringing migrant women together to cook. Her network in Denmark grew fast, due to her oldest daughter, who had already been in Denmark for years and had established a network, cause “we are all very social and active” (her daughters add, that this is nothing new, and say that “she knows half of the population in Syrian”).</p> <p>She has more than 30 years of work experience as an accountant back in Syria, yet, is currently working in a canteen. After she was granted asylum, she attended Danish language classes, and later on, she worked for 1.5 years in a café in a wage-subsidised position. She stopped in the job as the number of working hours and the wage did not suffice to apply for permanent residency. Her contact person at the job centre helped her put her CV online and she was then contacted by her current employer. She is happy with her job (for now), “because I like to work and I like to cook”, but she hopes to be able to open her own Syrian restaurant in the future. Due to her lack of Danish language skills, she is not expecting to ever work as an accountant here in Denmark, but “food is like a second language to me, enabling integration,” she says.</p>	05/05/2020

Interview 24	<p>This interviewee is one of the few success stories among our interviewees when it comes to successful labour market integration. She is a journalist from Syria, who fled the regime. She first went to Egypt where she worked as a TV reporter for two years. Her program was political, and when she tried to renew her passport at the Syrian embassy, it was refused. So, she embarked on the journey to Denmark, as she could not continue her life in Egypt without papers. She arrived in Denmark in November 2014 together with her two sons. It took six months before she was granted (temporary) refugee status. Shortly thereafter, she got a job as a journalist. She started looking already when in the asylum centre. She was positively surprised by her contact person at the jobcentre, who "thought outside of the box", and instead of just saying no, she supported her, and, for instance, helped her get access to two private English courses specialised in media communication, which was necessary for her current job, as she did not speak English upon her arrival. The reason for her success is (in her perception) a combination of her talent (she is a great journalist, with a great resume), and because of the help, she received from her contact person and the union. In her view, the unions (could) play a big role when it comes to LMI: "In my experience, the key in the market is the unions [...] They can organise, they know the possibilities, they know the rules, they can help the foreigner. They know the market and also, actually, they can put you in contact". First, she contacted her international union who then contacted the Danish union. They met with her, listened to her needs and aspirations, helped her in the right direction, helped her understand the workings of the Danish labour market, and put her in contact with her current employer.</p> <p>At the personal and social level, she is happy with her life, but her insecure status is a huge stress factor in her life. The contradiction between feeling well integrated but still not being able to meet the criteria of permanent residence status, (in particular the Danish language exam) is upsetting and depressing: "It put me down so much". As a single mother of two, working full-time, she does not have much time to attend Danish classes. She is struggling to pass the exam, and thus to qualify for permanent residency, but she is not sure that she will manage.</p>	07/05/2020
Interview 25	<p>This interview was conducted with a 29-year-old woman from Bangladesh, who came to Denmark in 2017 on a spousal visa, reunified with her husband, who is studying and working in Denmark. She has a BA in accounting from Nepal and two years of experience working as an accountant in a shipping company. Yet, in Denmark, she has only held a low-skilled job, and asked whether she has had any bad experience she says: "Actually, here I only get low skilled jobs, and I think that is a bad experience". When asked about what could be improved for her to get a job that matches her skills, she replied "Language".</p> <p>She has held three different jobs. First, she worked as a kitchen helper in a hotel. She was only offered a part-time contract, so she quit and shifted to a cleaning company. She did not like that job, so she changed again and is currently packing boxes for an online supermarket. All three jobs, she got with the help of friends who either recommended her for the job, or pointed her to the job, and this interview underlines the necessity of a network in entering the Danish labour market. Her network consists of other migrants from Nepal whom she has met at the workplace, at language class, or the celebration of the Nepalese festival here in Denmark. Replying to whether she has any suggestions for other migrants, she (again) stresses the need of having a network: "First thing is, you need to have a link. Those who are already here, you need to have contact with them. Then it will be easy to get a job [...] It is my experience."</p> <p>She is planning to return to Nepal when her husband has finished his studies in about a year, yet, she would like to learn Danish before she leaves. To expand her knowledge but also because "and I am hoping that when I learn Danish, maybe I can get a good job", she says while laughing.</p>	10/05/2020
Interview 26	<p>This interview was conducted with a 32-year-old woman from Bangladesh who arrived in Denmark in 2013 on a green card spousal visa.</p> <p>She arrived with a BA in finance, but has only worked low-skilled jobs, first as a part-time sales assistant and later on as a waiter. Her motivation for taking these jobs has first of all been to do something: "It is better to do something than nothing",</p>	15/05/2020

	<p>combined with the social contact with customers and the acknowledgement she receives from customers and her boss when she is doing a great job. She is, however, aspiring to do more with her life, and would like to continue her studies. First, she is planning to improve her Danish language skills. She is, however, struggling to find time for this with a full-time job and a small child, and is also in need of direction when it comes to managing in the Danish labour market. She was expecting to get more help, but “I did not get any good direction over here. Nobody gave me direction”.</p> <p>In her current job as a waiter, she has been a victim of discrimination and racism, first from her manager, whom she felt treated her differently, and afterward from a colleague who amongst others called her “The monkey from Bangladesh”. These experiences affected her work life extremely negatively, but luckily, her boss always supported her in situations like these, and she is encouraged to continue to “improve” her situation, as she calls it.</p> <p>With the lockdown due to the pandemic, she was fired from her job as a waiter from one day to the other, and although in a financially safe position because her husband is working, her vulnerable situation being on a (temporary) spousal visa, and thus dependent on her husband “extending” her, sets her under a lot of stress. Managing a full-time job, language school, and family life is a lot, and she would like for the policymakers to “make it a little bit easier for us [spouses]”.</p>	
Interview 27	<p>This story of a 28-year-old woman from Nepal who came to Denmark in 2015 to study, is a success story when it comes to her experience with the Danish University system, but everything but success when it comes to her labour market integration. Asked about her work experience in Denmark she said: “Oh no, this is my one disaster experience here”.</p> <p>She came with several years of work experience in the tourism industry, yet, even after finishing her BA in tourism, she has not yet been able to land a job matching her skills. Even finding <i>any</i> job has been difficult for her. She has applied for jobs at hotels or in restaurants, but only managed to land a cleaning job through a guy (from Nepal) whom she happened to meet on the bus and started talking to. He then recommended her for this job. While satisfied with her part-time job, she is discouraged about her job prospects in Denmark: “My only negative experience is that I can't get a good job here”. In her experience, “Network is everything”, and although she has many friends at university, she is not sure how to build a network outside her studies, as she does not have much time outside university and work, and at work, she is by herself most of the time.</p>	25/15/2020

3.9 Annex III, Individual biographies

Individual Biography #1

This is the story of a 24-year-old Syrian Kurdish refugee, Ahmet, and his trials while attempting to secure an education and eventually establish a career in exile in Denmark. Presently, Ahmet works as a server at a Shisha café in Copenhagen – also the location of our interview in early February 2020. But while today he may be working in a café, Ahmet's journey from Syria to Denmark was driven by far loftier aspirations for his life and career in Europe. Ahmet was a good student. By his own admission, he was ranked as one of the top ten students in Syria in 2013, when he graduated from a technical school. Afterwards he began his tertiary education at a technical university in Latakia. However, at the time, the Syrian civil war was well under way. And, by the end of Ahmet's first year of university in 2014, Islamist groups had begun to play a prominent role in the conflict (Gerges 2016, Weiss and Hassan 2015).

Expectedly, Ahmet was dejected by his ever-diminishing prospects in Syria. During our interview, he recounted, "I thought there is no more life here and there is no more future here...Everybody is killing everybody...there is chaos around the country here". As a result, Ahmet decided to leave Syria, with the hope that he would eventually "go to Europe to find my future there and continue my education". A few weeks later, in September 2014, Ahmet embarked on the journey from Syria to Europe. And, like countless other asylum seekers before and after him, Ahmet too followed the notorious Mediterranean Route. In 2015, at the height of the "refugee crisis", more than a million people had crossed the Mediterranean. Of them, 3,770 lost their lives on this arduous journey to Europe (McMahon and Sigona 2016, 1). In his journey, Ahmet dodged the notorious *jandarma* (military) in Turkey, weathered the perilous waters of the Mediterranean to reach Greece, survived the harsh weather conditions while stranded in the open in Hungary and eventually arrived in Denmark.

Yet, the particular nature of Ahmet's experience in exile is very much shaped by his past experiences, his present-day realities as well as the manner in which he imagines his future (Marfleet 2007, Bek-Pedersen and Montgomery 2006). To this end, Ahmet's life as a refugee in Denmark has been indelibly shaped by his familial relationships and the barriers he faced while trying to navigate the higher education system in Denmark.

To this end, one could argue, Ahmet did not *just* follow a "popular" path to Europe. Instead, as is often the case with regard to migration patterns, it was his kinship networks played a critical role in his decision-making *en route* to Denmark (Quinlan 2005, Olwig 2002, Choldin 1973). His stay in Turkey, for instance, lasted for a year as he was able to stay at an apartment owned by his aunt. During this time Ahmet worked odd jobs to fund the next leg of his journey to Europe. Similarly, the presence of an extended family in the country, including his parents who had recently been granted asylum, led Ahmet to seek asylum in Denmark. Speaking about this decision, Ahmet said, "I didn't have any idea about why Denmark. I didn't want to come here. I didn't have it in my plans, but I thought okay let's go there, my family is here". Yet, alongside his family, how Ahmet imagined (and planned) his life in exile was also shaped by a woman he had fallen in love with, in Syria. Also, an asylum seeker who had fled Syria with her family, she was living in Turkey when Ahmet arrived in Denmark. A year after he was granted refugee status, he returned to Istanbul to be married. Insinuating that she was integral to his life in Denmark, Ahmet said, "when I came here to Denmark, I made all the paper[work] like we were married".

Yet a significant turning point was when Ahmet's planned, kinship-driven life in exile (unexpectedly) changed its course. Cindy Horst and Katarzyna Grabska have argued that uncertainty and unpredictability are characteristic features of human lives. Yet, they add, levels of uncertainty are particularly "radical" and "protracted" in the lives of those who have experienced "conflict and conflict-induced displacement" (Horst and Grabska 2015, 1).

Similarly, Nadia El-Shaarawi has argued that “shrinking global asylum space” has ensured that refugees often find themselves “stuck” in a life of limbo where they are both unable to return home while also unable to “build lives in host countries” (Shaarawi 2015, 38-39). The consequence of this is that “long-term uncertainty” becomes an integral facet of “the lived experience of displacement and exile” (Shaarawi 2015, 39). This characteristic uncertainty that defines the lives of refugees entered Ahmet’s life when he returned to Denmark from Turkey after his marriage. At the time he had already applied for his partner’s family reunification visa. Yet, the delay (and uncertainty) in the processing of the application had burdened his relationship with his partner. Ahmet said, “I married her and came back and was waiting for the papers. We had some problems and she didn’t want to be with me anymore”. He added, “One time she called me [and said] if you don’t get me to you now to Denmark, then we shouldn’t be together. I said okay, you are with your family and I am with my family”. When asked whether the long wait for a decision on the family reunification application played a role, Ahmet said, “It was too long for me and for her”.

But while Ahmet’s familial relations may have played an important role in shaping the specific nature of his life trajectory as a refugee, it was his quest to secure an education and have career prospects that drove him to leave Syria. Here, uncertainty marred Ahmet’s attempts to secure an education in Denmark as well. His (refugee) acquaintances were contacted by the municipality and assigned a language school approximately 1-2 months after being granted asylum. Yet, five months since being granted asylum in Denmark, Ahmet had not heard from municipality authorities. Frustrated, Ahmet decided to be proactive. He went to his municipality and said, “I want to go to [language] school...finished. Send me to any school. I want to learn”. While he was eventually assigned a language school, Ahmet was enrolled on an intermediate-level course. With little knowledge of the Danish language, he then failed a language exam he had to take three weeks after enrolment. Enraged he returned to the municipality: “I told them if you don’t move me from this school, I will burn you and the *kommune* [municipality] and everything”. Subsequently, the municipality assigned him to a school dedicated to young refugees where he was taught Danish, English and Mathematics. Here Ahmet received the high school completion certificate.

Ahmet was keen on reviving his efforts to earn an engineering degree that began in Syria. A couple of months later he enrolled onto an 18-month pre-university engineering program at the Technical University of Denmark, which in turn would qualify him to enrol into the university’s bachelor program. However, six months into the program, Ahmet was unable to cope with the pressures of university education alongside his ongoing language education. Further, still reeling from the end of his marriage he found little meaning in pursuing a future that he had planned together with his wife. He said, “I gave up everything...did not have any plans”. Yet, Ahmet’s family insisted that he continue with his education and, taking their advice, he enrolled himself onto a technical school. However, the low quality of education and with Danish being the language of instruction, Ahmet found it difficult to continue with his education here as well. And, when he was then unable to successfully present a project in Danish and was told by the instructors that he would need to “start from the beginning”, Ahmet decided to change his plans and work instead. Admitting that he was “too tired from the education, the Danish language and from everything”, Ahmet held several odd jobs over the next two years. Aside from his current job at the shisha café, he worked as a cleaner and as a transporter. In this period, his sole focus was “to save some money”. “But,” he admitted, “I couldn’t save some money.”

In the end, one could conclude, both kinship and the pursuit of higher education introduced uncertainty in Ahmet’s life as a refugee in Denmark. Currently, however, our interviewee is working towards bringing stability into his life. For this reason, at the end of 2019, Ahmet decided to restart his education. He plans to start with a high school education and improve his English language skills, before pursuing a university education in English. He had decided to rebuild his language skills and strengthen himself physically and psychologically. Ahmet said, “I have to control my mind now. Not anymore, education, work...work, education and be

confused between many things". When asked why he decided to return to his original plan (of pursuing an education while in exile) after a two-year hiatus, Ahmet replied, "Because I was really tired of working...Because in Syria I never worked...one month, two months maybe". He went on to explain that coming from a middle-class background, there was never any material need for him to work. But when probed further about how he planned to navigate life in Denmark in the future, Ahmet underlined the critical role of his network. He said, "I meet a lot of people. Not going to call it the biggest network. But I have a big network of different kinds of people... If any day or any time I need some help, so I have these people to stand with, help me with anything I ask them". That said, Ahmet's strategy also involved a significant shift in his mindset. Speaking of this change in the way in which he approached life in Denmark, he added, "I am not thinking about the rules anymore. I am not thinking about how they want to change our life here. I have stopped thinking about a lot of things that I thought about before. Those things make me tired. They used all my energy from moving on or making the right choice.... I stopped thinking about the government, political bad things. I can't control any of these things. I cannot change any of these things. So, let me build my life, build myself and have my own goals, my own life. And then if I can I will help anyone who needs help and if I can make any difference in life then I will do it without anybody stopping me. But first I need to build myself".

Individual Biography #2

This story is about Adriana, a 35-year-old advertising manager from Brazil who came to Denmark to fulfil her career dreams in a country with economic stability and no bad memories. Unfortunately, as we will learn, in her meeting with the Danish labour market and the Danes in general, Adriana realized that she is not "one of them". In a Danish context, Adriana stood out (which is negative in Denmark). This meant that her encounter with the Danish labour market became a struggle for recognition – in particular until she realized why she stood out. After this realization, she changed her strategy for landing a job. Yet, at this point, almost ten years since she arrived in Denmark, she has not yet gained a foothold in the advertisement business. At least not the type she aspired to before arriving in Denmark. But she continues to fight for her dream, and although it took some time, she now knows how to "play the game" of labour market integration in Denmark.

Adriana arrived in Denmark in 2011 just after the centre-left coalition led by the Social Democrats came into power. Her plan to migrate started many years earlier, though. In 2004, after her father had just died, she said to herself: "*I'm gonna leave*". Later, the 2008 financial crisis hit her home country, Brazil, hard, and she decided to continue her studies abroad – in Denmark. She arrived with a BA in marketing from a prestigious university in South America. Initially, she arrived on a student visa. In 2011, the newly elected government restricted students' access to Denmark. The visa was extremely competitive, and she was happy to have been accepted as the only student from South America out of thousands of applicants. Yet, the policy restrictions also entailed a reduction in social assistance, and while her tuition fees were waived, she did not receive any additional financial help from the Danish state. Moreover, due to visa restrictions, she was only allowed to work part-time after she arrived in Denmark. This was a new concept for her, and a difficult one to cope with as she had been working full-time since she started her studies in 2004. In keeping with the work-study norms of Brazil, she was used to working all day and then attend classes at night, six days a week. Upon arrival in Denmark, she thus had more than seven years of work experience already. She used to work in advertising and left a managerial position in Brazil where she was working for big, international clients. Yet, even with this background, finding a job in Denmark (matching her skills) turned out to be very difficult.

The first year in Denmark, Adriana decided to just study. She had saved some money, and her expenses were low as she was living with her boyfriend at that time, meaning that in her first year in Denmark, finding a job was not an issue in her life. In the second year, she started applying for jobs. She was invited to some interviews but was not offered a job. Over the years,

she did some freelance work for companies outside Denmark, and when her student visa expired in 2014 (at the same time as she was about to finish her studies), she applied for an 'automatic' green card for graduates, just before the scheme closed.

After Adrianna graduated, the search for a job became a bigger part of her life. While on the search for a job matching her skills and qualifications, Adrianna has been working from 2014 and for five years now. In the summer, she has worked as a tour guide, and from October-April she has worked on a project, where she was in charge of the social media campaign. The project work was unpaid for the first three years. Afterward, she started to receive some money. Unlike the vast majority of the people she studied with, she thus managed to stay in Denmark, but constantly on the search for a full-time job matching her skills and qualifications.

Although Adrianna had a job, her encounters with the Danish labour market, started to make her feel different and undervalued. Over the years, it became clear to her that her extensive work experience with big clients was not only uncommon in the Danish context (in Denmark, people start their careers later and only work part-time while studying), it was also misinterpreted: *"People just didn't understand it"*, she says, recalling her first interviews for part-time jobs. It is her understanding that she was perceived as overly confident and even as straight-up lying during the hiring process when she mentioned her many years of experience with big, international clients. She took pride in her achievements, but instead of recognizing and valuing her skills, Danish employers seemed to take her as dishonest. The broad focus in the Danish hiring process going beyond skills and work experiences also put Adriana off. When asked about her free time for the first time during an interview, she didn't even get the question, as she recalls: *"What do you mean? I work full time and then I study"*. The people 'on the other side of the table' were unfamiliar with other ways of managing work and life than the classic 'Danish' way. In her experience, this resulted in biases during the hiring process.

The main turning point, helping Adriana to understand the Danish labour market and the process of seeking employment in Denmark, came at a later stage, when she realized the Danish unspoken norms of the *Jantelov* [The law of Jante], a code of conduct that characterizes not conforming, doing things out of the ordinary, or being overtly and personally ambitious as unworthy and inappropriate. She recalls the moment the realization hit her: *"things only changed after three years of looking for jobs...I was at an office with Danes and looking around seeing people who were coming for interviews - they were 28 and looking for an internship"*. After this realization, she stripped all the 'manager' titles off her CV, put 'intern' instead, and didn't mention all her big clients. Afterwards, employers started calling her.

Adriana also suspected discrimination in the hiring process, and thus tried to change her name to a more Danish/international sounding name. Afterwards, she received more invitations to interviews - along with the discriminatory comment *"but your name sounds so Danish"* during job interviews.

Adrianna is currently unemployed and staying in Denmark on a spousal visa (married to an Italian). Although it has proven difficult for her to find a job, she has not given up, yet, and she is fighting for her dream. Her current strategy is to apply for lower-level positions (e.g. internships), to *"smarten up"* her CV (i.e. make it humbler), and to pretend that she can be *"one of these people"*, i.e. that she can fit in. Yet, her experiences have changed her, but at the same time made her wiser. Adriana's lived life did not correspond to her expectations before coming to Denmark. The (unexpected) struggle with finding a job that matches her skills has scarred her, and she is *"dreading"* having to integrate at the workplace once in a job. The culture at Danish workplaces is different from what she has been used to thus far, and although *"Denmark is the happiest country"*, and Danish companies now try to embrace diversity at the workplace, it is her experience that many Danes are narrow-minded and exclusionary. They are not open to getting new friends or helping out new colleagues. One example she brings up is the lunch situation, where the room to manoeuvre is very limited. In her view, Danes only accept you if you eat certain things (*"self-brought rye bread with avocado"*), and speak in a certain (quiet) tone, and they only speak in Danish (although they

all also speak English). From an outsider's perspective, on a positive note, Adriana already knows how to read these cultural cues at a Danish workplace. Nevertheless, her experience of not fitting in and not being valued has affected her perception of the Danish labour market, and Danes in general, negatively.

Individual Biography #3

This is the story of Nasima, a 54-year old woman from Afghanistan. As you will learn, Nasima is a "tough" woman. She has not been dealt an easy hand in life, yet, she is a fighter, and has made a living for herself and her four children in Denmark. Over the years, her life (including her work life) has flourished from time to time but it seems that every time she is doing well, life decides to play a bad joke on her. She has received many "blows" over the years – from her daughter being seriously injured by a rocket that hit their house in Kabul, over domestic violence, to depression, and being involved in a car accident. When it comes to her integration into the Danish labour market, some of the largest "blows" she has received have been related to a lack of recognition of her skills, her trauma(s), and her aspirations.

Nasima and her husband and children left Afghanistan in 1996. While her husband sought refugee status in Denmark, Nasima and her children lived in Pakistan. After the husband was granted refugee status in Denmark, Nasima and their children joined him in Denmark in 1998. Although not having worked while living in Pakistan, because "back then women were not supposed to leave the home", Nasima arrived with a BA in language and literature and more than ten years of work experience as a teacher, first in primary education (while studying), and later (after having received her degree) in upper secondary education. Nasima spent the first years in Denmark attending Danish classes and was engaged in cultural activities in her local community. In 2002 she landed a job with the Danish Red Cross as a teacher at the local asylum centre. *"I really enjoyed this"*, she recalls. Unfortunately, the asylum centre closed down, but she was then able to get a job at a local school as a student counsellor. This job only lasted for a couple of months though, because, in 2004, the family decided to return to Kabul.

Back in Afghanistan *"there was still turmoil and problems"*. Yet, Nasima returned to her old workplace, teaching high school students. In addition to the ongoing war, Nasima was, however, having personal problems, as her husband and the father of her children was abusive and violent. After living in fear and as a victim of domestic violence for years, she decided to divorce her husband and return to Denmark with her children. Thinking back, she remembers how she was looking forward to a new life without stress and anxiety: *"When I finished my divorce papers in 2010, I could finally relax a bit. And I was looking forward to the future when I arrived in Denmark". She continues: "I was really happy. It was like I was flying. It was like I thought - after all the problems I had, and anxiety - that now everything was going to get better and I had a lot of hope. Before, I held great positions, and I had many great jobs."* Full of hope, Nasima thus returned to Denmark with her children in 2010. Nasima and her children were quickly eased back into Danish society (with a little help from an old friend), and within the first weeks, Nasima *"got a great job at the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) as a contact person [for newly arrived refugee families]"*. She just walked in from the street and applied. However, her contract ended after a year, and despite her optimism and drive, finding a job that matched her skills proved more difficult than before, and her struggle began. She ended up being unemployed for a couple of months. This is when the municipal authorities started to pressure her, she recalls: *"I was pressured a lot by the municipality at that time. In different ways. For example, they kept pushing me to take on a cleaning job at a nursing home. But I could not handle that psychologically. I arrived from a war and was not feeling well. I have experienced a lot of stuff."* Nasima felt disappointed and sad that her qualifications and aspirations were not considered at that time and believes that she could have been helped into employment that matched her skills and qualifications if somebody would have just listened to her.

To avoid the constant pressure from the authorities, Nasima decided to become self-employed. With the help of another set of friends, she borrowed money to pay for a one-year hairdresser education. While studying, Nasima started working freelance as an interpreter, yet, until 2015, she did not have enough hours of work as an interpreter to live on. Thus, she has been working several jobs since 2011 to make ends meet, although she prefers the work where she can apply her education and experiences: *"Sometimes you do not get any work as an interpreter or contact person. You have no income, so you have to go to the municipality. That is why I also work as a hairdresser"*, she explains. In 2015 and 2016, with the rise in the number of asylum seekers, Nasima was offered a lot of work as an interpreter and could almost work full-time just doing that. *"It went really well"*, she recalls. Yet, in 2016 she was involved in a car accident and got a whiplash (associated disorder), and 2016 went from a great year to a *"very difficult"* year for her. Moreover, for many years, Nasima was single-handedly taking care of three teenagers, and amongst them a daughter that developed a depression. Her daughter was at some point institutionalized and still was at the time of the interview. Moreover, Nasima lived under the stress of never knowing how much work she would have the given month, and of constantly trying to make ends meet. In 2016 and 2017, Nasima was also fighting to get back on her feet, while at the same time fighting to get her injury recognized to receive sickness benefits (she never succeeded with the latter).

Over the years, Nasima was also fighting to get her skills recognised, which proved difficult since she did not have her certificates from Kabul. In 2018, Nasima's BA in language and literature was, however, finally recognized, and she was excited: *"I was very, very happy. I thought 'finally, now I can work as a teacher'"*, she recalls. Unfortunately, the joy did not last long: *"Since 2018, I have sent thousands of applications, but I have not gotten a job. So, I lost hope"*. This is one of the biggest 'blows' Nasima received in regard to finding her place in Denmark. Not being valued by the labour market impacted her badly, and all the rejections made her question her worth. Today, she is still hoping to find employment that matches her skills, but for now, she has compromised her aspirations, as having a job and being able to manage financially is more important to her. But even with this, she is struggling, and when asked about her future, she replies: *"It is hard. It is difficult being on your own."*

Despite all the "blows" Nasima has received, she is still fighting to find a job that matches her skills. Yet, her top priority is to manage financially, then her aspirations come second.

3.10 Annex IV, Ethnodrama

The “Desired” and the “Undesired” Migrant: An Ethnodrama

It is 19:00 on a Friday in late June 2019. The TV is on at a bar in Copenhagen

Journalist (on TV): Today the Danish government announced that it would work towards making it easier for Danish companies to recruit educated, skilled workers from abroad. The intention is to ease the bureaucratic procedures that Danish employers have to navigate in order to hire a non-Dane. To discuss this matter further we have the government spokesperson with us. Can you tell us why the government has made this announcement?

Spokesperson (on TV): “Foreign labour is beneficial for all Danes in the form of increased growth and more kroner in the public purse” (Barrett 2018).

Journalist (on TV): In many ways this is ground-breaking because you are basically saying that all migrants are valuable to the Danish economy.

Spokesperson (on TV): Not all. We have to distinguish between desired and undesired migrants. For us desired migrants are those that are highly skilled. They will be recruited for their ability to contribute to important sectors in the Danish economy that are facing acute labor and skills shortages. But we have to also remember that there are also refugees who come to Denmark without much education or valuable skills. These migrants cost us a lot more and don't ‘give back’ to the Danish economy as much.

Amina enters the bar. She was anxious and felt like all the other patrons at the bar were watching her every move; as if, they knew this was her first time entering a Danish bar. Amina nervously looked around, searching for the person she is meant to meet.

Amina (aside²⁶): I can't believe I have to do this. “Integration Exercise” - what does this even mean? How will it help to meet someone from the network? Then again, it is the job networking organization that encouraged us to do this. And, I *do* need a job when I am done with my language classes. It would be nice to meet someone from India, though. I wonder what he is like. When we talked, he said that he was a software engineer but has been having trouble finding a permanent job in Denmark. I think he has been unemployed for the last 6 months. I wonder what he thinks of me, a refugee from Afghanistan. Where is he?

Amina spots Ravi sitting at a corner table in front of the TV. She is visibly relieved to see a familiar face. She walks towards him.

Ravi: Have you heard the news? The Danish government is implementing new schemes to help people like me.

Amina: Sounds good. But what do you mean by “people like you”?

Ravi: Well, Denmark has a lot of talented immigrants. But they are not using them in the right manner. If you see in the United States, it is completely filled up with immigrants and they are working at a very high level. They know how to use immigrants. I have completed my education; I have work experience. The state has to give me support. But if the state supports me, why would I be jobless for the last six months? We have all these skills and it is all a waste. There is no money to help people like me.

Amina (aside): What a relief! Seems like he would understand how difficult it is to be a refugee in Denmark.

Amina: This a good decision. Sometimes I feel that they spend all this effort trying to make life difficult for people like me and my husband. Here it is like the municipality imprisons you. If I go anywhere, they say “why do you go?”, “you need to come here and explain to us why

²⁶ When marked “aside”, it means that the character is talking to her/himself.

you went?" Anywhere we go, they ask questions. They don't help us. If they help us, then they ask a lot more questions. I mean, they imprison you. They will say, "we will help". But then they will ask, "Why did you do this? Where did you go? Why did this happen?" It is correct to say that in many ways our life is good here. But in other ways it is very stressful.

Ravi: I don't know. I am not saying this about you. But there are a lot of refugees coming here. They are getting support from the government and they are using the system. They get a lot of help from the municipality and they are just relaxing with the money. The government is not forcing them to do anything. I have seen many, many cases where they are misusing resources like this. They misuse the housing that they get. They misuse the help they get with transportation. You can also see how these people are using libraries. They are just gangsters. They are coming here, making some fun and nonsense and then going [home]. I saw this at the library yesterday. There was a group of people who came here, and they were fighting each other. These people are not good people. These people are pulling Denmark back, but they get support. This is not the right way.

Amina's eyes welled up but didn't want Ravi to see her disappointment. So, glanced over at the TV. Amina (aside): I guess he doesn't think much of refugees like me. Why did I leave Afghanistan? What am I doing here in Denmark? No one seems to think I have any value – not the municipality, not Ravi. I wasn't treated like this at home. We went to university, went to our courses, then came home...there was no stress".

After an awkward lull in the conversation, Amina hastily recollected her thoughts and replied.

Amina: Why do you think it is so easy for us here? I feel so much stress here. I want to be a teacher in Denmark. But because of the stress I don't feel like doing anything. I can't put my mind to doing anything.

Ravi: Yes, but the government is just trying to protect Danish interests. I want to settle here. I want to contribute something to Denmark. I have paid taxes from the job I had. Almost 320.000 DKK. I'm contributing to the society. This society has to help me because I have contributed. I have not used any type of funds from the municipality. I don't receive any help. Refugees get help. If you look at the people who are coming as refugees, they are misusing this system. I know some people who pretend to be refugees and who get help from the municipality. I know this guy who says he is a refugee and he is now subletting the house that the municipality has paid for him. He is actually renting the apartment by floor space. If you rent a room, it is DKK 4000 DKK per month. People who are staying in the living room have to pay DKK 2500. You can also rent the hallway. So, this refugee gets this apartment for free, then he makes money like this. He is also officially unemployed. And how is he going to spend this money? That's the problem. See renting the apartment is not the big problem. But how he is going to spend this money? He is going to spend it on some kind of drugs. So, Danish society is helping people like him. These people are coming into this society and they are using money from the municipality for illegal activities. And some of these people are coming here illegally. We are willing to work. We are the ones who can help this society. Not these people.

Amina: Me and my husband are also willing to work. But do you know what we have to deal with on a daily basis? Until a few months ago we were receiving financial support from the municipality. They told us that whenever we go somewhere, we need to inform them. After we stopped receiving support from them, we decided to go to Malmö to do some shopping. Things here in Copenhagen are very expensive so we thought we can save money by doing some shopping there. Just a few days ago they sent us an email saying, "why did you go to Malmö? You don't have permission to go there. You have to come and meet us and explain to us why you went to Malmö". They don't even help us financially anymore. The money we used to get has stopped. But still they are saying we have to go to the municipality, and they will interview us. How can I think about contributing to this society if they treat us like this? I can't even think about working.

Ravi: Have you or your husband tried finding work?

Amina: I haven't. But my husband has. He has a master's degree and he has learned Danish. But no one cares about his qualifications. We are married and want to start a family. But it is not that easy to find a job here. When he sends his CV, he only gets rejections. It is like they have already decided they don't want to hire a refugee. If we go to the job centre at the municipality, they try to offer us cleaning jobs. We both have university degrees. Why should we do these kinds of jobs?

Ravi realized that he too had similar experiences of feeling devalued when searching for a job in Denmark. He noticed the distress on Amina's face. His toned softened.

Ravi: Maybe in Denmark they don't care about us foreigners. First, I thought, I was the problem and I only have to be better at selling myself to Danish companies. But now I think that they don't want to hire foreigners. In IT companies, they never focus on what I have achieved, the computer languages I know and how I could help them. They always find some reason to not hire me. Sometimes it is because I haven't worked *exactly* with the kind of tasks, they need me to work with. But most of the time they keep talking about Danish language. Language should be in the back. It cannot be in front. Skills should be in the front. Language should only be something to use to communicate, to understand each other. Nothing more than that. See, in a country like India, we have 16 regional languages and maybe 20 unrecognized languages. But we use English because we are practical. Danish people are focusing more on language. If I don't learn the language, I can do cleaning jobs. That's not right.

Amina: Why don't you leave?

Ravi: I don't have any other option. I know many people who are leaving. Others are moving to other countries and finding other opportunities. This is not good. Someone like me who wants to stay here can take the country far. I am strong and I can work hard. I can give back to this society. I have a strong determination to get a job. But I cannot go back to India. I will be a zero there. If I want to go back to India, yes definitely there will be problems. If you apply for a job, they will ask you about your previous work experience. I have nothing relevant to show for the last three years.

Amina: Sometimes, all I feel like doing is leave. Go back to Afghanistan. We think about it all the time. Sometimes we say to each other, forget everything. Let's just pack our things and go home. But there are security challenges. We can't go home.

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4 Finland

Quivine Ndomo & Nathan Lillie

4.1 Background Information on the National Context: Country-Specific Critical Issues

Migrants, refugees and asylum applicants (MRAs) constitute a significantly small share of Finland's labour force, averaging 2.47% between 2008 and 2016 and increasing at 6.90% mean annual growth rate during the same period (Belegri-Roboli et al., 2018, p.67). However, the socio-economic salience of migrants for the Finnish society has grown significantly in the past decade and continues progressively (Ministry of the Interior, 2018; Habti & Koikkalainen, 2014). Despite a steady increase in population and labour force since 2000, Finland's population aged 15-64 decreased by 0.37% during that period laying the groundwork for an inevitable dependency ratio challenge for the country (Belegri-Roboli et al., 2018, p.67). Today, a widening dependency ratio and related declining public finances are key policy concerns for the country; prompting policy calls by the government for redress through among other strategies, immigration, especially labour and high skilled immigration, to service the country's socio-economic needs. However, despite MRAs relatively small number in Finland and the established demand for migrant labour in the country, the unemployment rate for MRAs is significantly high, (17.31 % in 2017), double the rate for native Finns, and much higher for third country nationals 22.3%. Further, women's unemployment rate is significantly higher than men's with a difference of c. 20 percentage points (Ministry of the Interior, 2019, p.52).

The Finnish labour market follows the Nordic labour market model, and is characterised by; flexible hiring and firing rules, generous social safety nets, and active labour market policies in addition to a strong union presence and centralised collective wage bargaining system (Ho & Shirono, 2015). As a result, wage levels are significantly stable albeit with limited cross-sectional wage flexibility (Ho & Shirono, 2015, pp.17, 25). Keeping with the Nordic model, Finland relies on the IT revolution to keep its economy growing, further cementing the tertiarisation of the Finnish labour market (Andersen, 2007, pp.58). Consistently, the SIRIUS indicator for sectors²⁷ identifies the first priority employability sectors for MRAs in Finland as wholesale and retail trade, public administration and defence, compulsory social security, construction, and motor vehicle and motorcycle repair (Belegri-Roboli et al., 2018, pp.113-114). In sum, the structure of the Finnish labour market, together with the differential stakeholder approaches and perspectives, including MRAs themselves determine the form and nature that labour market integration takes in Finland.

Migrant labour market integration (MLI) in Finland takes a top-down legislation driven policy approach, and a combination of key legislative Acts form the blue print for the management and integration of immigrants. Two Acts are at the centre of Finnish Integration law, namely: The Aliens Act (FINLEX 301/2004) which informs immigration regulation policy; and the Act on the Promotion of Immigrant Integration (FINLEX 1386/2010) (Federico, 2018, pp. 204-207). A sitting government further adapts the blue print into a concrete programme, and the current

²⁷ The SIRIUS Indicator for Sectors (SIRIUS 1) is a composite indicator used to determine the employability opportunities of MRAs in Finland. It is constructed the estimation of the Growth Indicator for Sectors (GIS) and the Sectoral Structure Similarity (SSS).

government programme highlights the issue of immigrants' labour market integration under the agenda to increase the national employment rate by 2023 (Prime Minister's Office, 2019). In stakeholder discourse, integration loosely, but unanimously refers to obtaining employment; obtaining employment, in this logic, is enabled by policies which encourage and facilitate migrants engaging in further education and language learning (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p. 248). Thus, in Finland, migrant labour market integration takes the form of active labour market policy, underscoring the importance of labour laws and the laws regulating residence in migrant integration. Previous research on labour market integration policy in Finland find that the implementation of integration programmes is predominantly consistent with legislation. Similarly, research finds consensus among stakeholders on immigrant integration discourse in spite of different actors emphasising different and at times contrary views (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p. 248). However, the disparity between policy rhetoric and policy response to MLI is noteworthy; stakeholders' discourse covers a much wider array of policy issues as well as recommendations that are not yet implemented (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p.255).

In Finland, unemployed job seeking migrants are integrated into the labour market through programmes that involve varying degrees of skill learning and practical engagement with the labour market. MRAs are not regarded as integrating themselves but rather they *are integrated* through state policy. Official government entities are the main integration service providers albeit in ad hoc, but not insignificant collaboration with the third sector (Numerato, Čada and Hoření, 2019, p. 108) ; Pirkalainen, 2018). Integration programmes are implemented at the local level, via municipality offices and local Employment and Economic Development (TE-offices), through varying combinations of some, or all of the following activities: information workshops, pre-integration initial assessment, individual integration planning, and integration training (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, pp.256-261). MRAs labour market integration in Finland has not been overly successful as evidenced by the disproportionately high unemployment rate among third country nationals in the country, and the recent shift in focus by CSOs serving migrants from pure advocacy to labour market integration services (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p. 248; Numerato et al., 2019, p. 102; Sarvimäki, 2017, p.92;). Stakeholders – the third sector, social partners, and policy makers – working on migrant integration in Finland identify a list of barriers, both structural and migrant embodied, that hinder the success of MLI in the country. Stakeholder public discourse also identifies socio-economic elements that support integration.

Both migrant embodied and systemic or structural barriers challenge the labour market integration of MRAs in Finland. Stakeholder discourse analysis finds that labour market skill deficiency; precisely, lack of Finnish language skills, education and English language skills is the most common and severe barrier to MLI in Finland (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018 – Finland report). Stakeholders underscore the significance of Finnish proficiency from the onset of job seeking, to work place integration. Most, if not all MRAs begin Finnish language lessons only after immigration, and typically much later for asylum seekers due to legal status barriers. Research shows that despite a heavy focus on language learning in integration training, MRAs Finnish proficiency is significantly poor, and more than 4/5 participants fail to attain the target pass mark B1.1 (OECD, 2018, pp.27-28). In addition to language challenges, stakeholders believe that MRAs often lack the skills needed in the labour market, or have qualifications that do not meet local standards, or which are not recognised by employers blurring the line between embodied and structural barriers to MRAs' labour market integration. Other clearly embodied barriers include perceived cultural characteristics, gender, lack of networks, and poor understanding of the host country labour market, especially labour laws and rights, which is believed to make MRAs vulnerable and susceptible to exploitation as well as health and other work place risks and hazards (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018 – Finland report).

Structurally, stakeholders agree that slow and inefficient integration processes such as the asylum application process, TE-office language courses, and integration training is a major hindrance to successful inclusion of MRAs in the Finnish labour market (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p. 251). Crucial time, lost at the beginning of immigration, hinders labour market integration significantly. Further, Finland's predominantly one-size-fits-all approach to

integration, which fails to recognise MRAs heterogeneity satisfactorily, is another key hindrance to labour market integration (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p.254). Failure to recognise foreign work experience and skills, and professional qualifications keeps most MRAs away from the labour market as most begin education afresh, while others switch to low skill work (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p.251; Habti and Koikkalainen, 2014). Stakeholders also see the legal process of qualification recognition as bureaucratic, costly, and thus inaccessible to most MRAs. Similarly, legislative bureaucracy that characterises labour market procedures for e.g., starting an enterprise or private company are seen as a hindrance to the integration of MRAs who by virtue of being new, lacking local language skills among other reasons, fail to leverage these opportunities accordingly. Additionally, the cross administrative model for integration management that distributes responsibility among several government ministries, and official local entities poses a coordination challenge as well as a resource distribution challenge (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, p.249). Moreover, it creates confusion among actors and above all, among MRAs who find it difficult to understand administrative nuances especially at the onset of immigration when such services most needed.

Importantly, stakeholders perceive immigrants and their integration in Finland as a value-adding endeavour with both macro and micro level benefits for the country (Baglioni and Montgomery, 2020, pp.81-82). At the macro level, migrants are an asset as far as they contribute to securing public finances, provide needed labour, and cover the socio-economic deficits brought about by demographic challenges. At the micro level, migrants' potential to internationalise companies and institutions through international networks and skills is highlighted (Pere et al., 2019). In practice, the government programme, Talent Boost, focuses on the attraction and retention of international talents boost growth and internationalise the private sector. Finland's future migration plans aim to increase selective high skill migration while controlling and streamlining unwanted migration (Bontenbal and Lillie, 2018, Sarvimäki, 2017, pp. 97). Consequently, labour and skills/expertise are highlighted as MRAs strongest enablers in labour market integration. Moreover, diversification from conventional employment into entrepreneurship and private sector engagement is highlighted as a preferred viable route for MRAs labour market integration. A variety of resources support the agenda to attract, retain and integrate migrants in the private sector such as the elaborate government programme, Talent Boost, as well as smaller interventions such as start-up grants and employer pay subsidies (Government Programme, 2019).

Lastly, stakeholders agree that Finland's labour market integration programme as a whole is relatively good, and has garnered some positive results; however, it leaves significant room for improvement, particularly the current form of integration training. Nonetheless, the individual integration plan is hailed as a novel practice and an effective labour market integration tool with demonstrated results including increased employment, annual earnings and reduced welfare dependency (Ala-Kauhaluoma et al., 2018, pp.34; Maahanmuutto ja kotouttamisen suunta, 2015, pp.75; Hämäläinen and Sarvimäki, 2011).

This overview of MLI integration in Finland highlights the following key issues: 1) MRAs are a micro and macro level asset to Finland socially and economically. 2) Integration of MRAs is largely an official state responsibility and is implemented through active labour market policies. 3) There is a significant gap between integration policy discourse and policy response as well as a missing MRA perspective, resulting in minimal success of integration services. 4) So far, recommendations for improving integration emphasise the need to speed up integration processes and adoption of a synergistic approach to integration e.g., simultaneous employment, education, and language learning. Stakeholders also call for further diversification of integration training according to the differential needs of MRAs. As a response to these recommendations, this report investigates the status of integration services and policy in Finland through the lens of barriers and enablers to labour market integration from a MRA' standpoint. Thus, the report delves into experienced and perceived strengths and weaknesses of Finnish integration programmes in order to illuminate the current policy

blind spots unknown to policy makers and intervention implementers based on extensive biographic narratives of MRAs participating in the Finnish labour market.

4.2 Methods

This national report combines the output of 1) a narrative biographical inquiry with select migrants, and refugees participating in the Finnish labour market; and 2) previous SIRIUS work package research on the legal framework and policies guiding MLI, and the role of the third sector and social partners in the integration of MRAs in the Finnish labour market.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the labour market integration needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Finland, to build an evidence base for developing relevant and responsive policies on migrant labour market integration. To do this we engaged a selected group of MRAs and representatives of the third sector, social partners, and policymakers in the study through a variety of empirical methods. The current study with MRAs employs the qualitative research method of narrative biographic inquiry (Creswell, 2007). The inquiry aims to capture as holistic as possible a picture, of MRAs' experiences in the Finnish labour market. Data was collected using the narrative biographical interview tool. Fieldwork began in January 2020, and ended in May 2020. Our target sample was n. 20, 15-64 year olds, with a leaning on the young and women MRAs in the Finnish labour market. Migrant youth and women constitute a vulnerable and disadvantaged population group in terms of employment generally and even more so in Finland (Numerato et al., 2019, pp. 105). Research shows that migrant women in Finland realise a significantly low employment rate compared to both native women workers (c17 percentage points difference), and migrant men workers (c15 percentage points difference) (Ministry of the Interior, 2019, pp. 51-52). Our planned sample group targeted MRAs from Afghanistan, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Russia, Somali, Ukraine, and Vietnam in order to cover the diversity of nationalities in the Finnish migrant population. A loosely structured three-phased biographical interview protocol was used in the interviews (similar to that described by Mrozowicki, 2011).

We conducted eleven interviews with six migrants, four refugees, out of whom seven were men, and three were women. Interview respondents were of Ghanaian, Nigerian, Russian, Somali, Syrian, and Indian nationalities; satisfactorily covering the major third country national migrant sending countries to Finland. Respondents were recruited in Helsinki and Jyväskylä through selective sampling and snowballing. We contacted each directly and invited them to interviews, which we carried out via face-to-face meetings. A qualitative data analysis software QDA Miner was used to organise, code and thematically categorise data. We then used Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) staged thematic three-dimensional space approach in analysis. In the analysis, we investigated the data for specific stories, and life-changing occurrences hidden in MRAs narrated lived experiences that pertain to the Finnish labour market and MRAs work life in Finland. These stories were interpreted in terms of barriers and enablers in job seeking, or job retention. The stories were categorised into a five narrative thematic categories of MRAs' labour market integration in Finland, which was then used to critically analyse MLI policies and interventions in Finland. The discussion of findings follows in section 5.4. But first, a reflection on ethics during research and an unforeseen challenge that significantly influenced our fieldwork, data analysis and reporting.

Participant recruitment, interviews, and data storage and management followed the ethical guidelines of the University of Jyväskylä, the ethical board of the SIRIUS project and the EU general data protection regulation. As a result, only de facto willing individuals participated in the interviews and interviews followed a pre-approved interview protocol, and were recorded using university owned audio recording devices. Transcripts and coding thereof was done on University firewall protected computer. Due to the intimate, in depth, and sensitive nature of biographical interviews, we participated in a project level and team level training on ethics,

rapport building, and response to potential highly sensitive and incidental findings. The gap between interviewees and interviewers was improved by the fact that both parties were migrants, and through use of common shared languages. During interviews that discussed significantly discomforting experiences such as racism and loss, interviewers used oscillating techniques that helped participants move from the more difficult topics to slightly easier ones in order to reduce the toll of consistently stressful discussions. Interviewers also explained the empowering potential of the interviews and their outcome in addressing needs, challenges, and building MRAs integration strengths further. In addition, sensitive topics and related terms such as racism and discrimination were not mentioned first at any instance by interviewers, instead, we allowed interviewees to venture into such topics as they emerged in their holistic narratives, using only indirect probing. Fortunately, all interview sessions were smooth and fairly calm, albeit sad.

The outbreak and spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, the subsequent mobility and social interaction restrictions put in place in Finland in March 2020 significantly hindered our data collection efforts. Fieldwork planned for March and April was significantly hindered; as a result, we ultimately carried out only half of the planned number of interviews. Respondent recruitment was the most affected, as most prospective respondents opted out of contact meeting, but also hesitated to participate virtually. In fact, virtual recruitment proved least effective as contacts commonly declined a virtual interview proposal. We understood that participants were hesitant to engage virtually due to perceived and real challenges related to the use of technological equipment. As a result, interviews that were conducted between March and May were still conducted via face-to-face meetings, only with known and trusted informants, and strictly in cases where both the interviewee and the interviewer were comfortable participating in a contact meeting. Precautionary steps were taken to ensure that neither interviewee nor interviewer were put in unnecessary danger during these interviews. In comparison to those carried out in January and February, interviews carried out during the pandemic period were notably rushed; however, Covid-19 and its effects on MRAs did not come up, except in directly affecting the recruitment of Ukrainian participants. We also faced challenges recruiting Ukrainian respondents who agreed only to speak about their labour market experiences in Ukraine but not in Finland, expressing fears about engaging in any conversation that would potentially involve their current employers. Most Ukrainians come to Finland as seasonal workers in the farms typically in May and June. Due to pandemic related mobility restrictions, the topic of Ukrainian season workers was already much contested and could have aggravated prospective respondents' hesitation to discuss their work. We also anticipate that their hesitation to discuss labour market issues could be either a group, network, or a culture issue.

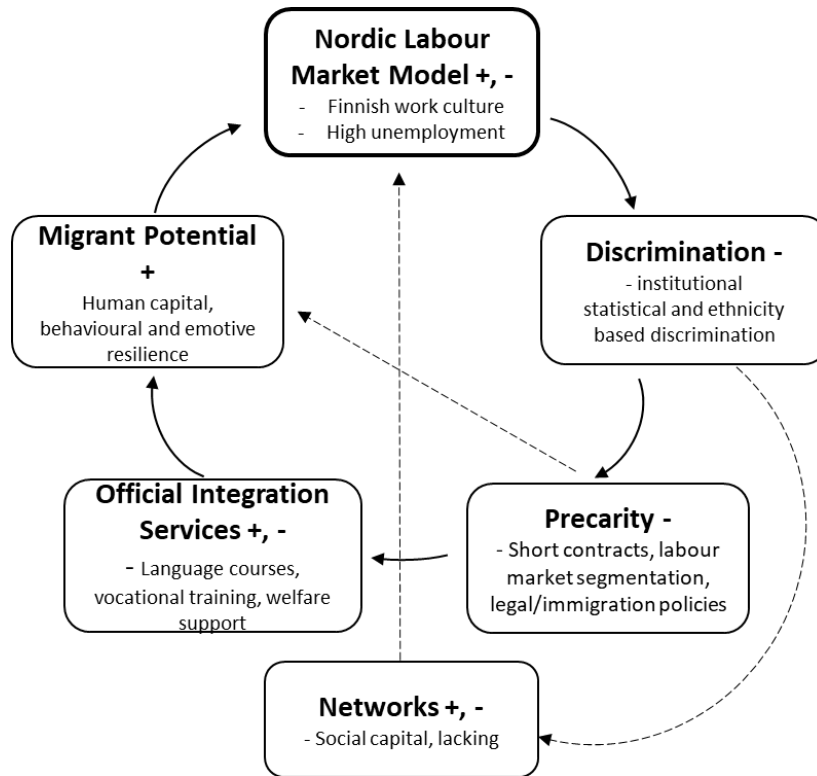
In the next section, we present an analytical narrative of MLI in Finland, illuminating experienced daily challenges emanating from national institutions, policy, the legal framework, and MRAs' embodied features; as well as the various mechanisms that support inclusion, or enable MRAs to overcome encountered challenges

4.3 Individual Barriers and Enablers: Analysis of Interview Data

We analysed 11 biographical narratives of migrants and refugees who are currently working, looking for work, or have at some point worked in Finland in order to glean an insider perspective on the labour market integration barriers and enablers in the country. Based on this analysis, we find a five dimensional narrative of a stepwise process of labour market integration over a period of 10 years, unfolding in the following order, with few exceptions. First, MRAs encounter the attractive but contradictory Finnish Nordic labour market model, followed secondly by the story of convoluted and multifaceted discrimination. Closely linked to discrimination is the third story of endemic precarity for which some solutions are found in the fourth story of official integration services, which are extremely handy but also fail to satisfactorily cover most of MRAs integration needs too often. As part of the solution to MLI

barriers is the fifth and final story of migrant' competence, which highlights MRAs invaluable contribution to their own integration in the Finnish labour market. Each thematic narrative begins with a biographical vignette based on participants' biographical narratives, followed by a critical analytical discussion.

Figure 4-1 A diagram illustration of MLI process in Finland



4.3.1 The Nordic Labour Market Model

Participant 2, 35 years old migrated from Delhi, India to Finland in 2013 to pursue a Master's degree. A year later, in 2014, he got his first job as a summer trainee at a ROXY [pseudonym], a large established engineering and service company in Finland. After four months when his traineeship ended, one thing was clear for participant 2; he hands down loved working in Finland. The working culture was many times better for him compared to the working culture in his form employment sector in India. At that point, he knew that he would no longer be focusing his studies in order to return to India, he was staying in Finland solely because of the 'Finnish work culture'. Before moving to Finland, he had worked for two companies in India for over 5 years in an industry where working conditions and labour norms were exploitative and career mobility significantly hindered. Bad experiences at work in an industry that imposed unregulated long working hours and days upon him and other workers and tied reward and upward career mobility to the same exploitative practices such as overworking was the main reason why the participant migrated to pursue further studies. Therefore, the 'Finnish work culture', in which workers were free, autonomous and socially protected, was just the perfect fit for his career ambitions. Particularly, the flexibility to work remotely, flexible working hours, and above all, welfare social protection, in particular, special consideration for working parents with young children which allow for family emergency response with little or no bureaucratic hurdles. However, with time, participant 2 has come to learn that the Finnish labour market has equally good and bad features. On the one hand, is the free, autonomous work culture

and social security, and on the other is an underlying structure that exacerbates high unemployment outcomes for MRAs... (Biographical vignette 1)

MRAs narratives tell a story of mixed feelings about a labour market that presents both remarkable positive and humane features such as worker welfare as well as challenges detrimental to migrants' labour market integration. Participants hail the '*Finnish work culture*' which features a high degree of worker' autonomy and freedom, flexible and family friendly work schedules, and "system that works". For participants whose nature of work allowed remote work, the benefits of such freedom attracted, and enabled them to work in Finland. For instance, after several attempts to secure full time employment in the IT sector without success, participant two took a short contract job in a different town from where he lived, as a remote worker, without incurring relocation costs. To date, that same employer is his permanent employer. Similarly, participant three's first job with a start-up was a low monitored, low routinized job, which enabled him to implement his own ideas at work, and in turn allowed him to develop his professional brand; a brand that 4 years down the line has enabled him to secure a permanent employment contract. Both narratives highlight the instrumental importance of the *Finnish work culture* to MRAs' long-term labour market integration since MRAs find it extremely difficult to break into the Finnish labour market for the first time without prior local work experience.

Therefore, random short-term contracts and internships are crucial for MRAs long-term labour market integration and a working culture that enables them to exploit such opportunities is in itself an integration enabler. Nonetheless, it is important to note that back-to-back short-term contracts and unpaid internships also act as a barrier to MLI by enhancing MRAs vulnerability; insecurity and producing generally precarious employment relations (see later this report for a detailed discussion of precarity).

Participants with family members in Finland, especially young children found the family friendly elements of the *Finnish work culture*, in particular, the flexible working hours and family emergency allowances most supportive. Participant 5, a mother of two, appreciates the fact that she can negotiate short four to six hour working days, which have made it possible for her to keep a job and manage her primary school going children's schedule. Similarly, participant 2 explains that the flexible working hours and family emergency allowances have been an indispensable support, allowing him to balance work and family life. Other participants who are not parents, and who cannot enjoy the benefit of remote working due to the nature of their work restaurant, care homes, and supermarket employees also found some bonuses in the *Finnish work culture*. These included the smooth working systems of remuneration, protective procedures in case of unlawful termination, and wage related welfare support. These positive features of the Finnish labour market guarantee migrant workers welfare and supports employed individuals to sustain work regardless of their varied needs.

However, participants also discussed some features of the Nordic labour market that hinder MLI, with some clearly obstructing MRAs from the labour market entirely, while others limited equal integration of MRAs. One is scarcity of employment opportunities in general, and of opportunities targeting migrants and refugees according to their special circumstances. Participants described tedious processes of looking for work which when found was a short contractual engagement, typically outside of a person's fields of expertise. Out of eleven participants, five are unemployed, four have short-term employment contracts, two have permanent employment contracts and only two work in their chosen field of expertise. Interview narratives underscore the rarity of finding work in one's own field of expertise, indicating that the two participants employed in own fields of expertise should be treated as outliers. In fact, both are high skilled migrants who tailored their skill acquisition through education to the skill demands of a specific job sector in Finland, including individually funded international professional courses. These migrants enjoy a privilege typically out of reach for most economic migrants and most distant for refugees and asylum seekers who do not have the luxury of planning their migratory paths. For those who take up work in professions other than their own as in the case of participant 10, the greatest challenge is lack of transition

support when beginning work both as novices in the Finnish labour market and the new professions. Participant 10 explain that aside from the emphasised norm of worker independence at the work place, their situation is exacerbated by the lack of guidance at the initial stage of new employment.

“... Here, they give little information about working duties, work schedule and such things from the first interview and then I learnt the shops hire immigrants unwillingly since they do not have extra people to teach them the work. I have been rejected in many places but when I finally got a position of a packer in one shop, I frankly wasted my time, working without any guidance.” (Participant 10)

The implications of MRAs professional displacement are profound when understood in terms of the value of work. For most people, work is a status symbol, and although utilitarian economic theories rationalise labour market segmentation based on the arguments that migrants' status is bound to their country of origin (Piore, 1979), participant narrative in this study confirms that MRAs do in fact experience a devaluation, loss of status, and integrity within the self as exemplified below.

“... As soon as they hear me speak bad Finnish, they think I cannot handle a challenging task. They either reject me [application] or offer me the position of a packer, which humiliates and hurts a lot as I feel that my knowledge and experience is not needed at all. I see many highly educated people work here as cashiers and sale-assistants. It is absurd and a waste of human resources when an executive director works as a cleaner.” (Participant 10)

Finally, the Nordic labour market model and the *Finnish culture of work* tend to contradict with the various labour market models in MRAs countries of origin, many times to the disadvantage of MRAs labour market integration in Finland. For instance, most participants who were in active employment before emigration, especially skilled migrants, anticipated a seamless transition from one labour market to the other, which did not materialise in any case. Participants' response to the labour market culture clash differ; some fail to accept difference that are perceived antagonistic and hindering employment and begin seeking and planning for alternative arrangements e.g., migration to another country; others seek ways to overcome such barriers less drastically e.g., by planning to move to a bigger city with more employment opportunities. In sum, MRAs narratives show that Finland's Nordic labour market model combines contradictory labour market elements that keeps migrants in the host country, as it alternates positive and negative incentives in an unpredictable fashion.

4.3.2 Discrimination

Participant 1 has lived in Finland for the past 6 years, and through the 6 years, has not succeeded to integrate into the IT sector in Finland, which is his area of expertise. Despite being a high skilled migrant with extensive work experience and expertise in IT consulting, in addition to obtaining tertiary qualification from a Finnish university in the same field of expertise, he has not managed to secure employment in the IT sector. On the contrary, he has incurred significant skill loss. For instance, being unable to join a project management unit and utilise acquired professional skills of project management and auditing, he lost two highly ranked internationally recognised professional qualifications, which were not de facto recognised or valued during his job search in Finland. The only explanation he receives for his employability is Finnish language deficiency, however, a potential employer that once refused to employ him due to language deficiency, still allowed him to perform a task for the company without an employment contract and without pay under the guise of research, acknowledging that he indeed had the skills required for the task. Participant 1 believes that there is a vertical limit his professional potential and capacity to grow in Finland, and that limit he believes is dictated by who he is an African migrant in Finland. His experiences and experiences of his peers and fellows shows that a migrant of certain nationality and ethnicity has failed time and time again to develop vertically mobile careers in Finland, especially high managerial level positions in the primary sector. (Biographical vignette 2)

MRAs stories identify multifaceted discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality and legal status, which emerges as the crux of MRAs woes in the Finnish labour market. This is the story of the multiple borders and walls that MRAs face in their daily lives as they seek to, or engage in the Finnish labour market as equal members of the country's workforce. Similar to the excluding effect of the Nordic labour market model, discriminative barriers affect MRAs in two ways: it keeps them out of the Finnish labour market; and/or 2) undermines their agency as labour market actors. The first form of discrimination that features prominently in MRAs narratives is **statistical discrimination**; an ethnically discriminative practice in which the majority ethnic group makes decisions about how to treat ethnic minority groups based on widely assumed and oversimplified beliefs about those groups, whether true or false (Ahmad, 2019; Rydgren, 2006). Nine out of eleven participants explicitly state that Finnish employers do not trust them and that mistrust plummets their employment prospects. Thus, MRAs believe that one certain way to improve MLI in Finland is by building the trust relationship between migrants and employers.

"Confidence must be built between the worker and the employer, removing the barriers between them and this is something that local labour offices can do..." (Participant 7)

Participant stories indicate that Finnish employers do not trust their skills, their capacity to work, their expert knowledge, their academic qualifications as well as their accrued professional experience simply because this capital is foreign, acquired outside of Finland and therefore not recognised in Finland. However, in some occasions, the already thin line between statistical discrimination and pure prejudicial discrimination became even more blurry as participants told stories of discrimination that hinged more on their race and country of origin than the foreignness of their qualifications and skills.

"There are people [employers] who check your background, where you come from and others look at whether you can perform the assigned tasks or not. A good person chooses according to the later, but the rest seem mentally ill or racist... Sometimes, we face racism in the workplace. Working life is difficult for foreigners." (Participant 9)

Statistical discrimination also takes the form of **network recruitment** (Rydgren, 2006). MRAs agree that one way to overcome the 'mistrusted migrant' barrier is by using a trusted individual typically a Finn, or an established migrant as a bridge to reach employers that are otherwise out of reach. Networks introduce prospective employees to employers, vouching for their character and capacity to be 'trusted with work' thereby eliminating the trust challenge. Participant two believes that most job adverts in Finland are purely bureaucratic symbols and that most advertised jobs are earmarked for specific individuals known to hiring organisations/companies. However, the network recruitment practice is a discriminative practice that should not be encouraged as it oversimplifies a challenge that fast grows endemic in the labour market. In a largely homogenous country, MRAs' social networks typically consist of co-ethnics, while employment gate keepers tend to be members of the ethnic majority, thus where network recruitment is widespread, MRAs will tend to remain outside of the labour market. Moreover, the practice undermines egalitarian merit-based recruitment.

"The way to work in Finland is to know a friend who will recommend you to the company that is looking for workers. This way you can work with them for a very long time as they see how you work, because they are afraid of signing a long-term contract with you in case you are not suitable for the work." (Participant 7)

The second form of discrimination, **institutional discrimination**; refers to intended and unintended discriminatory consequences of laws, legislation, rules and institutional norms of behaviour. In Finland, a source of institutional discrimination against MRAs in the labour market is the standard Finnish language proficiency prerequisite for employment. Although this may not be discriminatory per se when language proficiency demand is justified, however, often recruiters demand for native-speaker-level-proficiency is extreme as it is nearly impossible to MRAs to achieve that, making it an effective migrant excluding factor. Additionally, the national norm that prioritises professional and academic qualifications, as

well as professional experience acquired in Finland puts MRAs in a legitimately tough spot while rationalising employers' failure to absorb foreign workers, or the absorption of foreign workers into lower skill professions with generally lower labour returns. As participant, ten explains in the excerpt above, many highly educated immigrants in Finland are shunned by institutionally discriminative practices to menial jobs in the secondary sector.

Third MRAs labour market experiences reveal that the Finnish labour market is segmented along legal status and ethnicity lines with migrants overrepresented in certain professions in the secondary sector. Participant one illuminates the differential treatment, observing that migrants of African origin like him have an imminent cap on vertical labour mobility in the Finnish labour market. Interested in management level academic work, he acknowledges that his career goal is certainly impossible in Finland as he has never seen, and does not foresee the first black dean in a Finnish university. Other participants' narratives build a story of **career demotion**, where previously high ranked professionals including doctors, university teachers, managers are systematically segregated to typical 'migrant level work' in Finland such as practical nursing, assistant teaching, cleaning and store packing. In a rather bleak story, participant eight tells the story of migrants being hired only by fellow migrants in the restaurant sector where such segregation has reinforced social dumping, and work conditions are bad. Employees work longer hours, which are ultimately not paid. Moreover, their wages also fall below sector minimum offered by Finnish employers. According to him, the norm is that Finnish employers do not employ foreigners who are believed to lack qualifications among other reasons.

".... Sometimes, when you work in a foreigner's restaurant and you are a foreigner yourself, the [wage] scale is so different; they can pay you as low as 7 euros or 5 euros per hour, and you often work overtime for about 12 or 13 hours." (Participant 8)

4.3.3 Precarity

Participant 6 is a 56-year-old professional language teacher and interpreter who migrated from Russia to join her Finnish husband in a small town in Finland. She speaks fluent German, Russian, English and now Finnish. Before moving to Finland, she enjoyed a significantly successful and stable career teaching foreign languages in Russia. However, in spite of her globally applicable skills and effort to learn the Finnish language, she has not managed to secure stable employment during the six-year stay in Finland. In fact, she has only worked based on two short-term contracts totalling to one and half years, and only as a secondary school teacher assistant. While employed, her experience was bitter sweet; on the one hand she was happy to be busy and committed again, on the other, she worked with a hostile colleague who mistreated her based on her legal status and nationality and felt unprotected by the employer. Nonetheless, she has spent the larger chunk of her time in Finland, four and half years, looking for suitable vacancies, preparing job applications, and seeking higher educational opportunities to boost her employability. Although participant 6 continues seeking employment opportunities, her experience so far indicates that her future in the Finnish labour market is highly insecure and precarious especially due to her age, employers' failure to acknowledge and hire her skills and expertise, and the fact that even Finnish language proficiency has not improved her employability potential. Understanding that all the factors that hinder integration in the labour market are immutable and out of her control, she feels vulnerable, helpless and precarious; a feeling she shares with participant 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 11 (See Annex 2 for interview summaries). Today, she says that she will jump at the opportunity to be an assistant teacher again, or on opportunity to teach foreign languages even at a wage below the stipulated minimum collective wage agreement. All she wants is to work. (Biographical vignette 3)

Implications of the contradictory positive and negative elements of the Nordic labour market model on MRAs, and the subsequent exclusion due to discriminative practices aggravate MRAs insecurity in the labour market; culminating into the third story of MRAs experiences of

integration in the Finnish labour market – **precarity**. Precariousness results from some combination of instability, lack of protection, insecurity and social or economic vulnerability (Doellgast et al., 2018; Rodgers and Rodgers, 1989, p.7). MRAs narratives on employment contracts, workplace relations and interaction, work mobility, and future plans demonstrate their precarious position, and the precarious jobs they do in Finland. These narratives paint a picture of individuals with a one-foot-in-one-foot-out relationship with the labour market where long-term employment guarantees are a rarity. Instability and insecurity are direct implications of **short-term employment contracts**, socio-economic deficiencies of language and networks, gaps in the understanding of the Finnish labour market as a system, bureaucratic intricacies of the legal status, top-down integration procedures and demands, and the procedures for the recognition of foreign human capital. In his reflections, participant one understands that his personhood has many values and Finnish immigration laws only recognise the menial labourer version, the precariat.

“I used to work at the university as a teacher assistant (TA), then at the end of the day, I go to do my cleaning job. I wondered how the same me could be paid so well to use my brain and be paid so much less to use my physical strength...it’s just 2 different parts of me...but Migri [Immigration Office] would not allow a permit renewal on the basis of a 2-month TA contract. So I needed the cleaning contract for residence permit renewal.” (Participant 1)

This experience and many similar others illustrate how institutional constructs such immigration laws and norms in this case, and individual embodied characteristics produce insecurity and instability, which in turn creates a vulnerable form of labour out of MRAs. The implications of precarity can be dire for MRAs, especially as it magnifies their vulnerability and exposes them to exploitation. Participants 1, 2, nine and ten (See Annex 2 for interview summaries) exemplify MRAs vulnerability and desperation that often results in the exploitation of their labour where their labour is taken without remuneration, or is exploited through long working hours and/or lower wages. For instance, participant 1 once interviewed for a paid internship position at a lucrative IT consultancy firm, which he was qualified for it. After the interview, he was told that his poor language skills disqualified him; however, a few months later the same firm approached him asking him to perform the same task, without pay and without an internship contract, but instead as a master’s thesis project. Although he felt undervalued and exploited, he accepted to perform the task believing that it would earn him good will for future employment opportunities. Similarly, participant 2 worked based on multiple consecutive 2-month contracts for roughly 2 years, which also equals several residential permit applications since the Finnish visa regime ties residence for employment to the terms of the employment contract. Therefore, a 2-month contract means a 2-month residence permit. Further, precariousness weakens or completely hinders MRAs’ ability to plan for the future thereby trapping them in a cycle of poor employment and exploitative employment opportunities (Ndomo, 2020 *in press*). This is evidenced in vignette 3 about participant 6 who learns to accept, and wish for poorly paid jobs outside of her area of expertise.

4.3.4 Official Integration Services

Participant 5 has lived in Finland for 10 years and since her arrival in Finland, official integration services synonymous with the TE-office for migrants has been a part of her journey all the way. She migrated to Finland through the family route to join her husband who was already resident in Finland, and her, like other migrants migrating for work and refugees enjoy a very close interaction with official integration services for either 3 or 5 years. Guided and supported by the integration office, she has undertaken Finnish language courses, work trial posting, and has received unemployment benefits, all of which have been instrumental to her general integration in Finland. Speaking Finnish comes in handy in social and practical interaction e.g., at her kids school, and helping them with homework. Unemployment benefits have allowed her to focus her effort in acquiring skills necessary for work in Finland and nurture a young family. Nonetheless, she has also failed to successfully integrate in the labour market despite having the full support of official integration services. The language classes she

undertook proved insufficient for work. When she tried to practice as a doctor in a Finnish hospital, she learnt that the general Finnish language she undertook and passed exceptionally well was neither appropriate nor sufficient for a practicing doctor. Indirectly, this language training fail instrumentally barred her from pursuing her chosen career in Finland. Moreover, the work trial postings facilitated by the integration office also proved challenging as she did not have a designated trainer at work from the first day, which undermined the effectiveness of a work trial programme, meant to initiate synergistic integration aimed at improving learning of skills and language while working. Participant five's experience sets the stage for a critical evaluation of official integration in Finland. (Biographical vignette 4)

Despite challenging experiences of discrimination, vulnerability and precarity, MRAs have some support in their struggle for labour market inclusion in Finland. A variety of official state services, offered by TE-offices (the local employment and economic development offices) contributes in varying degrees to participants labour market integration endeavour. All four refugee-participants have undertaken (undertaking) Finnish language courses and vocational training, while four migrants have used local TE offices language course programmes as well as the individual integration plan provision. Only two participants have received integration assistance from private companies. In addition to the skill building projects, three participants have received welfare benefits from the Finnish Social Security Office (Kela) as part of official integration assistance. Participants' perception of the degree of usefulness of official integration services to their own integration varied sharply with each participant having a unique interaction with the integration services. Participant 8, a 28-year-old male refugee is very content with the vocational training programme he is admitted into; while participant 9, a 22-year-old refugee, is unsatisfied with the educational opportunities he and other refugees are afforded by the integration programme. According to him, the programmes reduce and clump all foreigners into a group of people perceived incapable of some perceived 'Finnish' professions. Corroborating this claim, participant 11 explains that in Finland MRAs do not get work in their areas of expertise because the TE office dictates the opportunities available for immigrants. Highlighting another dissatisfied opinion, participant 6, over 50 years old, female, family migrant, philologist by profession thinks the language classes offered by the TE offices are poorly organised and were instead an impediment to her integration in the labour market in the long run, a sentiment shared by participant 5, a trained doctor, and now practical nurse in Finland. Both participants reveal the weakness of Finland's largely one-size-fits-all integration programme in which all refugees head to vocational training and all migrants get the same language classes. Meanwhile participant one and two, student migrants at arrival could not access any of the official integration services, disqualified by their residential status as temporary migrants in the first three years of immigration.

"I don't know about others, but in my opinion, it is difficult to get good education in Finland. Of course I am a foreigner but in my opinion I can behave like the Finns, I can learn what they learn..." (Participant 9)

Indicatively, the inadequacies in the integration programmes slowed down participant six's progress to employment, barred participant five from practicing medicine, barred participant 9 from a vocational course of choice, and affected the rest of the participants' labour market integration differently. Thus, participants suggested ways to improve these services from a beneficiary's standpoint. In order to address unemployment stemming from the trust issue, MRAs suggest that integration activities should focus more on employment brokerage and supporting labour market entry. The TE offices should award more wage subsidies to employers so that they can employ more MRAs, while employers should also be given a mandatory quota of MRAs to employ within a given time period. Regarding bureaucratic procedures, participant 11 suggests speeding up asylum seekers access to language classes before confirmation of refugee status to reduce idleness and skill waste at the reception camps. She also proposes systematisation of the procedures for the initial language and vocational training of refugees, which currently seem arbitrary and dependent on luck. In general, participants suggest personalisation of integration programmes, which should begin

with researching and collating a database of MRAs education and professional background and designing integration programmes accordingly. Participants who have gone through Finnish tertiary education suggest a dire need to better match labour market skill demands with skills produced in higher education institutes. Finally, participant three suggests that social and cultural inclusion could improve the integration of MRAs, especially young single migrants, in Finland and the labour market.

This proactive evaluation of official integration programmes is indicative of two things: 1) MRAs generally face more barriers than enablers when integrating in the Finnish labour market; and 2) MRAs unwavering interest to participate fully in the Finnish labour market in spite of experienced and anticipated challenges. This leads us to a discussion of the fifth and last story of MRAs labour market integration in Finland – resilience.

4.3.5 Migrant Competence

Participant 4 is an international student migrant who arrived in Finland in 2014 for studies. Currently he works in Finland as a data engineer in his dream job. However, his journey to such success was tough and he is set apart by his unique and innovative approach to labour market integration. He believes that there is a huge gap between what is taught in the university and what the companies are actually practicing, and that until Policies bridge the gap between the disparate priorities of the schools and industry, there will always be an immigrant student having a challenge which may not be their own fault. According to him, integration is the sole responsibility of each individual MRA. He takes the standpoint that each migrant has to do whatever it takes to integrate in the host country, including investing own resources and funds on internationally recognised courses, and undertaking as many internships and work trials as possible in order to enrich human capital. It is up to the migrant to integrate in the labour market. This also involves having a full understanding of the labour market and using that understanding to target careers and professions that will most likely hire a migrant. Following his own advice, he has managed to secure a short-term contract in his field of expertise. He understands that migrant integration especially for certain minority nationalities and ethnic groups is very difficult. He adds that experiences such as racism and discrimination are inevitable and that people should expect such realities to manifest and come up with ways to overcome them. As he sees it, it's all but a reality that is inevitable, but can be overcome through ones irrefutable qualifications, and expertise such as international certifications, which he believes levels the playing field between 'equal professionals' not equal people. His take on, and experience of integration is one that centres on MRA's own competencies and their resilience. (Biographical vignette 5)

Simply put, resilience describes the ability to bend without breaking and to bounce back regardless of the magnitude of challenge. According to Southwick et al. (2014), resilience can be a trait, a process, or an outcome, occurring in a continuum, differing in degrees across multiple domains of life.

An array of dynamic social, economic and cultural competence is seen across MRAs narrated experiences of labour market integration in Finland. Although each participant's journey to labour market integration consists of more challenges than enablers, all participants continue their stay in Finland regardless. In fact, narratives show participants asserting agentic competence through determination, drive and focus, tact and negotiation, and innovative manoeuvre in order to improve their capacity to overcome challenges that impede their labour market integration. Thus, despite a wide variance in the group in terms of age, gender, nationality, legal status, socio-economic status etc., there is a convergence in the story of MRAs resilience through character, action and resolution to succeed in one way or another in the Finnish labour market. However, resilience, as contestation of challenges encountered in the Finnish labour market manifests differentially for participants depending on how each individual interprets encountered challenges. Observed differences also stem from MRAs socio-economic, and cultural characteristics such as human capital and social competence,

as well as biographical and historical circumstances. For instance, MRAs of Somali and Russian origin perceive and respond to labour market treatment in Finland differently; the former interprets fewer experiences as obstacles than the latter. Additionally, resilience varied between participants who understood integration as their sole responsibility, compared to those who perceived inclusion as a right or an entitlement.

Decisive life moments, or critical junctures (Bourbeau, 2015), propelled MRAs' agency into action, defending their status as individuals worthy of inclusion in the Finnish labour market. Critical junctures included instances of perceived discrimination based on legal status, ethnicity, skill/capacity, and human capital and experienced precarity. As a result, most of MRAs fight-back involved enrolment for further education, language learning, and cultural adaptation. All participants of this study have undertaken, at least, a language course, vocational training programme, and/or other forms of tertiary education in Finland. For participant four, labour market integration was his own responsibility. Not expecting any assistance from the state, he funded himself through professional courses to acquire skills and planned his own labour market integration. After five years, of menial labour jobs to fund his integration, he is finally employed in his dream job. His story epitomising resilience, however, it also highlights the danger of overemphasising MRAs agentic potential in integration. Participant 4's integration is narrowly defined; moreover, employed on a short-term contract, his status remains precarious, one foot in and one foot out.

At a different point on the resilience continuum is participant 5, who understands that labour market integration requires input from both the migrant and labour market institutions/structures. She is unable to practice as a medical doctor in Finland due to language barrier, and a costly and hectic certificate confirmation process that involves taking an exam. Moreover, completing TE-office's language courses was unhelpful, which compounds her frustration. Currently she begun work trial as a practical nurse, determined to enjoy her new profession, nonetheless, she feels betrayed by the system that did not avail the correct kind of training for professional MRAs like her (See Annex 3, biographical narrative 2).

All study participants have exhibited resilience in different forms at different points of their journey to integrate in the Finnish labour market. Participants' resilience stems from reflexivity. A constant attempt to understand what Finland requires of them as workers and inculcating this in future plans. MRAs learn, innovate and adapt, borrowing from past labour market experiences in the country of origin and in Finland as summarised below by the following composite excerpt.

"The deeper you go in the system the more you learn about how the system works... I realised that companies in Finland look for very specific skills, not the general things like an MA. So, on finishing my MA, I took three additional courses at a US university online and even had to pay. So, when it seems impossible to get what you want, you can always make a small adjustment that will ensure that you make at least a positive step forward rather than just idling and complaining that things are not fair." (Participant 2 & 4)

4.4 Critical Analysis of the Adequacy of LMI: Comparative Analysis

This section compares stakeholder understands of MRAs labour market integration needs vis-à-vis the actual needs identified by MRAs, through narrative thematic analysis. We revisit the outputs of SIRIUS work package 2, 3, 4, and 5; particularly policy makers, NGO representatives, and social partners' perception of, and interventions to MRAs labour market integration. This composite macro perspective is then compared to the highly nuanced micro illumination of MRAs needs based on MRAs biographical narratives collected through interviews for this work package. The comparative analysis concludes with suggestions for improving labour market integration services and policies following new insights from MRAs.

4.4.1 Stakeholder Awareness of MRAs' Problems

SIRIUS WP3 analysis of labour market integration policies in Finland highlights substantial disparity between policy discourse and policy response. The report shows that stakeholder discourse on MLI addresses a wider scope of barriers, and advocates for several changes to the country's integration policies respectively. However, an analysis of policy response is cognisant of a relatively slim scope of barriers. Taking note of the variation, our comparative analysis focuses on stakeholders' holistic understanding as explicated in public discourse and this is how it compares to MRAs own identified needs. 1) MRAs and stakeholders identify predominantly similar barriers to MLI. 2) MRAs and stakeholders' understanding of barriers and consequent integration needs differ substantially. The difference in understanding can be attributed to variation in points of emphasis and interpretation of experiences. As a result, 3) MRAs narratives point to a nuanced set of LMI needs

Similarities Between Stakeholders and MRAs: MRAs and stakeholders identify Finnish language skills as critical for employability thereby making language courses a core integration need for MRAs in Finland. Both parties also agree on the need to diversify the portfolio of language courses offered by official integration service providers to better match MRAs heterogeneous socio-economic circumstances. Additionally, MRAs emphasise the need for professionally/occupationally tailored language courses. Similarly, both groups agree on the urgent need to improve recognition and use foreign skills in Finland. While stakeholders focus on the need for official recognition of academic qualifications and professional experience and expertise accrued abroad, MRAs emphasise the **de facto recognition of skills** and capacity to engage in labour market activities. The difference between MRAs and stakeholders perspectives on the need for skill recognition highlights MRAs **emotive need for equal and fair valuation** in the labour market practices in Finland. MRAs stories highlight the difficulty of understanding, and accepting the devaluation of their skills and capacity as workers, experts, or professionals in the Finnish labour market. Additionally, MRAs and stakeholders agree on the need to improve accessibility to entrepreneurship support especially, reduction of bureaucracy involved, and developing services that specifically target MRAs.

Similar Barriers, Different Interpretation: In terms of **education**, stakeholders understand that MRAs tend to be disadvantaged, having relatively low level of education compared to the Finnish standard. Further, stakeholders lack consensus on whether an actual lack of education or employers' failure to recognise MRAs foreign qualifications alienates MRAs from the labour market. As a result, stakeholders lack a clear stance on MRAs education needs for integration. On the other hand, participant narratives highlight the diversity of educational achievement among MRAs making a generalisation on the issue difficult. Participant narratives also show that Finnish tertiary education does not guarantee equal admission into the labour market across sectors, as well as a mismatch between Finnish HEIs skill supply and labour market demands. Lastly, participants believe that MRAs do not have the freedom to engage in educational programmes of choice, and at the level of choice, as integration programmes steer them away from opportunities perceived to be "Finnish", into select "migrant" paths. For instance, refugees participating in the integration-training programme who desire to join a University are more likely to be awarded admission into a vocational training institutes or University of applied science. Thus, migrants identify the following needs concerning education. 1) Need for better **matching of educational training with market skill demands**; 2) need to enhance MRAs **freedom to engage in educational training of choice at the appropriate level**; and 3) need to **recognise MRAs educational qualifications obtained in Finland** by employing MRAs trained in Finland in matching expert positions.

According to stakeholders, MRAs lack **social networks**, which are critical for employment in Finland, and thus perceive social networks as a key need for MLI. MRAs narratives show a clear division between labour migrants and family reunification migrants who find social networks irrelevant and futile in securing employment; and refugees who find social networks necessary for labour market integration. Further, MRAs narratives provide nuanced insight into the issue of networks and labour market integration by problematizing institutionalised

employer recruitment practices that rely on networks to control the recruitment process. This illuminates the predetermined nature of MRAs exclusion from the labour market, and looks beyond the network deficiency rationale. Therefore, MRA narratives highlight a need for rules to enforce **transparent and fair labour market recruitment practices**.

“What I know for sure is that almost 80% of the jobs that are advertised are already earmarked for someone. They advertise because there is a regulation that you have to advertise a job and keep it open for a certain period of time. I would say that I have got to know about that only in the last year or so, and I have stopped applying for so many jobs after that...”
(Participant 2)

Another core labour market integration issue that divides MRAs and stakeholders' interpretation is **discrimination**. In stakeholder discourse, racism and discrimination are treated as a single issue, which is strictly shunned, but occurs marginally in the Finnish labour market. Trade unions focus on the link between language deficiency, knowledge of rights, and discrimination in the labour market. However, analysis of MRAs experiences of; perceived devaluation of human capital through withheld recognition of qualifications, skills, and experience; perceived unequal treatment by employers in worker recruitment and distribution of integration services; and segregation of occupations and work indicate that discrimination is a core challenge in MRA's labour market integration. Racism is only a single manifestation of discrimination. Therefore, for MRAs, discrimination based on ethnicity, nationality, and race takes the form of: unrecognised foreign qualifications and skills; segmentation of the labour market; network recruitment; and institutional norms such as native-level language proficiency demands for most employment. MRAs story on discrimination underscores the need to **evaluate and reform the underlying structure of MLI practices** such as recruitment norms in order to improve MRAs prospect of successful integration in the Finnish labour market.

Stakeholders perceive **cultural differences** as a pragmatic workplace manners concern, which is addressed through sensitizing information packages. However, for MRAs, cultural difference refers to macro level differences between labour market models and their respective cultures of work, making it a significant factor in labour market integration. During job seeking, the clash between labour market norms of the country of origin and those in Finland interrupt an anticipated smooth transition in the work life, thus affecting MRAs labour market integration negatively, least in emotive terms. MRAs also cope with the culture clash differently, some adapt, innovate and/or negotiate, which in turn creates inequality between MRAs in the labour market. This analysis exposes a need for information services on labour market structures that take account of MRAs origin country labour market structures in order to improve and unify transition.

New Addition: Participant narratives highlight common incidences of short-term employment contracts, arbitrary and unsystematic access to integration services, wage, hourly, and volunteer labour exploitation among MRAs, thereby underscoring **precarity** as a key factor in labour market integration in Finland. Negative stereotypes about some nationalities and ethnic groups, and MRAs typically temporary and uncertain legal status combine to aggravate precarity. For instance, for about a year and a half, participant two worked based on several consecutive 2-month contracts, while participant seven depends on a subcontracting agency for short contracts ranging from a day's work to month long contracts. Precariousness increases MRAs vulnerability and exposes them to possible exploitation in the labour market. Precariousness skews MRAs labour market trajectory and ultimately influences their labour market outcomes. This currently unstated barrier highlights the **need to secure employment for the most vulnerable MRA groups** including both beneficiaries of integration related welfare other MRA groups whose precariousness stems from lack of social security.

Stakeholder discourse on **social group differences** acknowledges the challenges that hinder the labour market integration of MRA women, especially mothers with young children. In particular, NGOs have tailored integration training that allows mothers to attend with children in order to improve their general participation. However, no significant attention is paid to

integration challenges and needs of youth MRAs, as well as single male MRAs with or without family outside of Finland. Half of the women interviewed corroborate stakeholders understanding that family related barriers do impede, or decelerate women's integration progress. On young working age MRAs labour market integration, participant 9, 22 years old is sceptical that his future career prospects would match up to his Finnish age mates. Despite arriving in Finland relatively young c.17 years old, he does not have access to the same education opportunities as his fellow Finns. Participant 11 adds that young refugees without prior work experience waste critical years learning Finnish language, out of school and out of employment.

4.4.2 Identifying gaps in MLI stakeholder intervention in Finland

The comparative analysis above highlights striking differences between Stakeholders and MRAs' interpretation of labour market barriers. Such a difference points to potential gaps in current and future integration policies and services that lack a MRAs experienced and nuanced perspective. Therefore, we identify six needs based on our analysis of MRAs labour market needs, which miss or take a different form in stakeholders' discourse.

Table 3-1 MLI needs in Finland from a MRA's standpoint

MLI Barrier/Theme	Stakeholder's recommended action	MRAs recommended action
Labour market skills	Quicker, thorough, accessible, skill recognition procedures	1. System that allows <i>de facto equal</i> and <i>fair</i> valuation of MRAs labour market capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., national database of MRAs qualifications and valuation
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More education opportunities - Easing Refugees learning continuation - Recognition of foreign qualifications 	2. Matching HEI programmes with labour market skill demands
		3. Recognition and absorption of tertiary education/skills acquired in Finland
		4. Career choice freedom for beneficiaries of integration service skill training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., admitting refugees in English undergraduate programmes
Social networks	Develop and expand social networks	5. Enforcing transparent and fair recruitment practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., strict regulation against network recruitment
Labour market segmentation	-	6. Evaluate and address discriminative features of the foundational structure of MLI practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> e.g., segregation of labour market sectors

4.5 Conclusion

Throughout the report, we have presented the labour market integration trajectories of migrants, refugees and asylum applicants in Finland; discussing barriers and enablers to labour market integration, their interpretation, as well as suggestions for better-targeted integration policies and services from MRAs standpoint. We have shown that migrant labour market integration in Finland is an arduous, complex, time consuming, and highly specific endeavour, at the centre of which are migrants' own competencies and official integration services. Migrant labour market integration is hindered most by the underlying structure of the Finnish labour market. From a MRA's standpoint, the highlights of the Finnish labour market are the welfare features of worker wellbeing and social security, while its low points include scarce employment opportunities, MRA precarity, and labour market practices that are discriminative of MRAs.

MRAs' portrayal of labour market practices in Finland locate MLI barriers in the underlying structure of the Finnish labour market. The culturally distinct structure defines the norms and practices of integration, some of which significantly hinder the inclusion of MRAs in the Finnish labour market. These include employers' preference for local, familiar, and comparable Western educational qualifications, skills and professional expertise, and network recruitment. Over time, these norms and practices institute taken-for-granted, discriminative practices related to e.g., skill recognition (or statistical discrimination), and institutional discriminative practices such as network recruitment. Although stakeholders do not consider these practices discriminative, our analysis of MRAs experiences in Finnish labour market affirms them as such. The report raises two significant issues with regards to discrimination.

1) The urgent need to address the underlying cultural structure of Finnish MLI practices in order to reduce the incentives that sustain statistical discrimination and institutional discrimination. A concrete recommendation for improving MLI practice is reform of worker recruitment practices, which should not only reduce the prominence of networks, but also making the process transparent and accessible to all qualified individual in the workforce.

2) Failure to recognise MRAs competences such as qualifications, skills and professional experience accrued abroad and the Finnish language demands present a strikingly difficult integration challenge for MRAs in Finland the consequences of which include stark professional inequality between MRAs and natives. Most important however is how this normative practice shapes the rest of a MRAs integration process, for instance, most MRAs have had to let go of their preferred professions, as migrants are either explicitly guided to specific careers, or indirectly through institutional normative demands. Moreover, although these practices ultimately place most MRAs in employment, we can barely talk of labour market integration when a medical doctor can only work as a practical nurse and a young refugee trains to be chef. Admittedly, Finnish language deficiency is a legitimate and striking challenge to the integration of professional MRAs in the Finnish labour market. However, the response to this should not be a normative rationalisation; rather, it raises the question of how to best integrate MRAs in Finland with and without Finnish language skills as already raised in stakeholder discourse.

The report also highlights the issue of precarity, which closely links to experiences of discrimination and legal status. Precarity stems from lack of stability and secure stable employment, prospects of career growth and a sense of belonging in society. Most MRAs in Finland work on short-term contracts, outside their area of expertise or preference, and in mobility dead-end jobs. Precarity pushes MRAs to accept work under exploitative conditions either as a last-ditch resort, or as an act of negotiation where MRAs take jobs that demand long working hours, offer less wages or non-paid gigs to build good will for future better employment. However, access to integration services reduces MRAs vulnerability potentially.

Migrant integration services are an asset to MRAs' labour market integration. TE- office's language courses and local municipality vocational training programmes are used the most by refugees while other migrant groups use the language courses, and other tertiary education opportunities in the universities and universities of applied sciences. In addition, eligible MRAs, especially the vulnerable mothers with young kids and unemployed refugees found the welfare instrument of unemployment benefits extremely useful as it enabled their transition into the labour market through flexible arrangements such as partial workdays. MRAs also find work trials extremely important in improving the employer-employee trust, thus enabling MLI. However, integration services were found to be insufficient, leaving significant room for improvement. An overarching limitation has to do with personalisation and service targeting. TE-office's failure to personalise language courses and vocational training services is attributed to lack of knowledge of the skills and educational capacity of MRAs. To address this, MRAs suggest collating a database of MRAs human capital, and reinforcing the database with rules to ensure de facto recognition of these capacities and efficient uptake in the labour market through transparent skill matching and recruitment practices. Further, MRAs also suggest better matching of skills produced in Finnish universities with skills demand in the labour market.

Lastly, migrant labour market integration depends on the largest part on MRAs own competence. MRAs draw on own social, economic, and cultural competence in combination with available official integration services to develop adaptive resilience, innovative resilience and sustainability resilience for the rest of their stay in Finland. MRAs resilience manifests in adaptive behaviour such as transition from one career path to another at any age; innovative career path building through internships, market targeted skill acquisition and sustainability in language learning, entrepreneurial aspirations and cultural adaptation. In a nutshell, in an integration scenario where the odds stack high against opportunities as in the case of MRAs in the Finnish labour market, success of integration relies most on MRAs innate capacity to adapt, innovate, survive, in other words - resilience. However, it is important to note that overemphasising MRAs individual competence or agency poses the danger of aiding the continuation of inefficient labour market integration practices. The optimal is to understand MRAs labour market capacity vis-à-vis host country labour market absorption capacity and creating as equal as possible a match between the two.

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4.7 Annex I, Demographic information on MRAs

Pseudonym of Interviewee	Date of interview	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of origin	Migration year	Education (primary, secondary, tertiary)	Current occupation in host country	Occupation in country of origin	Languages the individual speaks
Interviewee 1	13.01.2020	40	Male	No family in Finland. Wife +3 children in Ghana.	Ghana	2013	Tertiary	Doctoral Researcher	IT Engineer, Programmes manager	English, Anglo
Interviewee 2	21.01.2020	35	Male	Wife + 1 child.	India	2013	Tertiary	Management consultant	Bioinformatics	English, Hindi
Interviewee 3	21.01.2020	30	Male	No family in Finland	Nigeria	2014	Tertiary	Software developer	No prior work	English, Pidgin
Interviewee 4	01.02.2020	37	Male	No family in Finland. Wife in Ghana.	Ghana	2014	Tertiary	Data engineer	IT Support personnel	English
Interviewee 5	18.02.2020	35	Female	Husband + 2 children.	Russia	2010	Tertiary	Practical nurse (work trial)	Medical doctor, Nurse	Russian, Finnish
Interviewee 6	27.02.2020	56	Female	Finnish Husband.	Russia	2014	Tertiary	Unemployed	Interpreter, teacher	Russian, German, English, Finnish
Interviewee 7	09.03.2020	36	Male	Wife + 2 children.	Syria	2015	Secondary	Unemployed	Cook/Chef	Arabic, English, Finnish
Interviewee 8	16.03.2020	28	Male	No family in Finland.	Somali	2015	Secondary (Vocational training ongoing)	Student, unemployed	Caterer	Somali, Finnish, Italian, French

Interviewee 9	26.2.2020	22	Male	No Family in Finland.	Somali	2015	Secondary (Vocational training ongoing)	Student, unemployed	No prior work	Somali, Fluent Finnish, English
Interviewee 10	05.05.2020	45	Female	Husband Russian resident in Finland + 1 child.	Russia	2015	Tertiary	Student	Retail shop manager	Russian, Intermediate Finnish
Interviewee 11	16.04.2020	28	Female	Husband + 2 children.	Syria	2015	Secondary (Incomplete Undergraduate degree)	Student (language course)	Student, part time teaching	Arabic, English, Intermediate Finnish

4.8 Annex II, Summaries of conducted Interviews

Interview number	Short description of the interview, half page (including 1-2 turning points and 1-2 quotations)	date of interview
1	<p>Interviewee 1, 40 years old, is a PhD student set to complete studies in 2020. He came to Finland in 2013. He has a very strong employment background with a progressive record of accomplishment in his country of origin, Ghana. He has struggled to integrate successfully into the IT sector of the Finnish labour market. His 6-year struggle to gain desired employment in Finland has consisted of mixed experiences of intermittent episodes of inclusion and exclusion. He argues that qualifications and observed performance (work experience) are and should be the only 2 valid requirements employers should seek when hiring. His experience looking for work in Finland makes him think that this is not how hiring is done in Finland though. <i>“Well, if I take my experience of working on my MA thesis with Zoro, [pseudo name] a Finnish IT consultancy firm. I think that when they saw my CV, and my transcripts, they were convinced that I could do the internship and develop the method they wanted – but I was not given the job, but later they gave me the job as an MA thesis project. I did it without pay and not as employment. So, I did it so they could see my performance, in addition to the CV that they saw earlier. Yet, still, this could not give me a job in Finland”.</i> Based on his experiences and understanding of the Finnish labour market, he concludes that a black man is just not trusted enough to take high-level managerial positions in the private sector or in academia. <i>“I think the language and the perception about migrants, or I think – my ability to deliver or be in a skilled job e.g., at a manager level or a mid-</i></p>	13.01.2020

	<p>management position... I don't find that happening here so I would rather look for places where I have seen black people in managerial positions in consultancies. Because then I know that I could have a levelled ground to be what I want to be". He suspects that migrants in Finland do not have equal access to practical educational opportunities that would aid their meaningful employment in the primary sector of the Finnish labour market. He thinks that the University is either the first filter used by the macro structure to keep migrants outside of certain labour market sectors or that there exists a substantial disconnect between the services universities in Finland offer and employers' labour market demands. Believing that there is an imminent cap to his labour market success possibilities, the interviewee plans to migrate on to other countries where he stands a better opportunity of integrating into the labour market and the society. He is targeting English speaking countries such as the US and Canada, or moving back to Ghana.</p>	
2	<p>Interviewee 2, 35 years old migrated from Delhi, India to Finland in 2013 to pursue a Master's degree, which he has since completed. He started working in Finland in 2014 and has always been in employment since. He worked in 2 companies in India before migration. He was dissatisfied with the work culture – many unregulated working hours and appraisals based on 'the extra mile'– in India and appreciates the work culture in Finland, which according to his comparative experience of work in India and Finland, he believes epitomizes free and flexible working conditions. He appreciates this even more because of current family obligations with a new-born child. The work culture in Finland is the main reason why he decided to stay in Finland rather than return to India for work "So, when I came to Finland my plan was to finish my degree in less than 2 years and go back to India or somewhere else to find a better job with my enhanced qualifications. But once I started working as a summer trainee in KONE I got a feel of the Finnish workplace and how different it is in terms of the work culture and the ways of doing work. How your work is evaluated and those kinds of things. I got a feel for it while working there for 4 months until September 2014. That is also the time that I realized that I was not going back to India to look for a job". He believes that qualifications and expertise have little to do with one's success chances in the Finnish labour market; instead, he sees that luck plays a bigger role, which is disappointing to him as it eliminates the opportunity for excellence based on one's qualifications and expertise (merit). He is disillusioned since he feels that the 'system' of recruitment and consequent hiring is not straightforward, has loopholes that support patronage and sponsorship in the work market. During his 4-5 year period of working in Finland, he has held countless 2-month contracts, which have led him to lose faith in the transparency of the employment procedures for migrants in the country. He says that most jobs are advertised just to observe legislation and regulation although such jobs are usually 'earmarked' for certain individuals, highlighting a pattern of patronage and sponsorship. "What I know for sure is that almost 80% of the jobs that are advertised are already earmarked for someone. They advertise because there is a regulation that you have to advertise a job and keep it open for a certain period of time. I would say that I have come to know about that only in the last year or so, and I have stopped applying for so many jobs after that... I can say conclusively, based on how I was hired to the company – the advertisement that was floated for the job that I got had such specific key words that nobody else except me could have been hired to the job". None the less, Interviewee 2 has, and continues to equip himself with skills through additional self-sponsored training such as participating in slush events and hackathons in order to improve his</p>	21.01.2020

	chances of securing work. He continues to look for work and hopes to migrate with his family outside of Finland to explore working opportunities elsewhere.	
3	<p>Interviewee 3, 30 years old, migrated from Nigeria to Finland in 2014 to attend a Master's degree programme, which he has since completed. He had no prior work experience in Nigeria and had his first employment in Finland. He has been in employment since 2014, with short periods of unemployment between contracts. He has had 4 employment contracts with 4 different companies between 2016 and 2020. His career is upwardly mobile, and he has not faced significant challenges in securing employment. He likes the Finnish work culture of freedom, independence and autonomy, which he associates with his ability to innovate and excel as a software developer. He believes that experience/capacity/skill, and persistence are key to gaining employment in Finland without which one will definitely struggle to get work. On the contrary, lack of experience excludes migrants from the Finnish labour market. He thinks that migrants should seek the local experience through internships and other short work engagements as he did. <i>"I think that the internship was one of the smartest decisions I ever made because before that I just kept applying for full time jobs and I was always getting a no, or no response at all."</i> Salary and wages are key for him and influence his drive to change jobs. He has no Finnish language skills and believes that he does not need Finnish language skills in his professional field. He wants to build his expertise and brand as much as he can through employment in order to be able to branch to entrepreneurship and open up his own company. He believes that he takes initiative and that his 'can do it' attitude and his ability to deliver quality has played a key role in ensuring that he has employment, compared to other migrants. <i>"Well, I think, first of all, you need to be good at what you are doing, and I think for me one of the biggest attributes or characteristics of my own is that 'I can get it' I have the 'quality', I wasn't telling myself that I can't."</i> He would like to emigrate to another country that better suits him – a warmer place. He believes that with his experience, work will always find him so the priority is finding a place that he can enjoy living in.</p>	21.01.2020
4	<p>Interviewee 4, 37 years old, migrated to Finland in 2014 to pursue a Master's degree, which he completed in 2016 and has since lived in Finland on the basis of employment. He chooses to stay in Finland because the country has the advanced infrastructure necessary to practice his dream profession, something that would not be possible in his country of origin. He also finds the free and flexible Finnish work culture very professionally enabling. He has worked in Finland from the first time that he arrived in 2014 in the secondary sector doing menial labour jobs like newspaper distribution during the first 3-4 years. Participant 4 identifies an incongruence between university training skill supply and labour market skill demands, which creates a gap that challenges the integration of migrants studying in Finland in the Finnish labour market. <i>"There is a huge gap between what is taught in the university and what the companies are actually practicing, so until they bridge the gap between the disparate priorities of the schools and the companies, there will always be an immigrant student having a challenge which may not be their own fault. This is the truth on the ground."</i> Therefore, on labour market integration and responsibility for this, Interviewee 4 takes the perspective that each migrant has to do whatever it takes to integrate in the host country even if it means spending own</p>	01.02.2020

	<p>money on courses and doing several internships to advance human capital. According to him, it is up to the migrant to integrate in the labour market. This also involves having a full understanding of the labour market and using that understanding to target careers and professions that will most likely hire a migrant. Following his own advice, he has managed to secure a short-term contract in his field of expertise. He understands that migrant integration especially for certain nationalities and ethnic groups is very difficult. He adds that experiences such as racism and discrimination are inevitable and that people should expect such realities to manifest and come up with ways to overcome them. As he sees it, it's all but a reality that is inevitable, but can be overcome through ones irrefutable qualifications, and expertise such as international certifications, which he believes levels the playing field between 'equal professionals' not equal people. <i>"For an African, then the best thing is to write exams and certifications that can show that you really know what you are talking about so that you don't just claim, but can also prove that you know those things. The good thing usually is that if you have the proof of your skills, it won't matter that you are African. Your skin colour won't matter... discrimination is always there... You can do whatever you want about it but it is the reality."</i> Participant 4 also encourages migrants who fail to integrate in the Finnish labour market to try migrating to other places or to return to their home countries where they can be better included with the human capital that they acquire during their time in Finland.</p>	
5	<p>Interviewee 5 35 years old, migrated to Finland through the family route as the wife of a Russian doctor working and living in Finland on a permanent residence basis since 2010. She is a trained nurse and doctor, and had practiced as a nurse before transitioning to practice as a doctor for a year before moving to Finland. She and her husband decided to pursue their careers as doctors in Finland; her husband took Finnish language lesson in Russia for 2 years before migrating while she didn't as she had their first and second child around that same time. She feels that in addition to other challenges, her family responsibilities have significantly affected her ability to integrate in the Finnish labour market especially compared to her husband who she feels has integrated very well. <i>"it was difficult to combine work and study and home, the children were quite small 3 and 7 year old children, who also have hard times: one started school and had problems with the language and needed my attention. I tried to concentrate on the exam so that after passing it have my diploma confirmed, but didn't feel confident, moreover the exam costs 500 e., you can make 3 attempts, 500 e. each, if you can't pass, you have one year to prepare again. I didn't want to risk my money and missed the moment. I thought that when I finished my practice I could concentrate on the exam, but actually after finishing my work in hospital I started to forget the language and to prepare for the exam at home was difficult, at home there is always something to do, impossible to concentrate and hard to make yourself study."</i></p> <p>Interviewee 5 completed the assigned integration course and passed the language test after which she began a work trial as a doctor at a Finnish hospital. She learnt that her language skills were insufficient for working in the hospital and she also did not have a designated resident doctor that was guiding her through the transition into working in a Finnish hospital. The poor language and lack of training made the work trial quite challenging and consequently she felt that she was unable to work as a doctor in Finland. She has now switched paths and plans to start training as a practical nurse in September, as that profession has a lower Finnish language proficiency demand. She critiques the language training while also acknowledging some strengths of the Finnish</p>	18.02.2020

	integration system such as the unemployment support and flexible working hour for women with children and for caring for family members.	
6	<p>Interviewee 6, 56 years old, migrated from Russia through the family route to join her husband, a Finn, in Finland in 2015 and they have since lived in the small town of Jyväskylä. She is a professional interpreter and a language teacher and worked on both profession in Russia. She is currently unemployed, and she is seeking employment albeit with limited success. She has engaged in integration training - Finnish language courses and work trial, and has confirmed her teaching qualifications. However, she critiques the official integration language courses which do not consider migrants' qualifications and professions and thus end up being inappropriate. <i>“Well, I studied the language at the courses here, but to tell the truth I suffered much while studying. It should be taken into account that they are not for philologists; at my courses, there were some people with higher pedagogical education. Philologists should be taught separately from the other immigrants. I wasted approximately a year and a half, as I had to spend 6 hours a day to get very little information though for me half an hour would have been enough.”</i> She also finds that employee induction is very poor as per her experience during work trial in a secondary school as assistant teacher. At work, she faced significant harassment by a colleague and felt that the institution did not do much to solve her problem. Further, she also experienced a conflict between her understanding of cultural and professional ethic of working in a school in Russia and the reality in Finland. However, she has overcome the conflict and is now seeking an opportunity to work as an assistant teacher although such a job would push her career trajectory downwards. She finds that there are too few opportunities for migrants in Finland and that a lot of expertise is wasted. <i>“I’m a professional, but nowhere my experience is demanded, and I am amazed by this. When I tried to find some practice work at the [college for adult learning], where there are courses of Russian language, wrote to me that his teachers of Russian don’t need assistants. It was a surprise for me, I do not want to compete with them, some small amount of scholarship is enough money for me, but they could get much help from me. I also have much experience in teaching German and when I was on practice in school, this teacher of German was also teaching English and Swedish and German was her third or fourth language, so her German is not on the same level as mine and I could be useful to her, I could be her assistant and help her. In Russia they still publish my books for teachers on teaching German.”</i> She thinks that the local integration offices could improve if they researched about migrants' qualifications and professions and use that information to design personalised services to help migrants enter the Finnish labour market. She plans to move with her Family to Helsinki where she suspects there will be more demand for the foreign languages that she teaches.</p>	27.02.2020
7	<p>Interviewee 7 is a 36-year-old refugee who migrated to Finland in 2015 for humanitarian protection, then war torn Syria. He migrated with his wife and children. In Syria, he worked in the hospitality sector as well, working in hotels and restaurants in the tourist city of Palmyra, but also work in a family enterprise. He spent about a year in the reception centres before receiving his residence permit, after which he immediately began a yearlong Finnish language class as part of his integration training. Keen to begin working again, he took up short trial opportunities in several places followed by a vocational course on catering at a vocational</p>	09.03.2020

	<p>training institute where he studied to be a chef and graduated in a year. On completing training, he began working on a 3-month contract, which he was not to execute fully after his contract was terminated mid-way. He is now unemployed and as part of his effort to find work, he has signed up as a job seeker with a contracting company. He feels that there are stiff challenges against him in his search for employment, but he has also learnt some tricks of the trade from friends <i>“The way to work in Finland is to know a friend and then recommend you to the company that is looking for workers. This way you can work with them for a very long time as they see how you work, because they are afraid of signing a long-term contract with you in case you are not suitable for the work.”</i> The greatest barrier he faces and believes most foreign job seekers face in Finland is lack of trust between employers and job seekers. He feels that migrants face many challenges at once at the recruitment stage especially due to the trust problem and alternative routes such as entrepreneurship are rendered impossible by unknown and highly bureaucratic procedures. He feels that the Labour offices should be the bridge between employers and migrants to quash the trust challenge. <i>“Confidence must be built between the worker and the employer, removing the barriers between them by smooth contracts and supporting workers for a period with the employer, Choosing the right people in the right places, supporting the salaries, and a lot of things the labour office can do for this.”</i> He compares the quality of labour market integration in Finland to what happens to his family members who settled in Sweden and believes that their integration is better especially because the state invests more on employer subsidies that keep more migrants at work. He suggests that Finland should introduce a quota to all employers to improve their uptake of migrant employees.</p>	
8	<p>Interviewee 8 is a 28-year-old refugee who came to Finland from Somali, on the basis of humanitarian protection in 2014. He migrated alone and does not have family in Finland. Currently, he has completed language training and is now undertaking vocational training to become a chef, after which he hopes to secure a permanent employment. He has taken up a number of work trials in order to familiarise with the labour market. He finds the Finnish labour market to be a stark improvement compared to his home country’s labour market and that is a motivation. Among the enablers are the clear laws that control dismissal, and the nature of the relationship that an employee can have with the employer, and social security provisions such as unemployment benefits. However, he also acknowledges that those who cannot prove their qualifications like himself find it really hard to get decent work in Finland. <i>“Foreigners owned one could call. They are not asking a lot about the qualification, because they pay a low salary. If Finnish managers call, they always need a paper. What is your profession? What kinds of skills do you have? Have you worked in catering? Finally, they ask you to provide the qualification or certificate to confirm. If everything is fulfilled, they offer you a job.”</i> He adds that the recruitment processes are also sometimes not transparent and there are some hidden reasons that keep migrants out of the employment. He believes that there is a segmentation in the restaurant sector of the Finnish labour market where foreigners tend to be employed only by foreigners. Although he has experience of working both in Finland and his home country, Finnish employers still won’t employ him with qualification proof. The position of migrants like him that do not have recognised qualifications become vulnerable and end up experiencing exploitation in employments such as working for low wages for longer hours. <i>“Sometimes, when you work in a foreigner’s restaurant and you are a foreigner yourself, the [wage] scale is so different; they can pay you as low as 7 euros or 5 euros per hour, and you often work</i></p>	16.03.2020

	<i>overtime for about 12 or 13 hours</i> ". Thus, his goal is to acquire the qualifications that will allow him to gain permanent employment in a job that pays enough and according to the workload.	
9	<p>Interviewee 9 is a 22 year old refugee who migrated to Finland from Somali for humanitarian protection in 2015. He lives in Finland without any family members. He has participated in a number of integration activities organised by the TE office and he has worked or a short period of time. He is currently unemployed and undertakes a course at a vocational training institute. Generally, he thinks that the state of employment for migrants in Finland is overall not good. Based on his experience, he understands that qualifications are critical for gaining employment in Finland and he acknowledges that the work culture in Finland is very different from that of Somali. He also believes that there is ethnic and nationality based discrimination that foreigners like himself face when looking for work. According to his understanding, the relationship between the employer and the employee is very important for job security at the current job and can influence future employment opportunities. This is so because the employer decides whom they want to work with and that this choice is based either on merit, or on ethnic stereotypes. <i>"Yes, always the boss can choose with whom he/she wants to work. He/she needs employees who have good working rhythms. He/she does not want bad feelings. They need ordinary employees... There are people [employers] who check your background, where you come from and others look at whether you can perform the assigned tasks or not. A good person chooses according to the later, but the rest seem mentally ill or racist"</i> Participant 9 says that he has experienced racism at the work place and believes that such incidences do happen commonly, but he has learnt ways to deal with it. He also thinks that the integration system segregates migrants from the majority community especially through distribution of e.g., educational opportunities. He hopes that something can change about all the challenges that migrants like him face in the Finnish labour market so that all migrants can find jobs and manage to provide for themselves to eliminate welfare dependency and any other problems that unemployment sometimes force migrants into. <i>"Of course, I am a foreigner but in my opinion I can behave like the Finns, I can learn what they learn. Then I want the opportunity to learn and get a job that is given to natives. For us, if life is going well, we pay taxes. All can pay taxes, if we cannot go to work in the future, it is more difficult and some violations come from the foreigners. Kela [Social Insurance Institution] money is not enough for anything. If you cannot improve your life, if you cannot get a job, it is a bit difficult."</i></p>	26.02.2020
10	<p>Interviewee 10 is a 45-year-old Russian who migrated to Finland in 2015 through the family route to join her husband, a Russian resident in Finland. She is a student, takes up work training opportunities availed by the local employment office from time to time but has not been employed in the proper sense of it. She has a degree in trade and store management based on which she built an elaborately progressive career over a period of 15 years in Russia. She finds the work cultures and work systems in Finland and Russia as stark opposites, and says that sometimes the differences between the nations are good and other times the differences are bad. The main challenges she experiences in the Finnish labour market is the scarcity of employment opportunities for migrants in spite of those migrants being educated and having expansive work experience as well as lack of opportunity to grow career wise. <i>"One more motivating factor in the Russian system is the opportunity to quickly make a career if you</i></p>	05.05.2020

	<p>want it. You can start on the position of a shop assistant and putting a certain amount of efforts can quickly reach the position of a manager. Not only studying at University helps to make a career but also studying at a working place. So you can start from some subsidiary work for example shop-assistant's position and then study, if you feel that the work suits you. In Finland, you cannot start work without education.</p> <p>She acknowledges that language is a critical barrier to herself and other migrants' integration efforts, in addition to other challenges especially in the recruitment phase and at the work place. Furthermore, she stresses that the rigid focus on educational qualifications obtained in Finland while overlooking other qualifications and capacities means that many human resources are wasted in Finland with dire consequences for the migrants' wellbeing. On integration programmes, she finds the language programmes insufficient on their own, as they do not cater for the language needs of professionals. She also finds the work trials problematic, as the integration office does not ensure to place workers in their areas of expertise. In order to improve migrants' integration in the Finnish labour market, she suggests that integration should aim to motivate migrants and the best way to do this is to help migrants find work in their areas of expertise. "Often you can hear, that if you try hard, they will offer you a working place. Honestly, I have lived 5 years and have done practice work at about 8 places and have never been offered a job...A professional working on his place is very useful for the society I am sure in it." She adds that at the end of the day, a migrant's own capacity and will determines integration success.</p>	
11	<p>Interviewee 11 is a 28-year-old refugee who migrated to Finland from Syria for international protection purposes in 2015. She lives in Finland with a husband and 2 children. She is currently learning the Finnish language as part of her integration training after which she plans to seek admission in a university to complete a 3-month arrears on her undergraduate programme in Syria. However, she fears this may not happen and her fate may be similar to other refugees in Finland in terms of educational training. From what she has observed, refugees in Finland are directed and limited to a few professions, which dictates their educational path in the country. "If a person wants to work in his profession, he has no place, because they define opportunities for immigrants. For example, I used to teach in my country and want to complete the same profession here, but it is very impossible. ...the Finnish language course does not qualify the immigrant to enter a university or complete the dream he wants. In my opinion, if someone wants to complete the university, the Finnish language course must be completed more than one year, he must reach a level that qualifies him to study at the university." She has spent most of her time outside of the labour market mainly because of family reasons; had 2 kids, and the slow pace of integration procedures. Importantly, she notes that opportunities for refugees are limited in Finland, and when there are opportunities, refugees do not have the help they need e.g., from NGOs in order to access those opportunities. She thinks it would help if the TE office separates and directs specific services to refugees. Overall, she critiques the main components of the integration training programme (language courses and vocational training) for being insufficient and systematically segregating refugees integration unfavourably. She also believes that her ethnicity/nationality and the associated culture is a barrier in her integration. "Many people advised us to change our names or to change something in our culture because the name is strange and does not make employers accept us. But no, we will not change and not only we, but most people are sticking to their culture. Is it reasonable to change my name in order</p>	16.04.2020

	<i>to get a job? Is it reasonable to change the name that my father called me since childhood only in order to get a job, and I in my country had a job that was better than good?"</i>	
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4.9 Annex III –Individual biographies

Individual Biographical Story _1

“James Allan”

For James, as it is for many migrants, moving from one's country and home, to a foreign country where one takes up residence, and for adults, a life defining activity such as higher education, employment, marriage, and or refuge is conceived religiously as a step forward. The move is almost always filled with the expectation to find better, to get better at something, to get to a better life in terms of quality. In short, to leap forward. In reality however, these migration processes are filled with manifold challenges, unforeseeable struggles, and one too many up-hills. But as it turns out, buckling under the pressure of these challenges is not an option. Migration is highly demanding, migrants have dreams and expectations, migrants' social networks have expectations as well, and so do the host countries. Migrants have to weather the migration storm, and for James Allan, racism and pervasive ethnic-based discrimination is storm that has lasted 6 good years and today he believes he cannot truly overcome. Six years ago, James packed up a suitcase and left Ghana for Finland. In his suitcase were the essentials, things he knew he needed, and believed would guarantee a smooth transition and continuation of his life abroad. He chose some of his best suits and blazers, a plate and a mug, and two international certificates – his silver bullets, and thought, Finland here I come!

What James did not know was that he was not going to continue his life story. He was going to have to write a new story as do many migrants, and although his story took a few years to write, it is one of learning fast and fighting back! Ten years prior to the move, James' life was a culmination of progress, growth, continuity, and forward momentum, captured in the air of confidence that he exuded when deciding to migrate. Fresh out of undergraduate school, the computer-engineer-in-the-making took up his first job disseminating ICT to rural Ghana, a noble job in his opinion as it directly served community. He grew fast professionally rising through the ranks, and was soon a programme officer at a renowned intergovernmental organisation, had two lucrative professional certifications, and was doing consultancy work on the side and this was not all. His personal life was changing too; he was now married had one child and the second on the way and was the sole breadwinner. Believing that he had covered all the ground possible within his geographical context, the next life step for the young man was clear. He needed a fundamental change, or addition to his life and that change was to take the form of a master's degree, and maybe even a doctoral degree if all goes well. James search for scholarships to study abroad was bitter sweet. Denied a payed study leave, he had to find the least costly avenue. The United States, and Switzerland, his first and second choice were too costly and he had to let those be. Finland presented a tuition free option, and a renowned professor in his area of expertise, it was an inevitable compromise at the time. Besides, he had seen on the internet that education was free in Finland and that most people spoke, understood and used English there. Getting by will not be so hard, he thought. With that, he left behind a great job and a young family, knowing that this was for the ultimate good.

First year in Finland was already tough, his perception of Finland, his preparation, and his expectations it appeared, would have to go out the window. Many things did not add up and he had to change. To make the most out of his time in Finland, on arrival, he jumpstarted a job search and began the MA programme. His plan was to study and work part time; after all, he had heard all these stories of people studying and working abroad, there was even some information on this on the websites recommended by the Finnish embassy. He immediately got a job through the chamber of commerce that lasted two weeks, and then suddenly everything seemed to change for the worst. Finding employment in his field of expertise became impossible, and the concrete and official barrier to this was his Finnish language

deficiency. He was astonished when he realised that his many years of experience and his international certification could not sell him to Finnish employers. At that point, in time, two things happened that changed James' journey as a person – the journey that until his migration was progressive, felt fair and was inclusive – significantly. First, he lost his international professional certifications within two years of arriving in Finland because he could not find work and thus could not continue professional practice. Second, he was denied an internship opportunity he was qualified for, only to be approached by the same company months later to do the task for no pay as part of his MA thesis. At that point, James started understanding that there was more to his less than full acceptance in the Finnish labour market. He could not help but wonder if his skin colour might have had something to do with it. Overall, he knew that he was losing too much and that things had to change rapidly.

He made a compromise, no more looking for ideal jobs, whatever was available for a person like him in Finland – newspaper delivery and cleaning – would do. These were remarkably easy to find, he noted. But he also threw all his weight behind his studies thinking that a Finnish degree would surely fare better with Finnish employers. During his MA studies, he and a couple colleagues designed an application for a household name in IT consultancy, did his MA for yet another household name in IT in Finland, and completed his degree with a brilliant transcript. All of that did not get him a job. Now he knew that there was a problem, but he couldn't just move away. He had lost more than he achieved since his migration. How could he carry losses back home, or to a fresh start in New Zealand where he had admission into a PhD programme? What if New Zealand turned out to be another Finland? Better the devil you know he thought, and so he stayed, to get something out of the decision he made 2 years earlier, a Doctoral degree will allow him to do the consultancy work he started bigger and better.

He started his doctoral degree in Finland, without funding, but with a promise that if he proved his capacity, he would be given funding along the way. He was not worried about proving his capacity. He was still convinced that he was a capable professional and student. In fact, he was happy at the opportunity to show his capacity, it was an opportunity he had wished for much earlier. In six months, he had funding from his faculty thanks to a conference paper that he managed to push out during his 'test' period. He was happy to have proven himself capable, but this was not to last. Eighteen months in, the university had no funds to keep him, so he was back to the broom and back to proving his capacity again, which he did and with one year left on his study time, he has funding from the university again.

Looking back over the past six years, he notes his lesson. I must have been very naive at the beginning, thinking that a Finnish company could ever trust me with an audit, grant me unfettered access. How could that be when Finland is not Ghana? I see how hierarchical the society I live in is; nothing is pure black and white. Demonstrated performance, experience and qualifications got me a commensurate job in Ghana; it does not count in Finland. International certificates supposedly level the playing field by making all people equal professionally, yet they failed to improve my image to Finnish employers. Even the university does not treat all students the same, the best of the courses in my department are taught in Finnish. So I wondered – is there a possibility that the university is the first filter, distributing us into the labour market via some predetermined design – is this segmentation? This is how I know that a managerial level work like the kind I hope to do as a programme officer or an IT consultant just has no place in Finland. Not even in academia - imagine a black dean at a Finnish university. Vertical career immobility is real for people like me here - I have seen brilliant minds stuck in postdoc positions here, but becoming associate professors in Australia, Canada and most recently in the US. So I know what my next step has to be. I want to work as a consultant for a blue chip IT firm someday, or be a college dean at a university and if I go by history, that will not happen in Finland. Such a high management level cannot go to an African migrant in Finland, so I have to move to a country where people like me can succeed on the basis of qualifications..

And so he plans his next move. This time destination is an English speaking country where his wife could work too and his kids could stand a chance at following their dreams. He is ready for his next step so he says with a smile, "Australia or Canada or US, here I come!"

Individual Biographical Story _ 2

"Angela Murphy"

A practical nurse walks through the doors of Porvoo service centre, heading home. Her workday is over and she tries to get home before 4 pm when her kids return home from school. Her name is Angela Murphy and her story is one that is worth hearing, as it is a story of true resilience and versatility in the face of multi-layered gender, family, and legal status based discrimination and exclusion. Additionally, it is also an exemplary representation of gender and migration dynamics from the inside out. So, flashback 12 years to autumn 2010, St. Petersburg, Russia where the story begins.

Angela is a trainee doctor at the Moscow teaching and referral hospital. She just finished her 4-year training and she is just beside herself with pride that she finally did it! She is a doctor! When she failed the first entrance exam for med school, she didn't quit, she took a second one and it paid off. What Angela doesn't know is that life as she knows it, and the very same thing that she is so proud of at this particular moment she will have to abandon and may never get back again. It's a choice she will make, it's a choice she will not regret, but it will cost her the profession she has thought of more like a calling than a mechanical job that pays the bills.

One evening at home, Angela's husband, a fellow doctor throws a suggestion in the air, "how about we go and build our medical careers in Finland? I think that there, we can thrive to limits we could never imagine as doctors. What do you say?" After a bit of thinking... "Yees, yeah, that could work; if things can get better then why not?" That settled it, they were heading to Finland but not immediately; in two years, because they have to prepare before they uproot themselves for fresh careers in Finland. Life played its own cards and the two years of preparation played out very differently for Angela and Tim her husband. Tim enrolled for Finnish language classes while Angela became pregnant with their first child. Of course, she kept working for as long as she could before motherhood leave. In no time, 2 years had come and gone and Tim had learnt enough Finnish to get started. In fact, he got a job offer in a small beautiful city called Turku in Finland. So he went to Finland to settle down and later invite his wife and kid to join through the family migration path. It would work best that way. Meanwhile, Angela was having their second child. She was thrilled about the family growing, she was thrilled about the possibility to go to Finland but she couldn't help but feel like her career was stalling while her husband's was sprinting! It felt as if she was losing in some non-spelled out competition. Angela is not alone in this and she will soon join the long list of migrant women who are left behind by their husbands, brothers, and the male migrant in general in terms of career development potential in Finland. Although not widely addressed yet, literature suggests that gendered roles of family making as defined in various migrant countries of origin, and hegemonic male dominated family norms are seen as significantly influencing the poor integration of migrants in the Finnish labour market and in other migrant host countries. However, she quickly consoled herself, "I just have to get there, settle down and get started again. That's all it will take."

Angela was taking to Turku very well. She liked the Finnish classes she was taking. On arrival in Finland, she had visited the local Employment and Economic Development office (TE-office) where she and the integration personnel made a plan that would equip her with all she needed in terms of skills and understanding of procedures so she could kick off her career once again and the first stop was Finnish language course. 6 hours a day and then she returns home to the kids. She did this for slightly over a year and managed to pass the language test. Some months later, the TE office had called notifying her of a work trial opportunity at a

hospital that she could begin immediately. Angela was starting to feel very optimistic and with that positive attitude she walked into the hospital for her day one being a doctor (albeit in training) at a Finnish hospital – a dream come true perhaps?

No it was not a dream come true, maybe even the opposite, and this is why. Angela's first day was rough. What she thought was a good understanding of the Finnish language turned out extremely insufficient. The doctor she was working with had to repeat words many times, she had to ask questions repeatedly, she had to use the internet to understand most things; it was rough. The coming days did not get any better especially because the doctors with whom she worked kept rotating. Before she could accustomise to one doctor's dialect, there would be another one and they all had such varying levels of tolerance; some were very tolerant and some were not so accommodating of "the foreign lady who speaks bad Finnish and does not seem to understand anything," and Angela understood their plight. She knew it was not their job to help her transition into her new work environment, or to teach her 'medical Finnish' that was the work of the TE office. Unfortunately, for Angela, this gruelling experience was to go on for 6 months. There are nights when she returned home from work in despair, nothing made sense, she didn't know what Finland and everybody wanted from her and how she could give it. She wanted to return home to Russia! But as she pushed on, hoping that at the end of the 6th months, her 'medical Finnish' and her understanding of the Finnish work culture would be much improved; only one improvement occurred, she understood the Finnish work culture and even loved it very much. However, on the down side, she was losing confidence in her ability to be a doctor in Finland. She was scared that people's lives could not be safe in her hands, but her most concrete fear was that she would never pass The Finnish medical practitioners certification exam, in Finnish. This was not only a scary time for Angela, it was heavy, it was painful and unbearable. She had worked so hard to be a doctor and now a language was taking all of that from her?

Almost like an olive branch – but maybe not, Angela's work training was extended for another 6 months, but this time she was sent to paediatric department. The team was friendly and supportive, she was being guided/trained, the faces were not changing all the time, and even the patients were regulars. "Here I could work," she thought to herself and as her six months came to an end she approached the leaders of the hospital and requested to work with them as an assistant doctor as she acknowledged her Finnish language skill was not good enough for full responsibility over other people's lives. Unfortunately, the hospital did not need an assistant doctor, only a full doctor. Just like that, that glimmer of hope was extinguished. While at home without work for some time, Angela decided to study and take the certification test however she soon realised that it was impossible to be a stay home mum sending and picking kids from school, helping with their homework and preparing for an extremely difficult test. Her Finnish language skills were also eroding with each day that she didn't practice and the test was also costly – 500 euros for each try. Meanwhile, her husband was usually working overtime to service a loan they took for their house, so she also thought it might not be the best time to start gambling with 500 euros on test she will most likely fail.

Fast forward today. It's been some months since Angela began another work trial at the Porvoo service center. This time she is not working as a doctor, she is trying out practical nursing. She wanted to see if she has what it takes to be practical nurse. She's been told that the language demands are less stiff at this level, and she is also more comfortable knowing that she is not the one fully in charge of e.g., prescription which would require impeccable comprehension and communication skills in Finnish. She started it sceptically but she has grown to like her possibly new profession. She knows that it won't be easy and it will not happen overnight. She must go back to school and learn for years in order to be certified as a practical nurse. She must also continue Finnish language classes because the training, the exams, and the practice will be in Finnish.

Slowly she is learning to like the path that her career has to take and this is why her story is one of versatility, resilience and resourcefulness. Angela has two suggestions for the TE office; "personalise the language classes for qualifications, and provide migrants with labour market

and career transition assistance so that others like me, coming to Finland do not have to lose their hard earned professional expertise and right to practice like I did.”

Individual Biographical Story _ 3

“Salim Abdi”

Salim Abdi spent the whole of 2014 ‘migrating’. For most people who are forced to flee their homes and country to secure their lives, the journey is usually long, traversing many cities and countries and the vast and varied experiences of such a journey inevitably shapes life in the coming years. 16-year-old Salim left Somali in 2014 and arrived in Finland a year later in 2015. 5 years later, he feels that Finland is home, he doesn’t think of moving elsewhere, but he is nervous about his future, the kind of work he will manage to secure, the money he will be able to get and whether it will be enough to sustain a living or will he always be dependent on Kela?

“I was received very well in Finland, they were accepting.” Salim describes his arrival in Finland as a positive experience, in fact, as soon as he was a recognised refugee, he and the Employment and Economic Development Office (TE-office) hit the ground running with plans to help him find his place in the Finnish society. For two years, he learnt the Finnish language. All refugees begin with this first step. He found Finnish very hard to learn but reality taught him that he needed to learn it and use it because even socialising was going to be a challenge without Finnish, especially at school and the work place. The less Finnish he spoke, the less he tried to interact and most people just cast him off as the shy kid or the antisocial kid. However, he failed to foresee – understandably, – an even more concrete reason why he needed to gain proficiency of the Finnish language and although he still hasn’t understood this, his anxiety about the form of employment he can get all go back to his language capacity.

Midway 2017, he completed and passed his first language course and was off to basic compulsory education. This is a programme through which refugees are introduced to educational subjects to test their capacity on a subject as well their interest areas in order to guide the next step of their educational integration programmes. For Salim classes included Mathematics, Physics and some more Finnish. It’s difficult to tell which of these subjects were his favourites or even if his preference was in the list of subjects he was offered at a period so for a refugee’s labour market integration. However, as he would later lament the limited educational opportunities for foreigners (his preferred title over migrant or refugee), we can assume that this array of subjects was too narrow, or that Salim’s language skills did not allow him to continue further education along the lines of Mathematics or Physics as an Engineer, a teacher, a chemist etc.

Four years on in Finland, Salim has so far obtained only the basic versions of qualifications of a young adult preparing to join a European labour market. In fact, his strongest qualification in the Finnish context is Finnish language skills. In 2019, Salim joins a vocational training institute. His Finnish age mates’ spectrum of higher education institutions is much wider, including Universities of applied sciences and Universities, as well exchange programmes abroad. Two things separate him from his Finnish peers; language proficiency, and an uninterrupted primary and secondary education progression with qualifications that are recognised. Because of a lack of understanding of his educational capacity, missing certificates and imperfect Finnish language skills, Salim’s educational and career horizon is lowered by integration programmes. However, Salim himself does not fully understand the rationale behind his vocational training institute admission and not a University admission. He protests what he perceives as the integration official’s understanding of his human potential. He believes that they write him off thinking that he cannot do what Finns can do. He thinks that they think that only Finns can successfully take on certain educational opportunities and careers. He does not like this. He also does not understand why it is that in Finland a Finn and a citizen of the European Union is always prioritised over him and other foreigners like him

when it comes to opportunities such as employment. He thinks this is discrimination, because as he understands, one evaluation should always be based on merit.

Training to be a chef, Salim attends vocational training, continues to learn Finnish and takes part time jobs every now and then an opportunity opens up. Mostly the TE office notifies him when there is an opportunity. He has not worked in a restaurant yet, but has worked with a company that provides a variety of home services. He has conflicting feelings about working in Finland. Comparing the working environment in Finland and Somali, then Finland shines bright. Clear legislation on wages, working time and social security are strong points of the Finnish labour market according to him. However, there are some challenges and the first has to do with getting work. Qualifications are a must, and for people like him, that's the one thing that's usually missing. When he came to Finland, he had not completed secondary school and he has faced a stiff challenge in getting work in Finland without qualification. Once he interviewed to work at a Finnish restaurant and the recruiter told him to explain about his capacity but instead allow the certificates to speak. However, he has also come to learn that even with qualifications; there is no guarantee that a foreigner will get work. Based on his friend's experiences, he knows that it is very difficult for a foreigner to get work, especially secure, permanent employment. His fellow migrant and refugee friends tend to have short-term contracts, which offer low and insufficient wages and lack security to individuals. His experience also informs him that the recruitment process is a tall order for foreigners. He knows the struggle of seeking information on vacancies when such information circulate mostly within networks, and then the jobs are also few because the labour market is in a bad place at the moment, and he understands that foreigners bear the greatest brunt when the labour market goes through a rough patch. On top of this is the so-called 'taste-based' discrimination during recruitment where someone sees you and decides that they don't want to hire you? He believes the problem lies in the fact that employers have the final say on who to employ. "Being human, they chose according to their tastes and preferences. If they happen to dislike my background, where I come from, who I am, then they chose against me regardless of my qualifications or my ability to do the work." He says.

Knowing the challenges that a Somali refugee like him must overcome to get a job in Finland, Salim has learnt some useful lessons and one is to send as many applications (well done) as possible in order to hear back from recruiters occasionally. However, he notes that foreigner's problems do not end at the recruitment. At work, (and at school), Salim has experienced explicit racism, but he has found a solution around it. Understanding that everyone is entitled to their subjective attitudes towards others, he knows there is nothing he can do to stop the racism, but he avoids such people as much as he can. He chooses his friends very carefully and tries to avoid people that he describes as hurtful. Currently Salim does not have a job and he is okay with that. In the past when he had to work, attend vocational training and Finnish language classes he was overwhelmed. He thinks it's best that one acquires qualifications before venturing into the labour market. If his experience is anything to go by, the splitting attention between the two or three engaging tasks only results in poor performance of all. Unemployed, Salim depends on welfare support from the Social Insurance Institute (Kela) for his daily needs. The support is okay but is never enough and that's the source of his anxiety when he thinks of his future career wise.

Salim now knows that there is no sure formula for getting labour market integration in Finland right. The qualification rhetoric has been questioned by experiences of others around him. He also feels that he does not have a fair fighting chance for normal labour market participation, at least in comparison to his Finnish age mates. Nonetheless, his plan is to finish studies, obtain a certificate and look for work. He is ready to send as many applications as it will take him to be employed. His aim is to ensure that he stays in employment and out of social security support. This is because he believes that a job plays an important role in shaping foreigners lives in the host country. It is a source of fulfilment and one way that people improve their lives regardless of the past. For refugees, this is even more important, it is a way to take back control of one's life. He thinks that foreigners who have failed to secure jobs and depend

wholly on welfare support which is never enough tend to cause trouble or get into trouble, which he does not want that to be his story as well.

4.10 Annex IV, Ethnodrama

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE: Four Migrants and Four Scales of Resilience

A Boiling Toad Tale

PROLOGUE

On the left side of the tightly packed 20m² apartment/room lies a big white metallic bed, well spread in bright Ghanaian Kente cloth, a square dining table slash study desk is tucked away on the far right corner. On top of it is a 21-inch TV screen - pitch black, a bag of potato chips and a monopoly game card. On the rear right is a green 2-seater couch. An alarm goes off on a phone, and ELVIS, wearing blue sweatpants and hoodie appears from the kitchen, rushes to the phone, and turns it off. He falls on his back onto the bed, starts to doze off when the doorbell rings (TV Screen: Monthly get together for sanity!). He opens the door to a cheery MARINA (holding a shopping bag), JEFF (overdressed with a coat in the warmest day of May) and FRED running from the elevator door. All walk into the apartment chatting simultaneously.

(TV Screen: Monopoly)

(All four playing card board monopoly seated on the floor while drinking cheap beer from Lidl...)

JEFF

(Stands up and paces around a bit)

You know, integrating in the Finnish job market is just like playing monopoly, and playing well – you know, strategizing, calculating every move. I don't think of it as gambling like my friends here do (*now looking at ELVIS*). It's all too easy to get distracted from your goals. Some people get, let's say a cleaning job and since wages are much higher than what they were used to in their country of origin, they decide that money is good enough; they can forgo their future, and dreams, focusing only on fulfilling immediate wants.

(Marina and Elvis look at each other and shrug)

MARINA

I don't know about those "easily distracted people" you are talking about but I am not one of them, neither is anyone in this room. I think they must be very few. Migrants deal with really big, tuff, life issues, I think you simplify too much. Take me for example; I was a practicing doctor in Russia, but here I have to settle for practical nurse! Certainly not a money thing, and not my choice either!

(TV Screen: big, tough, life issues)

JEFF

Take those exams and certifications that can show that you are a master of your skills, and that you are not just claiming to be something. Have proof of your skills and it won't matter that you are Russian, or African, or Asian. Pick one exam that everyone in the world takes, pass it and all doubts will fade. It's a magic eraser for race and stereotypes.

(Elvis and Fred stand up and move to the dining table sitting opposite each other)

MARINA

Might work for you but not for me. After my experience with work trial at the hospital. Ooh the disaster that was...

(Sits on the couch and pulls both palms over her face)

... You know I couldn't understand most of what they said. My Finnish was so bad! All that stuff they taught at the TE office language class was useless. There is no way I can pass the Doctors certification test. There is no way. *(Looks down)* Besides, I also lost all my confidence. I just can't anymore.

ELVIS

I hear you Marina. If it's a monopoly game then it is rigged because we will always lose.

JEFF

(Cuts in rudely)

That's not true, you guys just give up to fast. You just don't have thick skin.

(Elvis picks up his phone and starts staring at it, throws it on the bed, leans back and gazes at the TV)

(TV Screen: Losing)

ELVIS

I've had my fair share of losing since I got here: two international professional certificates – PMP and CISA – expired, just because I couldn't practice. *(Facing Jeff)* Why didn't they erase my colour or the stereotypes about me?

My experience and even Fred's shows that there is an obvious cap to all vertical mobility, but all kinds of room for horizontal mobility for people like me. It's easy to move from cleaner to newspaper delivery, or from PhD student to project head, but not to dean. Management level is no go zone for – for clarity, Africans- here. We are legworks people; you either take that, or leave.

FRED

Preach man! That has been the theme of my life. All the time there aren't too many choices and you have to take whatever you get.

I worked for nearly 2 years on consecutive 2-month contracts. Do you know how many contracts those are? Yet that was not the worst part. I had a sword hanging over my head every 2 months; do I have a job? Can I renew my permit? All this time I sent hundreds of job applications but got nothing. So I enrolled for this hackathon which I won by the way, and pitched my idea to this big company. They were totally interested to proceed, so I had to register a company of my own in order to transact with them, and for that I needed a different kind of permit. I had to rush-marry my girlfriend, who is a Finn to get the permit. I presented the prototype to the company and guess what? *(Looking at Jeff)* I never heard from them again!

ELVIS

That's just so demoralizing. Something similar happened to me while doing MA studies. Three colleagues and I designed a service as classwork that caught the attention of a big IT consultancy firm, they were so quick to take it, and gave us nothing. In fact, they made us sign a non-disclosure agreement, which means we can never use that idea elsewhere.

The endless loosing for me is just too much. I had a really good life in Ghana, I was somebody, Finland has just pushed me 20 steps back!

(Walks to the bed, lying on his back with his feet on the ground).

MARINA

I worry about him...heck I worry about me, but at least I have my family here, it helps. He is alone. This get heavy. (*Looks at Jeff*) You live in a bubble. You need a reality check. You sound like a politician.

JEFF

(*Slightly agitated*)

I am in touch with reality! The way I see it, success depends on an individual. Ask yourself, what do you want and how far are you willing to go to get it? And, what will you chose to do when things don't work out. I'd say leave Finland, let things work for you elsewhere.

FRED

Something always gives... actually, maybe not. A while back, I realised that my employer was paying me peanuts compared to my colleagues so I started pushing for a raise. He says I should be happy to have a job, but I kept pushing. With a wife and kid, I needed stability, I gave an ultimatum, a raise or I leave. So I got a permanent contract, but at a lesser salary – irony. I have learnt that this is the trade.

(*Fred sits next to Marina on the couch, carrying a bag of potato chips.*)

MARINA

My situation is complicated; I have my children and husband to think of. I need to be at home when the kids return from school, and my husband always picks extra work to pay the house mortgage. He is a doctor.

ELVIS

(*TV Screen: The boiling toad*)

(*Dosses off in a short nap and a dream where he encounters his long dead grandpa, his guardian and source of wisdom. Grandpa tells him the tale of the boiling toad. When he wakes up, he sits and stares at his friends with resolve in his eyes, then starts talking.*)

We are just like the boiling toad. You know the toad that jumps into a pot with cold water to cool off but then the pot is put on fire and starts to heat up. The toad has the ability to adjust to the warm water but this uses up its energy, which runs out if the heating, persists, then the toad would never be able to jump out of the pot. It's like the ability to adjust is also a curse because the toad does not know that as it adjusts, the energy runs out and it will not be able to jump out ultimately and die. I am that toad, I and have to jump out now before it's too late or never will. (*Looks at the other three*)

MARINA

I wonder what I have done. Was the change of career from doctor to practical nurse my jumping out of the boiling water or was it my death?

FRED

I definitely died!

(*TV Screen: End of Scene 1*)

5 Greece

Christos Bagavos & Nikos Kourachanis

5.1 Background information on the national context: Country-specific critical issues

Significant transformations in the migratory landscape of Greece have been observed over the last years. The mixed flows of migrants and refugees have modified the role of Greece as a migrant-receiving country (Spyropoulou and Christopoulos, 2016). Immigration, in terms of either transit or settled immigrants, has become a major issue of official discourses, national laws and stakeholders' opinions; additionally, it has mobilized national authorities, international bodies as well as formal and informal civil society organizations (Marouda and Sarandi, 2016). Changes in the immigration landscape have led to further efforts by public authorities in the effective management of refugee flows and in reducing the risks of irregular stay for a significant number of migrants.

In practice, there is a kind of dichotomy between immigrants entering the country before the so-called refugee crisis of 2015, and refugees and asylum seekers reaching the country after the mid-2010s. Economic migrants entered Greece in the 1990s and 2000s, at a time when the country was experiencing high growth rates. Despite the absence of state policies, they managed to integrate into Greek society, mainly through the labour market. Unlike economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees who come to Greece mainly after 2014 settle in a country with significant unemployment and poverty problems that affect the Greek society as a whole. So, the first category has largely experienced irregular migration while the second has faced difficulties related to the refugee crisis. Consequently, the relevant discourse was shaped by the need for avoiding an extended irregular stay of immigrants and the effective management of refugee flows. Shift in Greek immigration law since 2014, which now aims to reduce the employment requirements that immigrants must fulfil for their residence permits to be renewed, has reduced the risks of irregular stay of immigrants and has enabled their further integration into the labour market (Bagavos et al. 2018). Nevertheless, despite the efforts made, both policies and public administration fail to fully address the challenges presented for the effective reception of refugees, which is a determinant preliminary stage for their future integration into the labour market. The clear division between reception and asylum procedures for those entering the country before and after 20 March 2016 – the cut-off date established by the EU-Turkey Statement – has also created a dichotomy between those transferring to and living in mainland Greece and those being held in the hotspots in islands. Consequently, the hotspots were overcrowded and reception conditions were poor in sanitation and hygiene, while access to health care was limited. In such a context, the hope for integration into the labour market, for those living in islands, sounds fanciful (Kourachanis, 2018a).

In any case, the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (MRAs) into the labour market remains more of a secondary issue for policy discourse and policy actors. Contextual aspects have been also relevant for the socio-economic integration of both population groups. Changes in the immigration landscape were coupled with adverse economic conditions and the subsequent austerity measures of the 2010s (Kapsalis, 2018). Extremely high unemployment and stifling control over the shaping of the labour law were and still remain two

significant aspects of an adverse economic and labour market environment (Kouzis, 2018). This gloomy framework did not favor the integration of MRAs into the labour market. With widespread unemployment, the prospect of developing targeted employment policies for MRAs seems impractical, since employment policies are mainly oriented towards the fight against overall unemployment. At the same time, economic hardship has particularly affected those sectors where MRAs are mainly employed, such as construction, retail and personal and domestic services. This unfavourable economic environment seems to be gloomier for refugees and asylum seekers than for migrants who are in a better position to secure a long legal stay, given the existence of informal ethnic/migratory networks among them, their knowledge of the Greek language and familiarization with the State administration (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2020).

In practice, the framing and implementation of policies fail to deal with the barriers in place, such as the inability to transfer skills and credentials to a European context, the precarious legal status, limited education and language skills and limited work experience that MRAs are most of the time confronted with when they seek stable jobs. Those barriers are even more significant in Greece which is characterized by the polarization and fragmentation of policies aiming to facilitate the access of MRAs into the labour market and the limited involvement of the Public Employment Services in the labour market integration of MRAs. Barriers are also related to the features of the Greek labour market itself. Third-country nationals, particularly those who have resided in Greece for only a short time, are mostly pushed into the underground economy and undeclared work, an issue relevant in the context of adverse economic conditions. Despite the intensification of labour inspections, there has been no sign of improvement up to now, mainly because of the non-systematic application of those inspections as well as common views among many people, who very often consider undeclared employment as something legitimate. Thus, migrants are trapped in low wage and low-skilled occupations, very often in the informal sector with no labour rights, without social insurance and with limited opportunities for any improvement in their socio-economic status. Although sectors such as catering, tourism and agriculture, which have experienced continuous growth in recent years, offer increasing opportunities to migrants for entering the labour market, those sectors are characterized by flexibility, irregularity, discrimination and undeclared work (Bagavos et al., 2019a).

In addition, given the persistent economic recession in Greece and the lack of job search assistance programmes, the integration of MRAs, in particular refugees and asylum seekers, is hindered by the fact that they most likely desire relocation to another European country and are unwilling to be fully integrated into the labour market of a country which is seen more as a transit than a settlement country. This is evident from the views of MRAs, stakeholders and representatives of social partners with long experience on migration issues, collected during the interviewees for Work Packages 3, 4 and 5 (Bagavos et al. 2019b and c).

The limited role played by the public authorities as a provider of services such as language courses, employability services and skills development training must be seen as significant barriers for the integration of MRAs into the labour market. Although NGOs have significantly contributed in these areas, public authorities have still not implemented many monitoring and validation processes, such as validation of the level of language knowledge or validation of skills. In general, despite the recent trend for the further involvement of the public authorities in the integration of MRAs into the labour market, the current increase in refugee flows risks diverting the attention of public actors to issues relating to the reception rather than to the integration of MRAs (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2020).

The results of previous Work Packages reveal that although the stakeholders and the representatives of social partners are well aware of the reality and the barriers to the integration of immigrants and refugees into the Greek labour market, they consider that they have extremely limited means of intervention and influence for improvement of existing policies. On the one hand, this is related, to the limited power devoted to them by the state for

such actions and, on the other hand, to the overall weaknesses in terms of bargaining power of labour unions in particular resulted from austerity measures.

Findings also indicate that the main aspects and challenges in relation to labour market integration of MRAs are the need for an increasing effectiveness of integration policies, the fight against discrimination and informal work, the integration of vulnerable groups, the significant role of informal networks, the further connection of MRAs with the State, and the major importance of language knowledge. Since the research efforts so far, significant challenges have been identified regarding the integration of MRAs in the Greek labour market. These challenges can be considered either as parameters which, with their proper use by public policy, can be turned into enablers for the integration of MRAs, or can be considered as barriers that need to be addressed.

In the last five years, a more organized reception and identification system for asylum seekers has been established in Greece, something that did not exist in the past (Christopoulos, 2020). This then pushes for the formation of social integration policies (including the development of employment policies). Programs such as ESTIA or HELIOS, which will be analyzed below, are interventions in the right direction. However, they need more support and more growth in the near future (Kourachanis, 2020). At the same time, the dimension of the role of migratory channels seems to be of particular importance in promoting the smooth and gentle adaptation of MRAs to the Greek labour market and the Greek society broadly (Venturas, 1994). Often, the first entrance of MRAs into the Greek labour market is through ethnic enterprises.

However, the Greek state must be more careful and sensitive on issues that can be considered as barriers to the integration of MRAs into the Greek labour market. A large number of MRAs had traumatic experiences and need special psychosocial support measures that to date have been insufficient in the social services of the Greek state (Kourachanis, 2018b). The inadequacy of the Greek state's social protection framework has often resulted in MRAs being trapped in 3-D Jobs (Psimmenos, 2017), which does not favor their work and social mobility.

5.2 Methods

In order to avoid bias and to maximize the dimensions of the factors that impede or facilitate MRAs' access to the Greek labour market, approaching MRAs has been done in more than one way. The main ways were through NGOs and solidarity initiatives (e.g. refugee squats, migratory channels) with which collaboration has been developed in the context of previous work packages. Prior contact and communication with these actors has been helpful in alleviating a significant research hurdle, such as identifying MRAs and pooling their experiences as well as highlighting the heterogeneity of the problems they face. The support request for these bodies was formulated in a letter written by the Greek research team and sent to them a few weeks before the investigation was carried out.

An additional filter for the selection of beneficiaries was the geographical representation of all regions of the Greek capital, Athens. A limitation related to this issue was the fact that interviews with other cities in Greece were not possible. However, the city of Athens can offer representative competence in the extracted findings, as almost half of Greece's and refugee's population resides in its territory (UNHCR 2019; 2018). Thus, interviews were conducted with MRAs residing in central Athens, but also in remote areas, such as the Skaramaga campground (Southern Suburbs).

Another parameter was the identification of MRAs with a focus on gender and age and in particular on women and young people. This effort has partially succeeded. There has been a satisfactory outcome in the search for interviews with young refugees. Specifically, 16 MRAs were interviewed (twelve of them were 18-24 years old and four of them were 25-45 years old).

In the women's aspect, there were particular difficulties in finding an adequate sample. This is because the cultural background they bring from their countries of origin discourages them from speaking openly about the personal problems they are facing, and because many of the refugee women have learned that they should not work but only grow up children and take care of their household chores. Based on these limitations, the research team was able to conduct four interviews with female MRAs. Regarding the countries of origin of the interviewees, five are from Syria, four from Afghanistan, two from Congo, two from Pakistan, one from Iran, one from Iraq and one from Albania. Year of arrival in Greece also varies: four arrived in 2016, one in 2017, six in 2018 and five in 2019.

The interviews with the beneficiaries often contain sensitive points. Some of the interviewees had suffered traumas, shocks and persecution, making it not easy to discuss certain issues openly. For that reason, the interviewees were informed about the possibility of providing psychological support. In addition, in some cases, the reference to sensitive issues that may have burdened the psychology of MRAs was avoided.

The dimension of traumatic experiences both in the country of origin and during the trip or the place of settlement of the MRAs play an important role in their integration prospects. Many MRAs who have experienced incidents of violence need special psychosocial support services in order to make a new, safe start to their lives. Particularly in the case of women, abominable mental traumas, such as abuse, can often be reported. Resolving traumatic experiences is an important prerequisite for strengthening employment prospects, as every human must be in perfect or fair mental and physical health to be able to work. These parameters are therefore important for maximizing the effectiveness of MRAs labour market integration.

5.3 Individual barriers and enablers: Analysis of interview data

Throughout the biographical interviews, a number of enablers and barriers were identified that could be considered turning points or epiphanies in the integration of MRAs into the Greek labour market. These dimensions will then be sought to be presented synthetically through the creation of certain narrative themes directly related to labour market integration. The following are some of the thematic narratives that could be considered to facilitate the integration of the MRAs into work. Afterwards, a number of thematic narratives related to factors that impede labour integration will be synthesized.

5.3.1 Barriers

5.3.1.1 *Vulnerability and Agency: Pre-emigration experiences, escaping from violence*

A key factor that hampers the labour market integration of MRAs is the pre-emigration experiences. Many MRAs have experienced a post-traumatic shock from the persecution or torture they suffered in their countries of origin or during their journey. The painful experience of persecution is a parameter that has created traumatic experiences for MRAs. Coming from regimes that do not respect human rights they have suffered catastrophic events. Trying to escape a situation that threatened their lives was not accompanied by a much better situation.

Often, the process of migratory travel was framed by new serious threats that again put their lives at risk. The traffickers themselves or the security forces of the transit countries carried out hostile actions, resulting in many of their companions being killed. All these events, which happened before their eyes, have left negative experiences to MRAs.

5.3.1.2 The consequences of the MRAs traumatic experiences

Even the process of settling in the host country has in many cases not been accompanied by services to ensure respect for human dignity. Particularly for Greece, a country where thousands of asylum seekers and refugees intend to settle in another country of destination following the EU-Turkey Statement, the context of the host conditions is particularly intense. It is indicative that at present there are about six thousand asylum seekers places available at reception and identification centers in the Aegean islands. In fact, there are over forty thousand people in these hosting structures (Kourachanis, 2020). This treaty directly violates human rights. The phenomena of housing overcrowding, poor health conditions and often living in tents are exacerbating the fragile mentality of asylum seekers (Bagavos et al. 2018).

Adding to all of the above is the dysfunctional, slow-moving, and complicated way of examining asylum applications. The process of examining an asylum application takes a very long time. It is indicative that some asylum seekers have an appointment for an interview two years later. All this time is characterized by strong instability and insecurity. Without knowing whether Greece will eventually provide them with international protection, asylum seekers are trapped in a pending mechanism and, of course, discouraged from developing coherent and long-term professional plans. All of these dimensions, which combine the fragile mentality of asylum seekers with the inadequate reception conditions of the Greek state, pose significant obstacles to the integration of workplaces.

According the Interview 10 (Laura, Female, 23 years old, Single from Congo): She was born and raised in Congo. She finished high school and held some IT seminars. She worked in a company with electrical appliances. She lived a prosperous life with her parents and siblings. A few years ago she began to notice that her father had returned home at night injured. She began to worry that something was happening to him. She insisted to find out and he revealed to her that their family was from a Rwandan tribe and that the regime's troops in Congo had discovered it. A few days later her father disappeared and she has not seen him until to date. She decided to go to the military authorities for help. When she revealed her father's name, the military authorities arrested and sent her detained in an area far from her town. She escaped and emigrated to Turkey to survive. After a short time, she was forced to cross a forest with other unknown prisoners without knowing where. After days of hiking, she found herself on a beach and put them in inflatable boat, without knowing where they were going. They ended up at the Moria camp in Lesvos. As she reports:

"One night one of our traffickers took us from the detention center in Turkey. He put us in the boat with dozens of other people and left. We didn't know where we were going. At some point we were told that we were heading to Lesvos. We were taken to the Moria Reception and Identification Center. There we encountered a new mess. At first we were sleeping on a cardboard box outside the camp. When it was hot or it was raining we were totally exposed. Absolutely exposed to any weather phenomenon. After a few days they brought us a tent and we stayed four people there.

After about three weeks we found shelter in a container inside the camp and left the tent. The Moria camp is a hell. The conditions are miserable. There is a big crowd. Together vulnerable groups and lonely men. Every day we heard about a new case of victimization of a vulnerable person. My little sister, while we were in the Moria camp, went to the hospital seven times. She became ill because of the bad conditions in the camp. That is why we were transferred to an apartment in Athens.

In the last few months we have been living in Athens and things are much better. However, I cannot say that I have overcome what I lived. The horror of war, the hardships of travel, and the fact that people were killed in front of me have shocked me. As long as I lived well in my country before the war broke out, I could never imagine living in a paper box outside the camp of Moria. I do not know if I have yet fully realized what I have experienced.

It may, of course, be the worst, but even now I can't say I feel completely safe. Certainly, I no longer run the risk of being at war during my stay in Turkey or while living in the Lesvos camp. However, we had not planned to come to Greece. We wanted to go find our kin-network in Germany. Here we are trapped. I was forced to apply for asylum in Greece and they told me they would call me for an interview in January 2022. What will I do by then? I don't know if I have to learn Greek or to take the risk leaving for Germany. They all look so uncertain. And if they refuse my asylum application? If they call me back? To go where; I have nothing in my country anymore. All that I have lived through and the current uncertainties about the future prevent me from developing a long-term business plan. I work only some days wherever I find".

Laura's traumatic experiences in her country of origin greatly strained her psychology. Even today she can't get over the fact that she lost her loved ones to the bombing. This biographical story recalls the significant impact of the traumatic experience on the social and labour integration of refugees in the host country. The effects of trauma on refugees are long-lasting, both physically and mentally (George, 2010). Traumatic experiences are also exacerbated by the insecurity they experience in the host society. The lengthy and uncertain asylum procedure increases the stress and pain of asylum seekers and refugees.

5.3.1.3 Serving the vulnerability: the failure of the reception;

A decisive turning point for the labour market integration of MRAs is the absence of targeted employment policies (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2020). This situation is made worse by the fact that MRAs are in Greece at a time when, after ten years of austerity policies and recession, there is a general phenomenon of unemployment among the population. This is generally reflected in the working and social problems of the Greek society. According to Eurostat (2019) data, in the Greek society the risk of poverty and social exclusion has increased from 27.7% in 2010 to 35.7% in 2016, unemployment rates from 7.8% in 2008 to 24.9% in 2015, long-term unemployment rates from 3.9% in 2008 to 18.2% in 2015, material deprivation rates from 21.8% in 2008 to 40.7% in 2016, housing mortgage rates for the poor from 18.1% in 2010 to 40.9% in 2016.

At the same time, the absence of any preparatory intercultural action to familiarize asylum seekers and refugees with the European way of life is a particularly important factor. Training MRAs in daily living in the urban context and, above all, in apartments seems to be essential. The main issues raised were overconsumption in the case of ESTIA beneficiaries of housing, underprivileged care of underage children in families, and the infliction of minor or major damage to apartments.

The most obvious shortcoming that leads to integration difficulties is the lack of Greek language learning activities. Learning the Greek language at the moment is partially based on voluntary partnership initiatives of NGOs. In this respect, it is often discouraging to those who benefit from learning the Greek language. This is due to the fact that the majority of them still view Greece as a transit country to other Member States. In any case, the fragmented actions of learning Greek with independent initiatives of organizations, without centralized planning, fail to ensure a very important parameter for labour integration in general.

In the absence of a coherent state-sponsored Greek language learning program, a crucial obstacle to work integration, particularly for single parent families and women in general, is the lack of adequate childcare structures and services. This binds mothers with underage children - in the majority women MRAs are such cases - to childcare and prevents them from finding a permanent job.

In addition, the lack of a skills and training qualification mechanism for MRAs seems to be a major weakness. Many MRAs have degrees or have acquired professional skills in their countries of origin. The Greek state has not yet developed services and mechanisms for the

recognition of these qualifications²⁸, which removes MRAs from an important mean of enhancing their employment prospects.

The last - and most important - dimension is related to the fact that there are no specific, constant and targeted measures for the employment of MRAs by the Greek state. Thus, in 2018 a (non-binding) National Strategy for Integration including MRAs has been released (Ministry of Migration Policy 2019). This strategy also provided some labour market integration measures, such as routing into rural work. However, the framework for the implementation of the social inclusion strategy has actually deteriorated and has essentially ceased. This has created an environment for MRAs that is not accompanied by targeted ways of supporting their integration.

An example here is interview 8 (Amena, Female, 44 years old, widowed with four children from Syria, born in Damascus). She finished high school and then learned the art of sewing. She started working in textiles until she got married. Her husband was a clothing designer and she worked at home while raising their four children. In 2013, the state arrested her husband as a political opponent and killed him. During the first time, several unknown men came and threatened to kill her and her children. For this reason she had to leave the country and decided to emigrate to Germany. On the journey to Europe, traffickers robbed her. Also, when she arrived in Turkey, soldiers fired on them and killed some of her companions.

When they arrived in Moria they stayed in a small tent with her four children for about three months. Eventually, when she arrived in Athens, she worked for several days as a tailor in a handicraft. However, she had no one to look after and care for her children and was forced to leave her job. She believes that if there were social services to support single parent refugee families, she could work undistracted and have a decent standard of living.

She reports that: *"In Greece, I feel safe, but after a year in Athens, I find it very difficult to integrate into society as well as to find a job."*

One of these obstacles is learning Greek. Greek seems to be a difficult language that you cannot easily and quickly learn. Although I'm living in Athens since one year, I have only learned a few words. I tried to enrol in a Greek language course organized by a non-governmental organization but the class was full.

Apart from Greek it is difficult to find a job because I have nowhere to leave my children. My eldest son is eight years old and my youngest daughter is three years old. I need them at home and there is no one else to take care of them. If I had to leave them somewhere to watch them while I was working I might have found a solid job. Even with a little money for a start.

I was a seamstress in my country, so I know how to make and process garments. I think I could do this profession here too. But my other compatriots in my country were craftsmen and here they can't prove it. I have been told that there is no service that can recognize qualifications in their specialty. As a result, they work and get paid as unskilled workers. And often they can do the job of craftsmen and get paid as unskilled.

This is related to the fact that we have not learned any information about any employment program. If, for example, someone could help me rent a small shop and get me two or three machines in my job, I could open a clothing shop and not need the UNHCR and home allowance from the ESTIA program. But at this stage I am in, needing an interpreter to talk to you, having to raise children and having no money to open a shop, how to practice my profession and live independently?"

²⁸ One of the rare actions in this field, thought with a limited coverage, is the European Qualification Passport initiated in 2017 (Council of Europe 2017).

5.3.1.4 *Exploitation*

The lack of coherent state employment policies and the lack of a robust labour protection framework expose MRAs to the risk of job insecurity. This phenomenon was particularly evident for vulnerable groups, such as economic migrants, even before the economic and refugee crisis in the country in the last decade (Kapsalis, 2018). The most common paths to the labour integration of economic migrants were through practices of undeclared, unskilled and low prestige jobs. This phenomenon is largely perceived in the population of the MRAs who entered Greece after 2014 (Bagavos, et al., 2019a and b).

The need for MRAs to work in combination with the lack of intensive controls on labour law compliance and the weak role of labour unions has resulted in their weak bargaining position with employers. In order to earn a living for their subsistence, MRAs agree to work in harsh conditions, usually with lower wages than those of Greek workers. This has subsequently, as experience has shown, led to a total deregulation of labour rights in the sectors of the economy in which they work (Xypolytas, 2017).

Interviews with MRAs show that there are widespread undeclared employment and circumvention of many labour rights (working over eight hours per day, exposure to difficult manual labour without proper hygiene) in these populations. In the context of asylum seekers, one factor that discourages their work on formal terms of employment is the fact that they will lose the cash assistance they receive as a prerequisite for obtaining it if they do not have their own means of subsistence.

The phenomena of undeclared work were first seen in the Greek society in the 1990s, when there were massive waves of inflows of economic migrants (Kapsalis, 2018). It seems that in the years of the refugee crisis, asylum seekers and refugees are expected to be routed into labour integration channels similar to those that emerged for economic immigrants thirty years ago. These paths lead to heavy labour conditions in the rural areas, with technical occupations in the construction industry as well as routing them to catering services in tourist areas. These are professions where Greek workers avoid being employed.

Private employment agencies play an important role in routing MRAs into these sectors of the economy. These are private companies that undertake to find job for MRAs. Due to the lack of targeted employment policies by the Greek state, MRAs are being forced to pay private employment agencies in the aftermath in order to earn a minimum income.

The last major hurdle in the integration of MRAs is the lack of information to open a private business. Many MRAs in their countries of origin had a small individual or family business and believe that in Greece they can continue their professional activity in this field. However, they are not aware of the procedures to obtain business financing from the Greek state or to start the process of opening a business with their own economies.

Interview 9 is illuminating in this regard (Ali, Male, 18 years old, single from Iran). He grew up in Iran in an area whose inhabitants were not entitled to obtain Iranian citizenship and he is now 18 years old. They were excluded from any access to social rights. So he was never able to study and enrol in the formal education system. That is why his family decided to come to Europe four years ago to feel safe and able for their children to receive formal education. At first, they arrived in Lesbos, but they couldn't go to school there. In Lesbos an interpreter was killed in front of him, which shocked him. After they came to Athens, the abolition of the AMKA²⁹ excluded them from access to education.

Through networks of his compatriots, while living in Lesbos, he went to work as a farmer in the fields. For about a month. However, the landowner did not pay him. He also knows the hairdresser's art but does not have the required certificates in our country, nor is there any

²⁹ The AMKA (Social Security Number) is in essence the work and insurance ID of every employee, pensioner and dependent member of their family in Greece. The AMKA is necessary for the use of every social service.

mechanism for certifying his skills. He is also concerned because he does not know the language and fears that it will not easily be adapted to Greek society. He also fears a new phenomenon of victimization in the labour market.

As he reports: "As long as I stayed in Lesvos I didn't know Greek or English. We were offered the time we lived in the hotspot to go to work on some farmers' estates. When we went the first day the boss told us he would get us a trial period without getting paid. If we are fit for the job it will keep us going for a month that we needed. I did my best to have an income as long as I waited to move in mainland. He told me that I was fit for the job he wanted and he would give us all the money collected at the end of the month. We carved the soil and transported wood to the top. It was a heavy duty. Then we picked the fruit, put it in bags and loaded it. I did this job for a month and in the end he told me he would not pay me. He threatened me that if I didn't leave he would call the police to arrest me. Eventually I worked hard for a month without getting paid.

When they brought us to Athens after a while I asked some of my compatriots I had met in Lesvos for work. I was told that they had paid for a private labour office and sent them to work in a factory. They carried the trash at the end of the day and they were collecting the empty boxes left over from the warehouse. We went there for work and they told us that they only want us whenever there is load to unload. They used to call us about once or twice a week to carry boxes for about six hours a day for a fee of twenty euros per person. It goes without saying that the job was undeclared and we had no stamps or any form of labour protection.

When I am saving some money I want to open a craft with bags and shoes. In my country I did this job by hand and I was very good. I believe that in Greece, which is a country with tourism, such an ethnic enterprise will be well-liked, because there are not many here today. But I do not know how to open such a business in Greece and I am afraid that they will not exploit me again, as in Lesvos then".

5.3.2 Enablers

5.3.2.1 The safe place of Europe;

A first narrative thematic analysis relates to the fact that asylum seekers and refugees as a whole come from countries that have violated human rights, basic freedoms, and do not secure the right to decent living. Their plan to move to European territory, as well as their expectations of migratory travel, are in line with the sense of safety that the European culture provides, along with access to rights and, in general, the possibility of living with dignity. This can be seen in a series of biographical narratives that show the painful living conditions in their countries of origin and the feeling of security in the European continent (Ellis et al., 2019). This can be accounted for by factors favourable to inclusion at work, despite the unfavourable living conditions in the camps, as well as individual but actual incidents of racist violence or victimization of MRAs.

Interview 3 provides a useful witness of this aspect (Hasan, Male, Syrian 24 years old, Married with four children): He was born and raised in Syria with his 11 brothers. His father was a shoemaker and lived in good economic conditions. From a young age he learned the art of shoemaking. When the war started in Aleppo, their apartment was bombed. Then, his whole family decided to leave for Turkey. He stayed with his brother and his two nieces to guard the house so they wouldn't be robbed. But in a new plane raid a new bombing wounded his hand and legs. Also, his two nieces were killed. He went to the hospital, but police arrested him and put him in jail because the area he lived in was in opposition to the political regime in Syria. They considered him a political opponent and for four months interrogated and tortured him. When he was acquitted, he left and went to find his family in Turkey.

He came to Europe hoping to live safely and without the risk of being captured again. He arrived in Greece in 2016 and 2017 his family came for reunification. He wants to stay in Greece as he believes traditional shoemaking can be viable in our country. He currently lives with the support of the ESTIA program³⁰ and works undeclared as a shoemaker in a small shoe industry. He found his current job through ethnic/migratory networks. Through his daily life at work he has managed to learn a little Greek. He is well aware of his art and believes that he will manage to open his own business. However, in the craft industry he finds it difficult to use the machinery, as in Syria all his work on footwear was handmade.

As he reports: *“My expectations for emigration from my country of origin were to find myself in a country that provides a sense of safety and to feel that my life is not at risk. I grew up in a country that did not have access to rights because we came from a race that was considered hostile to the regime. We were therefore excluded from any right. We had no right to attend school. I did not have the right to learn writing and reading. For that reason the only option I had from a young age was to become a farmer. Some years ago the army came and arrested my father because they considered him as a terrorist. Since then, I haven't seen him again. After a while, my other brothers and I were called in for questioning. They tortured me and threatened to kill me. I had to leave and the only safe option I had in mind was to come to Europe. The emigration travel was dangerous and painful. Despite the hardships, now that I live in Greece, I feel safe. I have the confidence to meet a new country where I can live in peace and enjoy rights. Under these conditions I can calmly pursue a career in the labour market. Working conditions may not seem particularly easy, but in my country I did a lot of hard work”.*

5.3.2.2 Intermediaries of labour-market integration (NGOs and international organizations)

The employment policies of the Greek state, which have been developed to date, cannot be considered as an enabler of the MRAs labour market integration. The exception to this is the newly established HELIOS program that will be mentioned below. Employment services created by NGOs can be considered as a substitute for state deficiencies (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2020). Some NGOs have included in their social support programs the development of activities and services for the preparation of NGOs for entry into the Greek labour market. Such activities include creating CV, preparing for an interview with employers, learning IT and Greek or English Language. However, such actions, although important, are of limited scope if fulfilled by NGOs.

According to Interview 6 (Akram, Male, 20 years old, single from Syria): He grew up in Syria and went to school there until the first year of high school, when he was interrupted by war. He wanted to study at the University, but because of the war he failed. Many schools in the area were hit by bombs. Many of his classmates were killed. He left with his family in Turkey. In 2016 he managed to move to Greece with his father, but the rest of his family did not manage to come to date. They stayed for a year in Leros and then moved to a camp in mainland. He was living in an apartment of ESTIA program and currently he receives the rent allowance from HELIOS program in Athens. He had particular problems until he filed his papers and obtained the required official documents for his stay in Greece (AMKA, etc.). He learns Greek and English at an NGO. He has sent his CV to a communication company in a position to support Arabic-speaking customers and hopes he will be hired.

He reports that: *“NGO executives helped me find out how the Greek labour market functions. Initially I was taught to learn Greek, my other compatriots started English classes in the same*

³⁰ The ESTIA Programme was developed through the collaboration of the UNHCR with the Greek government, local authorities and non-governmental organizations. Its original objective was to create accommodation places in apartments for asylum seekers who would be relocated to other EU Member States. Since 2017, the programme was extended to all categories of asylum seekers, with an emphasis on the most vulnerable cases (Kourachanis, 2018).

NGO. When we learned some basic concepts of the Greek language we started seminars on the structure of the Greek labour market and a description of some of the areas we could be involved in, such as tourism and the agricultural sector. We were told about the rights and wages in the Greek labour sector. During our seminars we prepared our CVs, as they also showed us how to behave and respond to interviews with employers. These are all very useful actions to understand what we need to do to find a job in Greece. However, a very small percentage of all MRAs may be involved in these actions. In my group we were twenty beneficiaries of the employability program. The rest do not do such things".

One initiative that appears to encourage the labour and social integration of recognized refugees is the HELIOS program. HELIOS is a newly established rental subsidy program for recognized refugees implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and its partners with the support of the Greek Government and funded by the Directorate-General of the European Commission for Migration and Home Affairs. The main purpose of HELIOS has two parts: first, the development of actions to support independent living. Second, the rental subsidy. According to the HELIOS Newsletter, beneficiaries receive information and financial support to upgrade their living skills. In particular there is support in finding an apartment to rent but it is leased in the name of the beneficiaries. The rental period of the apartment should be at least six months and at most twelve months. Along with the financial support of HELIOS, six-month mandatory integration seminars are also planned. These seminars will be divided into 280 hours of learning the Greek language and 80 hours of inclusion seminars on cultural familiarization, employment counselling and more (IOM, 2019).

As it is reported by a beneficiary of the above-mentioned services (Interview 6): *"I've been in Greece for four years. I stayed for a while in the hotspot of Lesbos island, after in a camp in Malakasa in Attica. For the past two years I have been benefiting from the ESTIA program of the UNHCR. This program was very good, because compared to the camps we stayed at home and lived humanly. But the two years I was in the program I was not given the opportunity to learn Greek or get a job. Especially after the first time I felt like swallowing. Because we didn't know the Greek language and we couldn't do anything. We felt they were simply hiding in a house to become invisible. My prospect of staying in Greece has improved lately. Because I got refugee status. This property gave me the opportunity to rent a house in my name with HELIOS money. At the same time, I have been attending Greek language courses in HELIOS lately and some seminars on Greek and European culture. I think these two actions are the key to find a job and integrate effectively into Greek society. Because I will know Greek and I will be able to talk to my employers, my colleagues, my neighbours. I'll be able to make friends easier. In a nutshell, I can enjoy the opportunity to live somewhere safe. When I save a little money and get acquainted with Greek reality I would like to open my own business so that my family and I can work"*.

5.3.2.3 The role of ethnic/migratory networks in the labour integration of MPAs

Biographic interviews with MRAs show that the most crucial turning point for their integration into the Greek Labour Market is the role of ethnic/migratory networks. Those networks appear to be the main communication channel with the Greek labour market. Migration networks have become more prominent in the literature as an important preparatory social factor for their social integration (Poros, 2011). Mostly ethnic networks seem to channel MRAs into ethnic businesses. In ethnic businesses, MRAs come to a first employment process in Greece and gain their first work experience. At the same time, they are familiar with the way businesses operate in Greece and develop expectations for the creation of their own ethnic business. The ethnic dimension of the business seems to bring prospects of sustainability to the Greek economy, as it can offer innovative and competitive products as it relates to services that are not offered or lacking in Greece.

Interview 12 is illuminating here (Mohammed, Male, 24 years old, single from Syria): He was born in Syria but, when he was a child, his family had to immigrate to Iran because they were enemies of the political regime. His parents were well-off in Syria as well. He studied and

graduated from the University of Meteorology. In Iran, control measures were tight for his family. He felt he was not free to do what he liked. He was not allowed to travel from one city to another and generally felt very limited. From his school age he wanted to leave the area when he grew up to go to Europe, where he imagined it free and with rights.

At the age of 22, he decided to pursue his dream. The migration journey to Europe, however, was horrible. He was taken to the Iranian border with Turkey and sent back to Syria, a country he had never visited since his childhood. There they were crushing him and later he managed to leave the country illegally. Along the way he was in danger of being killed by soldiers guarding the border. He was determined to leave because he could no longer afford to live in such an environment. When he managed to get to Turkey, after a few days he managed to reach Chios.

He stayed in Chios for a while and then he reached the port of Piraeus. There, for a while, he remained trapped in the informal camp set up at the port's E2 gate. Groups of activists and his compatriots offered him support. He met them and made many friends. Later, he managed to stay at Skaramanga Camp. The situation was miserable. He lived with three families in the same area. For this reason, he decided to listen to his Greek friends who suggested that he should stay at a squat for refugees. There, besides housing, he attended English seminars and he greatly improved his English.

His friendships with activists and compatriots and the fact that he knew English helped him quickly find information about jobs he could be employed. He was hired as an interpreter by Farsi in English and vice versa, a job he holds to this day. He is satisfied with his work and wants to develop more skills to be integrated better in Greek society. There are two things that make it hard for him to do his job. First, the short-term contracts they offer him and that he doesn't get a salary as good as he would like.

As he reports: *"A key parameter that helped me find a job in Greece was my compatriots. They told me who was looking for a job and what I could do when I arrived in Athens. My first job in Greece was a year ago in a coffee shop. I would go there when the coffee was closed and I would clean it, as well as assist in carrying the supplies. Then, when I learned a bit about the job, I would replace the waiter when he was on leave. Then, for about six months, I was working on serving. There I learned to shape my daily life in Greece, as well as to speak a little Greek (mainly to communicate with suppliers). I have been out of the coffee for the last two months because I found a job in a shop which sells carpets. Upstairs I get the same money as I used to, but while I was living in my home country, I had a carpet-making workshop. So I went to the carpet business to see how it works in Greece. We have a tradition of carpets in my country, we make them handmade and I believe that this is one area that we can pursue professionally in Greece. My goal is to raise some money and learn how to make carpets in Greece. As soon as I do this, I plan to open a small carpet craft. There, besides me and my wife, my children could learn the art and earn a living on their own".*

5.4 Critical analysis of the adequacy of LMI: Comparative analysis

The critical analysis of the adequacy of LMI services through the MRAs biographical narratives substantially verifies the findings produced in previous work packages. Previous work packages have highlighted various barriers and enablers affecting workplace integration of MRAs. These obstacles concern fundamental issues, such as the legal status of their residence in Greece and the insecurity that exists until the acquisition of residence permits, and even more advanced issues, such as the lack of support actions for their integration into the Greek labour market.

A first set of barriers concerns the legal status of economic migrants' residence and the possibility of their formal employment in the Greek labour market. Legal residence is the key parameter that regulates the ability of immigrants to work. Over the years, Greek immigration policy has had a repressive character, with many of the economic migrants working under

undeclared employment (Kapsalis, 2018). The parameter of legal residence is also related to the fact that the completion of a minimum number of insurance stamps, through minimum working days per year, is a prerequisite for the renewal of a residence permit for employment purposes. This is what made obtaining the legal residence even more difficult during the financial crisis. Particularly during the crisis, many immigrants who were unemployed again went on to work illegally in the country working in undeclared jobs. In this way they were routing into networks of illicit trade and financial crime (Bagavos et al., 2018).

A second set of obstacles relates to the absence of labour integration policies designed by the Greek state. The absence of targeted training activities is a serious barrier to the integration of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees. Crucial is the lack of Greek language learning activities, which is a deterrent to both entry into the Greek labour market and their integration into Greek society in general. Any opportunity to learn the Greek language is being undertaken at an optional level by civil society initiatives and, more generally, organizations expressing their solidarity with immigrants and refugees. The absence of state-run Greek language courses in times of crisis is a major problem in their employment integration.

The above barriers trap MRAs into a weak bargaining position in the labour market. This has resulted in more frequent occurrences of job insecurity among immigrant and refugee populations. The economic crisis has led to a worsening of the phenomenon of job insecurity in Greece. However, this general tendency is more perceptible to vulnerable groups of workers, such as immigrants and refugees. The condition of job insecurity manifests itself in a variety of forms. Its main manifestations concern the phenomenon of underemployment, labour exploitation or violation of their labour rights (Bagavos et al., 2019).

Another set of important findings has to do with the role of stakeholders in developing labour market and social integration actions. The difficulties in integrating MRAs into the Greek labour market are compounded of the lack of adequate and effective assistance from social services infrastructures. This gap is sought to be replaced by NGOs and informal solidarity initiatives or otherwise Grassroot Solidarity Initiatives (GSIs) by civil society actors.

It should be noted from the outset that there are fundamental differences in the philosophy of interventions by different civil society actors - which has an impact on the ways in which MRAs labour market integration are sought. For example, NGOs, through interconnections and agreements with private sector companies, are primarily aimed at routing unskilled workers. On the contrary, GSIs call for the development of a solidarity culture. To this end, they channel beneficiaries of interventions into areas of employment that promote social solidarity, such as the Social and Solidarity Economy (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2020).

The above dimensions are verified and different barriers and enablers to the adequacy of these services can be identified from the MRAs biographical narratives. A central feature is the tendency of NGOs professionalization. That is, despite the value stated in the statutes establishing them as urban associations, there is an increasing dimension of carrying out their social activities with a view to disbursing funding and increasing the status of their body. On the contrary, in the dimension of the activists' actions there is an inherently genuine interest in MRAs, however, due to the refusal of funding from official European and national institutions, their scope for action is short-term and quite limited in the development of labour market integration. Solidarity movements and non-governmental organizations are activated in different ways to support MRAs. The focus of this activation is more on humanitarian aid. The development of employment actions is not a priority mainly because of the high unemployment rates in the country.

Some barriers and enablers have emerged from the critical analysis of the impact of services on MRAs integration. In the case of NGOs, MRAs are used either as professional staff (interpreters, cultural mediators, carers, etc.), or as volunteers to reach out to their peers. This practice has helped many MRAs to find a job and raise their standard of living by becoming significantly integrated into the Greek society. In solidarity initiatives, MRAs are seen as equal

members of the community. By extension, MRAs in these initiatives have the same labour market prospects as Greeks.

Differences are identified in the ways NGOs and solidarity initiatives seek to integrate immigrants into work. On the one hand, NGOs adopt a model of active social policies based on established employment policy models. These include advisory activities for preparing a CV and preparing for a job interview, information on employment services in the Greek state and private employment promotion agencies, creating a business register that wishes to hire MRAs for employees (active matching), seminars on labour rights, as well as the organization of events and festivals promoting employment with the participation of employers and the unemployed. On the other hand, GSIs develop professional activities in the area of social and solidarity economy. In this area, social cooperatives are the main means of employment. Their main occupation is in the areas of fundamental human needs such as nutrition and clothing (Bagavos and Kourachanis, 2020).

Interviews with the MRAs show that both of these integration pillars developed by civil society have a limited impact. MRAs cases that have been incorporated into the labour market through these practices appear to be extremely limited. The majority of the narratives show that the ethnic/migratory networks remain the main channel for immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees in the Greek labour market. The role of ethnic/migratory networks remains crucial and decisive for MRAs in finding job and shaping a preparatory framework for adapting them to Greek society. Therefore, the fact that the main channels of integration of the MRAs are ethnic/migratory networks reveals from an additional dimension that formal employment policies, both by the Greek state and by NGOs, fail to have a significant impact on this crucial social dimension.

5.5 Conclusion

The preceding analysis reveals remarkable findings about enablers and barriers experienced by MRAs to integrate into the Greek labour market. The developed methods and techniques of analysis show that there are significant turning points and epiphanies that are crucial to the labour market integration of MRAs. The identification of these points was preceded by a thematic analysis of their biographical narratives from which the following findings are drawn.

Six narrative segments that relate to major epiphanies and turning points in labour market integration can be identified. The narrative pieces relate to three turning points or epiphanies that have a positive impact on MRAs integration. There are also three other dimensions that are considered barriers to fulfilling their integration into the Greek labour market. All of these issues are summarized below.

Among the points that seem to encourage the integration of MRAs is the sense of safety and enjoyment of rights that accompany living on European territory. Positive impacts also appear to be found in the various actions being developed by NGOs in the area of employability, learning the Greek language, implementing the HELIOS program, as well as the support MRA receives from informal solidarity networks.

The plan of MRAs for moving into Europe, as well as their expectations of the migratory travel, is in keeping with the sense of security that the European culture provides, in particular the respect of human rights and, in general, the possibility of living with dignity. At the same time, employability services created by NGOs can be considered as a substitute for state deficiencies. Some NGOs have included in their social support programs the development of activities and services for the preparation of MRAs for entry into the Greek labour market. Such activities include writing a CV, preparing for an interview with employers, learning IT and Greek or English language. However, such actions, although important, are of limited scope if fulfilled by NGOs and cannot meet the needs of the majority of MRAs.

Finally, field research shows that the most crucial turning point for MRA integration is the role of ethnic/migratory networks. Those networks are becoming the main channel of communication with the Greek labour market. Mostly ethnic/migratory networks seem to channel MRAs into ethnic businesses. In ethnic businesses, MRAs come to a first employment process in Greece and gain their first work experience.

Biographic Interviews also revealed some turning points or epiphanies that may hinder MRAs labour market integration. A key issue is the vulnerable psychology and post-traumatic shock of many MRAs. The painful experience of persecution is a parameter that has created traumatic experiences for them. Coming from regimes that do not respect human rights have suffered catastrophic events. Often, the process of migratory travel was framed by new serious threats that again put their lives at risk. All these events, which happened before their eyes, have left negative experiences to MRAs.

In terms of employment orientation, a major barrier is the absence of targeted employment policies. This situation is made worse by the fact that MRAs are in Greece at a time when, after ten years of austerity policies and recession, there is a general phenomenon of unemployment among the population living in Greece. Greece still suffers from high unemployment rates, even today. At the same time, the absence of any preparatory intercultural action to familiarize asylum seekers and refugees with the European way of life is a particularly important factor. There are also difficulties in integrating employment due to the lack of educational activities for learning the Greek language.

One last issue relates to the absence of constant and targeted Greek MRAs employment policies. The most typical example is the 2018 (non-binding) National Strategy for Integration. Although this strategy provided some labour market integration measures for MRAs, its implementation has actually deteriorated and has essentially ceased.

Several findings of the current Work Package are in line with those of the previous Work Packages. Lack of Greek language knowledge, skills record and monitoring, mechanisms relative to the recognition of professional and educational qualifications, and knowledge about the labour market and the opportunities for networking are among the most relevant barriers to the labour market integration of MRAs. Those aspects are closely connected with the absence and the inability of the state to establish institutionalized structures providing relevant services. At that respect, CSOs, by undertaking several activities and offering various services play a significant role in the process of the integration of MRAs into the labour market. However, they frame their activities as those of a temporary agent that provides support to migrants, yet these activities are rather fragmented and not always connected with the implementation of government policies. In practice, the framework and the aim of State integration policies are mostly absent, and therefore, ethnic/migratory networks end up playing the major role in providing help to MRAs to reach and to integrate into the labour market.

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5.7 Annex I, Demographic information on MRAs

Pseudo nym	Date	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of Origin	Migration Year	Education (Primary, Secondary, Tertiary)	Current Occupation in Host Country	Occupation in Country of Origin	Languages
1	21/2/20	35	F	Married without children	Congo	2018	Tertiary	Unemployed	Business with Cell Phones	French
2	21/2/20	23	M	Single	Iraq	2019	Secondary	Painter	Barman	Arabic
3	26/2	34	M	Married with 4 children	Syria	2016	Primary	Shoemaker	Shoemaker	Arabic
4	26/2	24	M	Married with two children	Syria	2015	-	Cleaner	Shepherd	Arabic
5	26/2	20	M	Single	Afghanistan	2018	Secondary	Farmer	-	Farsi
6	26/2	22	M	Single	Syria	2016	Secondary	-	-	Arabic
7	27/2	41	M	Married with two children	Afghanistan	2017	Primary	-	Craftsman	Farsi
8	27/2	44	F	Widowed with 4 children	Syria	2017	Secondary	Dressmaker	Dressmaker	Arabic
9	27/2	18	M	Single	Iran	2016	-	Farmer	-	Farsi
10	28/2	23	F	Single	Congo	2017	Secondary	Industrial Worker	Employee in Electrical Appliance Company	French
11	28/2	22	F	Single	Albania	2018	Secondary	-	-	Albanian

12	5/3	24	M	Single	Syria	2016	Tertiary	Interpreter	Cosmetics Shop	Arabic
13	5/3	20	M	Single	Afghanistan	2018	Primary	-	-	Farsi
14	5/3	24	M	Single	Afghanistan	2018	-	-	-	Farsi
15	9/3	20	M	Single	Pakistan	2019	Secondary	-	-	Urdu
16	9/3	21	M	Single	Pakistan	2019	Secondary	-	-	Urdu

5.8 Annex II, Summaries of conducted interviews

Interview Number	Short Description of the Interview, half page (including 1-2 turning points and 1-2 quotations)	Date of interview
1	<p>She grew up in Congo. From the age of three she separated from her mother and went to live with her father and her stepmother. She had a comfortable life in her childhood and adolescence as her father was a diamond maker. However, she grew up in a conservative family and society. When she had menstruation for the first time she was terrified, as no one had talked to her about it. When she reported what had happened to her stepmother, she scolded her and punished her. She was frustrated because she didn't understand why she was bleeding, and then she decided to ask her cousin. He explained that it happens to all women.</p> <p>"When my mother punished me in this way because I told her I was bleeding I decided to tell it to someone else. And I said it to my cousin. Then he explained to me that it happens to all women".</p> <p>She studied economics at the University. She wanted to pursue a postgraduate degree, but at that time there was an increase on tuition fees. She participated in student demonstrations against these measures. She was arrested and police officers abused her at the police station. At the same time her affluent father died and then she was in a very difficult situation. In her country, many disappearances of girls involved in the demonstrations had been heard. Then she decided to leave the country.</p> <p>"I spoke with the Student President and he told me that many girls who participated in demonstrations have been killed by them and then they said that the girls have been disappeared. It may be better to leave the country before they kill you. Also, the police officers themselves threatened to kill me. I was very scared".</p> <p>He decided, through Turkey, to come to Greece because it is a European country that respects human rights. She arrived at Moria's hotspot and was assisted there by International and domestic NGOs. Living conditions were poor. He later moved to mainland structures where similar living problems were observed. She has not been able to find a job mainly because of her lack of knowledge of the Greek language. He also believes that there are racist phenomena along the way. She is currently living with UNHCR cash and NGO support. Through ethnic/migratory networks, she found a private employment agency that sent her to work in a soap industry. But they did not hold</p>	<p>21/02/2020</p> <p>Female</p>

	<p>her because she did not know Greek and English and could not understand. He also went to job offers and left a CV prepared with the help of an NGO. But even now no one has called her for work. Her skills from the Congo are not used up to date in the Greek labour market.</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: Abuse in her country of origin</p>	
2	<p>He grew up in a village in Iraq where he finished high school. In 2014 he was forced to immigrate to Baghdad because he is gay. He was related to a boy from his village and his parents and villagers kicked him out. The families of the two boys had a great deal of controversy over the incident. A. went to Baghdad and started working as a bartender in a bar. He soon left as homosexuals were tortured or executed at that place.</p> <p>"I was afraid I would die every day. They do not want people in same-sex relationships in Iraq to be present in their society. It happened in front of my eyes to kill a colleague at the bar I was working with, because he was gay too. So I probably wouldn't be alive now if I did not leave".</p> <p>He came to Greece through Turkey in 2019, as he had friends here who could help him. He crossed Evros and reached Athens via Thessaloniki. In the early days he had money with him and lived with it. Through acquaintances, he found someone who rented rooms for refugees. He then applied for asylum and entered ESTIA. He now lives with the benefits of the program and occasionally works as a paintbrush or cleaner. He wanted to stay permanently in one of these jobs but employers refuse to insure him and call him out only for casual and undeclared employment. He plans to find a job in an ethnic business as a waiter and then raise money and set up his own business. He does not feel well in the neighbourhood she lives in (Acharnon).</p> <p>"I want to work somewhere permanently but everybody wants me whenever they have heavy jobs and without insurance me. I also went to a private employment agency but I had to know the language to send me to a job. I am thinking of starting to work in an ethnic business so I can get on with and then if I collect money to make my own".</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: The murder of a gay colleague</p>	<p>21/02/2020</p> <p>Male</p>
3	<p>He was born and raised in Aleppo, Syria, with his 11 brothers. He went to school until fourth grade. His father was a shoemaker and lived in good economic condition. And from a young age he learned the art of shoemaking. When the war started in Aleppo, they bombed the apartment that his family was staying at. Then, his whole family decided to leave for Turkey. He stayed with his brother and his two nieces to guard the house so they wouldn't be robbed. But in a new plane raid a new bombing wounded his hand and legs. Also, his two</p>	<p>26/2/2020</p> <p>Male</p>

	<p>nieces were killed. He went to the hospital, but police arrested him and put him in jail because the area he lived in was in opposition to the political regime in Syria. They considered him a political opponent and for four months interrogated and tortured him. When he was acquitted, he left and went to find his family in Turkey.</p> <p>"We lived very well until the war. The war first forced my family to leave and then me. I lost my two nieces, almost to kill myself too. In Europe I feel safe".</p> <p>He came to Europe hoping to live safely and without the risk of being captured again. He arrived in Greece in 2016 and 2017 his family came for reunification. He wants to stay in Greece as he believes traditional shoemaking can be viable in our country. He currently lives with the support of the ESTIA program and works undeclared as a shoemaker in a small shoe industry. He found his current job through ethnic/migratory networks. Through his daily life at work he has managed to learn a little Greek. He is well aware of his art and believes that he will manage to open his own business. However, in the craft industry he finds it difficult to use the machinery, as in Syria all his work on footwear was handmade.</p> <p>"In Greece I feel safe. I am not in danger of being arrested and I can live in peace with my family. It is very important that I was able to reunite my family. Without it I would not have been able to live in a foreign land".</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: The War and His Arrest / Reuniting His Family</p>	
4	<p>He was born in Syria. He is now 24 years old. He was a farmer and never went to school. Authorities in Syria chased him for collaborating with rebel groups. He lived in an area that did not give its residents citizenship, as they were considered enemies of the Government. As a result, they have no access to education and social services. His boss at the farm he was working for helped him escape from the country and go to Turkey. From there he was able to reach Sweden, where he applied for asylum and was rejected. Then, in despair, he attempted suicide. He then came to Greece, where he brought his wife with their two children.</p> <p>"I left Syria to escape persecution. When I managed to get to Sweden I thought my suffering was over. But when the asylum application was rejected by the Swedish authorities I said it was all over. They will send me back to Syria. I couldn't stand it, I wanted to end my life. Fortunately today I live in Greece".</p>	<p>26/02/2020</p> <p>Male</p>

	<p>Lately he has been a beneficiary of ESTIA, so from there he secures a home and a monthly allowance. At the same time, he works as a cleaner whenever his friends from ethnic/migratory networks find him. Sometimes he even gets a job as a carrier for Arab bosses. He has difficulty finding a stable job, mainly because he usually works in undeclared and precarious jobs and mainly does not speak Greek.</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: His persecution in Syria / Suicide attempt in Sweden</p>	
5	<p>He was born and raised in Kabul, Afghanistan, along with his three brothers. He went to school for 7 years until family problems arose. His father worked as a chef in a company and was asked to poison the food in order to poison some religious opponents. His father refused, and then he was threatened by members of the mafia. He was given ten days to accept to poison religious opponents. His father refused and then kidnapped him for two days. They then killed his father and released him. When that happened, his family panicked. Within a week they got up and left Afghanistan because they were terrified that they could kill the whole family. They went to Pakistan first, until they managed to sell their home and come to Greece.</p> <p>"They kidnapped me and told me that if my father didn't do what they were told they would kill me. I was very scared. I didn't know what was going to happen to me. Then they killed my father. It was a nightmare all this. I don't think I'll ever be able to forget it".</p> <p>When he came to Greece with his mother and his brothers, he had many difficulties, mainly due to the different culture, language and living conditions. They were staying in a building together with many Arabs. Then they went outside to a camp. Then they ended up in ESTIA. In addition to his ESTIA benefits, he works undeclared in agricultural work (picking oranges) or in a shop of his own nation that sent him from the camp to carry rugs. The main problem he faces in finding a job is that he does not speak Greek. He is planning some time to raise money to do his own small ethnic business.</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: His kidnapping / his father murder</p>	<p>26/02/2020</p> <p>Male</p>
6	<p>He grew up in Syria and went to school there until the first year of high school, when he was interrupted by war. He wanted to study at the University, but because of the war he failed. Many schools in the area were hit by bombs. Many of his classmates were killed. He left with his family in Turkey. In 2016 he managed to move to Greece with his father, but the rest of his family did not manage to come to date. They stayed for a year in Leros and then moved to a camp in mainland. He was living in an apartment of ESTIA program and currently he receives the rent allowance from HELIOS program in Athens. He had particular problems until he filed his papers and issued the required official documents for his stay in Greece (AMKA, etc.). He learns Greek and English at an NGO. He has sent his CV to a</p>	<p>26/02/2020</p> <p>Male</p>

	<p>communication company in a position to support Arabic-speaking customers and hopes he will be hired.</p> <p>"In Greece I feel safe but when I get my own job I will definitely be able to plan my life better. I learn Greek and English in an NGO program. I believe that learning Greek will greatly help the prospects of finding a stable job".</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: The war / lack of his mother and his brothers</p>	
7	<p>He was born and raised in Afghanistan. He had a fruit packing lab which he later sold on the public market. He had a steady job and a good standard of living, but he was blackmailed by a group of Saafins (old city policemen selling protection to its residents). He was told to join his gang and rob other people in the area. He refused because he did not want to become a criminal. Then, they twice destroyed his home. The second time he decided to leave Afghanistan. He and his wife and their two children went to Iran and from there to Turkey.</p> <p>"I lived a quiet and peaceful life with my family. When the gang came and blackmailed me to go with them I refused. I didn't want to tease any other person. All I wanted was to earn some money from my job to take care of my family. The second time they attacked my home I realized that I had to either become a criminal or leave my place. I chose the second one".</p> <p>They stayed in Turkey for a long time in an enclosed camp in miserable conditions. At the end of 2017 he arrived in Greece at the Moria camp. His child became seriously ill in the camp and was taken to the hospital. As a result of the conditions in Moria, their child was hospitalized seven times. This was the reason for them to join the ESTIA program and come to stay in Athens. In Athens his children go to school and he has begun learning Greek and English through the services of an NGO. He has never worked in Greece. He wants to work in food production and later open his own business, as he did in Afghanistan. He worry that he does not speak Greek and that the issue of acquiring refugee status has not yet been resolved. He is also anxious because he does not know well the procedures to open a business in Greece and does not know who to consult. He only asks and trusts his countrymen. Also, his wife knows how to make carpets and possibly open a business on this.</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: The blackmail that led him to leave his country.</p>	27/2 Male
8	<p>She was born in Damascus, Syria. There she finished high school and then learned the art of sewing. She started working in textiles until she got married. Her husband was a clothing designer and she worked at home while raising their four children. In 2013, the state arrested her</p>	27/2 Female

	<p>husband as a political opponent and killed him. During the first time, several unknown men came and threatened to kill her and her children. For this reason she had to leave the country in order to immigrate to Germany. On the journey to Europe, traffickers robbed her. Also, when he arrived in Turkey, soldiers fired on them and killed some of his companions.</p> <p>"The moment when the Turkish soldiers were shooting at us cannot be forgotten. We had just crossed the border through a bombing town. We went there to escape and the soldiers attacked to kill us. Behind us were the bombs of the planes and in front of us the bullets of the soldiers. Many were killed by the bombs. Others by bullets. Those of us who have lived will never get out of our minds the image of the horror we lived in".</p> <p>When they arrived in Moria they stayed in a small tent with her four children for about three months. Eventually, when she arrived in Athens, she worked for several days as a tailor in a handicraft. However, she had no one to look after and care for her children and was forced to leave her job. She believes that if there were social services to support single parent refugee families, she could work undistracted and have a decent standard of living.</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: Abduction of her husband / Shot by Turkish soldiers has left post-traumatic stress</p>	
9	<p>He grew up in Iran in an area that was not given citizenship and he is now 18 years old. They were barred from any access to social rights. So he was never able to study in the education system. That is why his family decided to come to Europe four years ago to feel safe and able for their children to study in the education system. At first they arrived in Lesbos, but they couldn't go to school there. In Lesbos an interpreter was killed in front of him, which shocked him. After they came to Athens, the abolition of the AMKA excluded them from access to education.</p> <p>Through networks of his compatriots, while living in Lesbos, he went to work as a farmer in the fields. For about a month. However, the landowner did not pay him. He also knows the hairdresser's art but does not have the required certificates in our country, nor is there any mechanism for certifying his skills. He is also concerned because he does not know the language and fears that it will not easily be adapted to Greek society. He also fears new phenomenon of victimization in the labour market.</p> <p>"While I was in Lesbos, some of my compatriots sent me to work in rural areas. The boss had told me that if I was good he would keep me and pay me at the end of the month. I worked, in fact, all month in the fields, and in the end he told me he had no money to pay me. He took advantage of me. This has made me feel fear and insecurity</p>	27/2 Male

	<p>about the job market. I am in a country I do not know and do not even speak Greek. I'm afraid they will exploit me again".</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: The exclusion from education / murder of an interpreter in front of him</p>	
10	<p>She was born and raised in Congo. She finished high school and held some IT seminars. She worked in a company with electrical appliances. She lived a prosperous life with her parents and siblings. A few years ago she began to notice that her father had returned home at night injured. She began to worry that something was happening to him. She insisted to find out and he revealed to her that their family was from a Rwandan tribe and that the regime's troops in Syria had discovered it. A few days later her father disappeared and she has not seen him until to date. She decided to go to the military authorities for help. When she revealed her father's name, the military authorities arrested her and sent her detained in an area far from her town. There, while in detention, soldiers tortured her and abused her. Then they transported her to Turkey. There they continued to abuse her and torture her. After a short time, she was forced to cross a forest with other unknown prisoners without knowing where. Suddenly in the woods, Turkish soldiers shot and killed some of the prisoners. After days of hiking, she found herself on a beach and put them in inflatable boat, without knowing where they were going. They ended up at the Moria camp in Lesvos.</p> <p>"I lived in hell. I was abused in a closed, dark room in the middle of nowhere. It was the scariest I've lived in my 23 years. I don't think I can ever overcome it. And right now I don't have my family to protect me".</p> <p>As soon as she told at Moria the way she had been there, they thought that she had to be moved to a mainland apartment. During those two years in Athens she has tried to work, mainly through a private employment agency set up by her acquaintances from Cameroon who met her at the Moria camp. At this office she was offered to go for seasonal work on an island during the tourist season. But she had issues with her papers and could not leave Athens for a long time. Then, from the same office, she was offered to go to work in a factory just outside Athens as a factory worker. She went for a few days but they didn't keep her because she didn't know Greek or English. She thinks that the major obstacle to her integration into the labour market is that she does not know Greek, also that she has pending documents and that she wants to return to the Congo to look for her family.</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: Her Abuse and Torture by Congolese Soldiers / Her Extinction by Her Family and the Need to Reunite With Her</p>	28/2 Female

11	<p>She was born and raised in Albania. She finished high school and at the age of 23 she decided to migrate to Greece. Her father worked as a farmer and her mother worked as a cleaner and she worked with her for a while. Her family sent her to Greece because there were no jobs in Albania and the finances were not good. Another reason was that she did not want her little sister to drop out of school to contribute financially to the family.</p> <p>"There is more poverty in Albania than here in Greece. Things are hard, we are in crisis and there are no jobs. I couldn't find something to do to help my family and I do not want my little sister to stop school like I did in order to work".</p> <p>He came to Greece crossing the border into a refrigerator truck in very bad conditions. When she came to Athens she stayed with her cousins and worked as a cleaner. She now works alone and cleans 2-3 apartments. She has no papers and therefore no access to public services.</p> <p>She learns Greek by contacting people in her neighbourhood and at the Sunday School of Immigrants. From there they have helped her a lot as she claims for a residence and work permit. She feels insecure and afraid of getting the necessary documents.</p> <p>"Every Sunday, I go at Migrant School and take classes. The teachers help me on how to get a residence and work permit and get the necessary documents. I am very worried that I do not have documents and residence permits because I am afraid they will stop me on the street and check me out".</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: Family's Financial Problems in the Country of Origin</p>	4/3 Female
12	<p>He was born in Syria but, when he was a child, his family had to immigrate to Iran because they were enemies of the regime. His parents were well-off in Syria as well. He studied and graduated from the University of Meteorology. In Iran, control measures were tight for his family. He felt he was not free to do what he liked. He was not allowed to travel from one city to another and generally felt very limited. From his school age he wanted to leave the area when he grew up to go to Europe, where he imagined it free and with rights.</p> <p>At the age of 22, he decided to pursue his dream. The journey to migrate to Europe, however, was horrible. He was taken to the Iranian border with Turkey and sent back to Syria, a country he had never visited since his childhood. There they were crushing him and later he managed to leave the country illegally. Along the way he was in danger of being killed by soldiers guarding the border. He was determined to leave because he could no longer afford to live in such</p>	5/3 Male

	<p>an environment. When he managed to get to Turkey, after a few days he managed to reach Chios.</p> <p>"The trip was an unprecedented nightmare experience for me. I lived in a country that was oppressing me, but I had never risked being killed. On this trip I was really scared that I might lose my life. But I wouldn't go back for any reason".</p> <p>He stayed in Chios for a while and then he reached the port of Piraeus. There, for a while, he remained trapped in the informal camp set up at the port's E2 gate. Groups of solidarity activists offered him support. He met them and made many Greek friends. Later, he managed to stay at Skaramanga Camp. The situation was miserable. He lived with three families in the same area. For this reason, he decided to listen to his Greek friends who suggested that he should stay at a squat for refugees. There, besides housing, he attended English seminars and he greatly improved his English.</p> <p>His friendships with Greek activists and the fact that he knew English helped him quickly find information about jobs he could be employed. He was hired as an interpreter by Farsi in English and vice versa, a job he holds to this day. He is satisfied with his work and wants to develop more skills to be integrated better in Greek society. There are two things that make it hard for him to do his job. First, the short-term contracts they offer him and that he doesn't get a salary as good as he would like.</p> <p>"While living in a tent in the port of Piraeus, I met people in the true sense and meaning of the word. People who left their lives and their jobs to help some strangers. I owe a lot to them that I managed to live my dream in a country with freedom and security."</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: The dangers of his migration journey / The valuable solidarity of activists in the port of Piraeus</p>	
13	<p>He grew up and completed elementary school in Afghanistan. After elementary school he went and became a farmer to help his father. However, because they were considered enemies of the regime, they were persecuted and headed to Iran which was very close to them. They stayed there for about five years, but without Iran giving them residence permits, because they were also considered enemies of the regime there. Then he decided to come with his family in Europe.</p> <p>"We left Afghanistan because they didn't want us. We went to Iran, which was the closest area. They didn't even want us there. We were not given a residence permit. We couldn't have access to anything. We decided to go somewhere where we immediately felt we were not in danger. In Europe".</p>	5/3 Male

	<p>The journey had many difficulties. He says that they had to walk for days and nights in the cold, without food and water. He finally managed to reach Lesvos, where he stayed for eleven months. Things were also very difficult there. He lived in tent for a long time. He has come to Athens with his family for the last two months. He finds it difficult to get a job because he does not know the Greek language. He also doesn't have many acquaintances with his compatriots to help him get to work somewhere. He dreams of studying at the School of Fine Arts.</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: His family has so far supported him in all difficulties.</p>	
14	<p>He was born and raised in Afghanistan until he was fourteen years old. He's never gone to school. His father and he worked as stockbreeders and farmers. Ten years ago they migrated to Iran because the Afghan regime did not want them and threatened them. Iran was their closest place and they spoke the same language. However, Iran refused to grant them residence permits. He had started working as a carpenter in Iran, but because he did not have a residence permit he could not live there forever. He decided to come to Europe. He thinks that the travel experience was very difficult, as he had to travel illegally from country to country. They walked for days to reach Iran from Turkey. When they arrived in Constantinople, they managed to get to Lesvos. He has been living in Athens for the last three months.</p> <p>"It was very difficult to get to a European country. I didn't know Greece. I learned it when I arrived in Turkey. But while I stay here I think I can stay forever".</p> <p>As long as he lives in Athens he has not been able to work. He would like to be hired as an employee in a restaurant of his compatriots or a furniture store and then when he makes some money to open his own business. His main problem is that he does not know Greek and cannot communicate with most of the people.</p> <p>"I find it difficult to get a job because I don't speak Greek. If I learn Greek I will be able to do any job I could find".</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: He thinks his brother has helped him a lot in his life so far.</p>	6/3 Male
15	<p>He was born and raised in Pakistan and is 22 years old and single. The family's financial problems forced him to immigrate to Iran first and then to Europe for a better future.</p>	9/3 Male

	<p>"My parents were poor and we could hardly live with the money we earned. When they thought I was old enough they told me to leave the country and go to work elsewhere. I couldn't live there anymore and I decided to go to Iran."</p> <p>He was unable to obtain a residence and work permit in Iran but also in Turkey where the army arrested him and for a while put him in an enclosed camp in miserable conditions. In his attempt to cross Lesvos, traffickers tore up the inflatable boats and he risked drowning in the sea because he did not know how to swim.</p> <p>"I did not find a solution with my residence permit and I thought that in Turkey I could do it. But it wasn't easy there either. The army first arrested me when I went to cross the border and they left me in a closed camp for some time. It was very dirty and looked like a prison [...] When I approached Lesvos, they saw another boat coming from the other side, and then they booted the boats so they wouldn't catch us and take us back. We stayed in the water for quite some time until they got us on the other ship and landed us. It was difficult because I didn't know how to swim well, I almost drowned."</p> <p>Then, when he came to Athens, he found work in NGOs, through acquaintances, as an interpreter as he knew English. He now learns Greek from his work. He mentions short-term contracts and low salaries as a difficulty.</p> <p>"I met people from NGOs in Lesvos and when I came here they told me to work with them as an interpreter. I work officially there now and that helps me because I make more money and also because I improve my job and my language. The job is good but the contracts are small and the money I get could be more".</p> <p>Turning Point / Epiphany: Family's financial problems</p>	
16	<p>He comes from Pakistan, is single and is 24 years old. He decided to come to Europe because his little sister got sick and had to work to help his family financially.</p> <p>"My little sister was seriously ill and my mother had to stop working and take care of her at home. Things were hard when my dad was the only one who was working. I couldn't find a job in my country and decided to come to Europe to work and help my family financially".</p> <p>He came to Greece, first through Iran and then through Turkey. On his journey, the traffickers robbed him and then he crossed the border into Turkey. The Turkish soldiers put him in jail without food for a few days. He went to Lesvos and stayed at the camp in Moria.</p>	9/3 Male

	<p>"At first I went to Iran and then I went to Turkey. All this without papers, illegally. I paid some money to help me but on the way they robbed me. In Turkey, the army caught me when I crossed the border and the soldiers put me in jail without food for a week. When they released me, I found a way to go to Lesbos and stay for a few months in Moria."</p> <p>He now lives in Athens with his two other compatriots in a small, self-paying home. He works as a gardener with a friend. It doesn't work every day, only when there are jobs. His salary is not large but sufficient for the necessities. He is constantly scared what to do with his documents and residence and work permits.</p> <p>"I stay with two friends I met in Moria. We live in an apartment in Kipseli. I work with a friend of mine, we clean and water gardens in homes. We do not work every day. Only when they call us. Money is not a lot but it is enough for us to live. I am mostly afraid of being checked on the street for official documents because I do not have a residence and work permit".</p> <p>Turning Points / Epiphanies: Sister's illness / Family's financial problems</p>	
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5.9 Annex III, Individual biographies

The main theme of the three individual biographies is the portraiture of the main turning points that affect labour market integration. Individual biographies show that there is no straightforward path to employment. On the contrary, many barriers can block the entrance to the formal labour market. Also, there are some enablers which could help the work rehabilitation. These three stories were chosen because they are complementary dimensions of the barriers and enablers observed in the integration of MRAs in the Greek labour market.

The first individual biography tells the story of a woman who was forced to leave her homeland because her husband abused her and their child. When she asked her parents and the police to protect her, they refused. She decided to leave her country, taking her child with her because she was afraid they would be killed. She did not know how she would live and who would help her financially. She has chosen to seek asylum in Europe because she believes women are more respected there and she could also work and survive on her own.

The second individual biography shows the adverse conditions and the effects of undeclared employment on the lives of MRAs. This is the story of a 23-year-old asylum seeker who, after many hardships, managed to find an undeclared job in Athens. When he became ill he did not have insurance coverage and was forced to spend a large part of his income in order to buy his medicines. This story also highlights the supportive role of informal solidarity networks, as any social support for his integration comes from grassroots solidarity initiatives.

The third individual biography is a success story. He is a recognized refugee who works in a formal job with a decent salary and insurance coverage. The help offered to him by civil society, as well as his knowledge of the English language, helped him to be hired as an interpreter at an NGO. At this moment, his family has a satisfactory income and their child is studying in a Greek school. It seems that successful integration into the labour market has brought about a smoother social integration.

Individual Biography 1 (Female Asylum Seeker)

Between trauma and hope: An abused asylum seeking woman in Greece.

She was living with her husband and her little son for 8 years in her country of origin. Then she took her son and they left because her husband was abusing her and her child. He was a violent, very violent, man. She didn't want to get married with him but her parents imposed her. Through a series of events, such as the fact that she could no longer bear the domestic violence, that her parents did not accept her back into their home, and that the police did not protect her because she is a woman, she decided to leave the country. The evolution of history in the following paragraphs shows that her trauma experience in the country of origin was an important factor that still affects the possibility of her integration into the Greek labour market. While they were living together with her husband they were in a good financial situation because he was working. When she decided not to tolerate the violence that her husband was inflicting on her, she was left without money and the problems started. She had no money to go and stay in her own house with her child. She went back to her parents. However, her parents considered it dishonorable for their daughter to get a divorce. Her father hit and kicked her out of the house. He told her to go back to her husband. They were afraid to say that they were victims of sexual and physical abuse because in their country no one would help a woman who left her husband. There is no recognition of the victims and generally they do not have rights. When her parents kicked her out of their home she went to live with her sister's family. Her sister's husband refused to host her because she considered it unacceptable that she had abandoned her husband. She then decided to go to the police for protection. Police told her to go back to her husband, otherwise she would have problems.

No one was protecting them so she thought she had to leave from the country to save her son. These events highlight the gender inequalities and social discrimination experienced by women in these countries. The trauma caused by domestic violence and the refusal of her family and the police to protect her is the turning point that forced her to leave the country. A series of events forced her to look for a safe environment in which to enjoy rights, such as freedom of expression, public health care for her child, and the ability to work, even if she is a woman. She decided to go to Europe and she was looking for a way out. Some friends told her that they could get to Europe more easily through Greece.

They asked for enough money to transport them and they got money from her sister. Worst of all, they were robbed of some of the money they had on their trip, and with difficulty they reached Turkey where the army caught and held them in a prison-like building for a week. Then they put them on boats and passed to a Greek island. They stayed there for a few months. She applied for asylum in Greece with the help of NGOs who heard their story and provided with the necessary documents. The help of NGOs here was crucial. State authorities are understaffed and unable to adequately respond to increased asylum requests. Many NGOs, like this, identify vulnerable asylum seekers and prioritize them in housing referrals to mainland. This NGO helped her leave the hotspots faster and move to Athens. The NGOs pressured the state services to pay attention to her case, as she was an abused woman and mother of a minor child. Also, the NGOs helped her to join a housing program in Athens, so that her child could have access to education and she could more easily find a job.

However, the NGO could only help her with housing. Most NGOs in Greece focus on humanitarian aid and not on the social integration of asylum seekers and refugees. Therefore, the NGO could not help her find a job. This eventually happened through Migratory Channels. When they came to Athens they found many of their compatriots who helped her to find a job. Firstly, she was sent to work in a shop as a seamstress but the money was not enough for a decent living. She didn't know the language either, and she couldn't understand what they were telling her to do, so it was difficult to work there. Her compatriots then sent her to clean houses. This is a tiring job. Overall, her compatriots who she found in Greece were very helpful. They sent her to work. This parameter helps us to understand the important role of migratory channels in facilitating the social integration of MRAs. Which is usual phenomenon in the scholarly literature.

Although she found a job, she didn't have anyone to take care of her child while she was working. Now her compatriots take care of him. Sometimes she has to take him with her. He is not sitting quiet because he is a child and wants to play. She chases after him. She doesn't know what to do but she is more afraid of what will happen with her residence permit. If they do not accept them they must leave and go elsewhere because they cannot go back. She doesn't want it for her son, she wants a better future for him. He has already seen a lot and has gone through a lot. She hopes things get better from now on. The issue of residence permit is a key condition for the formal labour market integration of MRAs. Resolving such issues play a crucial role in the prospects of work integration (Kapsalis, 2018).

Individual Biography 2 (Young Male Migrant)

He is 23 years old and immigrated to Greece in 2016. In his country he was with his parents and his little sister. They were a poor family and both his parents worked. His father was working as a laborer and his mother was cleaning houses. Those were difficult years. He went to school for 9 years and then dropped out. He went to work with his father to make more money. There is more violence in his country than here in Greece. Things are hard, they are in crisis and there are no jobs. He can't find anything to do to help his family and he doesn't want his little sister to drop out of school like he did. He discussed this with his parents and they told him to come to work in Greece where his uncle had come earlier.

They had no residence permit to cross the border when they paid a trafficker and, along with 2 others, put them in a truck. The route was long and the weather very cold. They were given blankets but again it was very cold. This is how the border was, hidden inside the truck. When he arrived in Athens, he went to find his uncle. He stays with him now with his family. He doesn't have residence permit, so he could not find an easy job to provide him with an adequate income. Initially, he worked with his uncle on the building that he was working. At first, he only cared about his basic needs because he didn't know Greek, but then he learned some Greek words at work. The money was not much.

Later he found the job he is doing now. He washes dishes and serving in an ethnic restaurant. He is doing almost everything in this job. He cleans up after the whole restaurant, picking up and throwing away the garbage, generally what they need. The boss, because he doesn't have residence permit, is often afraid. Since he does not have papers he works undeclared and he does not have social insurance. Two weeks ago he was ill. When he went to the pharmacy to get the medicines, he paid the total cost of them because he didn't have insurance coverage. It was an event that made him to feel very difficult. He gave all the money he had saved from his work last week to buy the medicine. This fact shows that exclusion from the formal labour market also leads to a lack of insurance coverage, which exposes individuals to significant risks that affect their income and their safety. The job can be difficult, but he also learns Greek at the same time. He goes to the Sunday School of Immigrants (Kyriakatiko Sxolio Metanaston) to learn the Greek language. The teachers are very good with him and they help him with other things besides learning the language. They help him to get a residence permits. They tell him where to go and what to ask for, which documents to bring.

Individual Biography 3 (Male Recognized Refugee)

He is 36 years old and come from an Asian country. He came to Greece with his family, his wife and his two children. They have lived the war in their country and lost their own people. In 2017, they bombed his house and killed his two youngest children who happened to be there at the time. It was the worst day of his life. Then they decided with his wife to take the other two children and leave the country to be safe. They couldn't live in a war-torn country anymore. They already lost 2 out of 4 kids, what else was left to lose?

They decided to go to a country that borders Greece. And things were difficult there because they didn't give them a residence permit so their kids couldn't go to school. Once their youngest son got sick and they couldn't get him to the hospital because they didn't have papers. They could not find a solution and since his family was not given a residence permit, they thought they could do it in Turkey. But it wasn't easy there either. Initially the Turkish army arrested them when they went to cross the border and they left them and stayed in a closed camp. It was very dirty and looked like a prison. After some time they found a way to get to Greece with boats.

When they were approaching a Greek island authorities took them to the camp. The conditions were not good for their children there. They talked with an NGO which asked them if they wanted to apply for asylum in Greece. They accepted because they wanted their children to live in safety and dignity. Now they've brought them to Athens, which is much better, and they live in an apartment. They are safer there.

In recent months he has been recognized as a refugee. His children go to school now and they are happy about that. When he was younger he had learned English and so he learned about different jobs that he could go on. He met people from NGOs in Lesvos and when he came here they told him to work with them as an interpreter. He officially works there now and that helps him because he makes more money for his family and also because he improves his job and his language. They help him in many things, what he needs for his children and

his wife. The job is good but the contracts are too short in terms of period and the income he gets could be higher. He is afraid that after the contract they will persecute him but he thinks in the end he will find a job again.

5.10 Annex IV, Ethnodrama

Basic themes: Trauma-Vulnerability / Gender & Age / Migratory Channels

A 19-years-old guy from Syria and a 32-years-old woman from Congo are hosted at a camp in Athens. Waiting for their lunch, they have a short conversation in English and share their experiences from their countries of origin and their journey to Europe. Other asylum seekers are listening to their discussion and sharing their concerns.

Bartender A: Look at these people. They have been living here for so long and they still haven't put it down. They are optimistic.

Bartender B: Just think that they have gone through much worse. They did not live well in their countries. At least here they feel safe and hope that at some point they will live with dignity.

Bartender A: I wish that. See this little kid talking to that woman. They look distressed but have hope.

Boy: Would you like to say a few words while we wait in line for our meal? Where are you coming from?

Woman: Hi, yes, it's boring to wait so long every day to get our meal. I was born and grow up in Congo. You?

Boy: I'm coming from Syria, but I try to forget it.

Woman: I don't want to remember the last few years in my country too.

Boy: I suppose it would be hard for you. But I will never forget that my school was bombed and my close friends were killed there. I see them every night in my sleep.

Woman: We have all experienced horrible feelings. They arrested me because my father was considered as an enemy of the government. The police tortured me and abused me. Those supposed to protect us have been my worst torturers. Women in their perception are like animals. We have no rights. We have no right to a decent life.

Boy: How did you get away from this nightmare?

Woman: I didn't run away. They sent me to Turkey. They left me in a camp. One night we escaped with other migrants. I didn't know where we were going. I found myself in a boat and from there to Greece.

Boy: My dad took me to leave from the war area in our country. We arrived in Turkey and from there the traffickers brought us to Samos Island.

Woman: It must have been much better in Samos. I stayed for a while in the hotspot of Lesvos. Moria camp in Lesvos has a capacity of about 2,800 housing seats. There were about 14,000 people inside. Molecule for me was a second nightmare.

Boy: And in Samos things were not better. The proportion of locals and refugees has reached one by one. The hotspot has a capacity of 658 housing seats. Actually, there were 7,000 people inside. In fact, I originally stayed on the mountain outside of the hotspot. Only when I got sick and was taken to the hospital did they think that I should come to a camp in Athens.

Asylum Seeker from Afghanistan: I listen to your conversation while we are still standing waiting in line, outside in the cold, to get our food and I remember my own story. We left from Afghanistan with my wife and our child because they wanted to kill us. Eventually, my wife and my child drowned in the Aegean. They did not die in Afghanistan and died trying to come in Europe. At least, here we have a bed to sleep and something to eat.

Woman: So as you put it, you're right. How is your living conditions here?

Boy: We are staying with my dad. We have the cash assistance and sometimes we go to a restaurant that our compatriots have. We clean and collect the rubbish. They give us ten, sometimes twenty euros for our work. They are not enough for us for our daily costs.

Asylum Seeker from Afghanistan: It is enough for me that I am alive and I have somewhere to sleep. They call me for agricultural jobs near the camp. I pick oranges. What other job can I find here that they have for us, out of town? When they give me ten and when fifteen euros per day for ten hours of work. They are not enough for me to survive. But because I work in the informal economy, I can also get the cash assistance from the UNHCR. In a few months I hope to be able to rent an apartment in Athens.

Woman: I can't find a job. My compatriots told me that if I want to find a job I need to learn Greek. I don't know how I'll learn Greek if they don't send us somewhere where we can receive Greek language courses.

Boy: I've learned some words from the work. But again, I can't communicate adequately.

Woman: In any case, as you said, it's better to live in Greece than in our countries of origin. We are not in danger of dying here. We left the worst behind.

Boy: I wish that things will get better.

Asylum Seeker from Afghanistan: We will make it.

6 Italy

Mattia Collini & Paola Pannia

6.1 Introduction

This report offers insights into the main barriers and enablers for the labour-market integration of migrants, refugees, and asylum applicants in Italy. This is achieved through the analysis of their biographical narratives. The specific focus of this work package allows us to look more in detail at many issues we have covered in the previous reports through the lens of MRAs, based on their direct experiences.

In the first part, the report provides a critical review of the national context of the labour market integration of MRAs, based on the reflection on the previous work packages and the perspective of the various stakeholders. This is then combined with the analysis of laws, practices, and the role of the various actors in order to provide a comprehensive picture of labour-market integration. It is followed by an overview of the employed methodology (which relates to in-depth biographical interviews), including techniques of data analysis and peculiarities of the sample.

The second part of the report is dedicated to the narrative-biographic analysis of the interview data, which is organized around narrative themes that relate to major epiphanies and turning points experienced by our informants. This allows to understand LMI dynamics and nuances from the insider, highlighting the major similarities and differences among the various biographical experiences. Finally, we assess the adequacy of the labour market integration measures through the use of a comparative analysis that confronts the general context and the perspectives of the stakeholders with the main barriers and enablers identified through the biographical interviews. In conclusion, we propose a comprehensive summary of the main findings of the research for the current work package.

6.2 Background Information on The National Context: Country-Specific Critical Issues.

Migrations do not happen in a vacuum or in a terrae nullius (Chiaromonte et al. 2018, 310): migrants inevitably enter into communities and societies characterised by a set of cultural, religious or traditional features (Geertz 1973; Aime 2004; Benhabib 2004) and into countries characterised by different legal, political and economic systems. In the previous work packages of the Sirius project, we examined several aspects of the complex topic that is the integration of migrants in the local labour market: legal aspects, the structure of the labour market, the role of civil society organisation and social partners, as well as other stakeholders, have all been explored. This gave back a picture of the current (actually, pre-Covid-19) situation in Italy which is rather mixed, characterised by the presence of many shades and a few bright lights.

Indeed, if we have to choose a keyword to describe the general situation of labour market integration of MRAs in Italy, 'fragmentation' would be the most precise one, considering the connectivity between actors, official texts, laws and contexts (see, for example, Oxfam 2016, and the past country reports). We also have a marked division in the paths towards integration

according to different categories of migrants, with refugees and asylum seekers relying heavily on institutionalised patterns and programmes, often managed by CSOs operating as service providers for the government. On the other hand, economic migrants, are less reliant on CSOs but on ethnic informal networks and/or the 'common' network of services available for the resident population (job offices, agencies, trainings, professional formation) (Maggini and Collini 2019).

Furthermore, the possibility of a successful integration is strongly influenced by the geographical, economic, political, and sociocultural peculiarities of the Italian context (see ex multi, Testai 2015, Ambrosini 2013, Tryandafillidu and Ambrosini 2011). The majority of foreign workers are concentrated in the highly-industrialized and developed Northern regions, while only a smaller quota, mainly seasonal workers, resides in the less-developed and more agriculture-dependent Southern ones (Ministry of Labour, 2019).

The legal framework on migration remains fragmented, affected by inhomogeneous normative stratifications and lack of effective instruments of migration's planning and management. In Italy, the management of asylum and migration does not fall under the responsibility of a single governmental body. Rather, it is scattered among different institutional entities. Each entity is competent and responsible for single piece of the complex migration machine. Local governments play a crucial role in several domains, such as education and social integration, but the main governance of migration ('immigration politics'), pertaining to permits, accesses, and reception services is an exclusive domain of the central government. Regions play a role in the migration governance, according to an effective 'multilevel model', as outlined by the Constitutional Court (Panzeri 2018), which led to a distinction between the "immigration politics" and "immigrants politics" (Covino 2011: 392; Benvenuti 2015:82; Caponio 2004:805). Regions have shared or exclusive competence on housing, healthcare, professional formation, but have not always demonstrated more inclusiveness than the State (Chiaromonte et al. 2019). The gap of governance at the central level has been filled from time to time by different actors, such as local municipalities (especially in the context of reception), the third sector and the judiciary. Such lack of coordination and monitoring at central level has led to a sheer fragmentation and uncertainty (ibid.). For instance, standards of care and assistance for asylum seekers and refugees vary a lot between the different centres of accommodation and the enjoyment of basic rights becomes "a matter of luck" (Oxfam 2017).

The vast landscape of the stakeholders surveyed during the Sirius research, is also composed by various degrees of sensitivities and knowledge with regards to the real needs of MRAs and the best strategies for their successful integration in the labour market. As it emerges from the research done for the work packages four and five (Numerato et al 2019, Baglioni 2020), NGOs, perhaps unsurprisingly being at the forefront, are those proving more in line with the actual needs and issues of migrants. Operators and Social cooperatives acquired a professionalism over time, since the beginning of the migratory crisis when several NGOs and cooperatives were forced to recruit personnel with little practical experiences. This changed with practice and also thanks to some targeted programmes sponsored by the Government and international organisations in the period before the 'Salvini' reforms of 2018.³¹

Among employer organisations, and private companies we saw the coexistence of different approaches and competence, also influenced by industrial culture, and business ethics. On the one hand, we observed a generally poor consideration of migrant workers – saw just as a source of (cheap) workforce – and lack of knowledge on how to tackle the problem of integration and cultural diversity on the workplace (Chiaromonte, 2018, Collini Federico and Ibrido 2020). On the other hand, the private sector also presents numerous positive examples from larger enterprises who are presenting – and promoting – successful projects of integration. In general, social partners, seems to be able to pinpoint the major barriers related

³¹ For more details, see Sirius WP4 report available at <https://www.sirius-project.eu/publications/wp-reports-results>

to their specific field, as it merges in the case of the main trade unions. Policymakers can have on the one hand a sensitivity on the matter, but are often lacking specific knowledge, particularly at higher level of government, while there is often a better knowledge at local level. This is also influenced by the political orientation of the policymakers.³² On the other hand, technical figures in the public administration seem to have a more pragmatic and knowledgeable approach to the issue of migrants' integration and reception. In recent times, we had a clear lack of political will to invest on integration during the Salvini's League – Five Star Movement government in 2018-2019 (Maggini and Collini 2019).

Still, there are some common grounds where the majority of stakeholders agree, first and foremost on the importance of work as one of the most effective instruments for ensuring the effective integration of foreigners into the social fabric of the host country. At the same time, there is a consensus on some key issues – mostly of normative/political nature, and the need to create more synergies among all actors/stakeholders in order to create virtuous paths of integration (Maggini and Ibrido 2019, Collini Federico and Ibrido 2020).

The last part to examine is the general rhetoric on migration and the 'vulnerability-agency' nexus according to the various stakeholders. Different stakeholders recognised the general situation of vulnerability of migrants, but this was particularly evident for refugees and asylum seekers. With regards to agency, we found that the most successful experiences of integration were related to projects or paths of integration that rely on making MRAs independent, providing them the tools to navigate and integrate autonomously in the Italian labour market.

Until 2018, the official policy rhetoric of the centre-left governments (2013-2018) defined the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as an opportunity for Italy, due to the possibility of addressing depopulation and ageing population, of filling vacancies and improving businesses and economic growth (Maggini and Ibrido 2019). This was also translated into practice through the implementation of policy measures. After the general elections of 2018, that resulted in a coalition government between the populist Five Star Movement and the right wing Salvini's League, we assisted at a radical backlash, with a focus on migration as a security issue. Policies and public debate were only targeted at controlling and limiting immigration, not the successful integration of migrants. Indeed, beside a new rhetoric, more stringent norms having been enacted with regards to migration policies, the so-called "Security decrees" or "Salvini Decrees", that also severely limited the funds for reception and integrations services.³³

Social partners, civil and religious associations, and few political parties tried to counter this narrative, however no major changes, at least in practice were observed also after the constitution of a new centre-left government at the end of 2019. Still, a new opportunity recently arose from the COVID-19 crisis. In the past months, the COVID-19 crisis had a relevant impact also on migration issues, including the integration of migrants in the Italian labour market. On the one hand, the consequent economic crisis is expected to affect the potential of integration in many economic sectors, on the other, it led to the opening of a policy opportunity window for a regularisation of irregular migrant workforce present in the country. Indeed, after a prolonged debate, a compromise was reached, and a regularisation of irregular migrants has been approved, targeted to some specific categories of workers such as agricultural, domestic and care.³⁴ This measure finally implements – at least in part - the requests by several social partners and associations, as was also captured by the Sirius research through the various stakeholder interviewed/surveyed. This can potentially terminate a 'catch-22' situation in which (in most cases) if you do not have a job you cannot have a residence permit, and you cannot have a regular job unless you have a valid residence permit.

³² For more details See Sirius WP3 report available at <https://www.sirius-project.eu/publications/wp-reports-results>

³³ Decreto Legge, 04/10/2018 n° 113 ; Decreto Legge, 14/06/2019 n° 53.

³⁴ Decreto Legge, 19/05/2020 n° 3.

6.3 Methods

The main method employed for this work package is the in-depth biographical interview (Denzin 2007, Creswell 2013), whose results have been analysed comparatively, along with the perspectives of the stakeholders based on data collected for the previous work packages.

For the selection of our pool of informants, we originally devised a sample that would give us a comprehensive representation of the main 'types' of extra-EU migrants present in Italy (economic migrants; family reunifications; refugees and asylum seekers). We also tried to include whenever possible a broader range of backgrounds and experiences, and their geographical distribution in order to identify possible influences of the different socio-economic contexts on labour market integration, as observed in the previous reports. This sampling strategy relied on the collaboration of the various stakeholders we encountered in the previous years (mostly associations, and social cooperatives), as well as personal contacts, to recruit informants and 'snowballing'.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic struck at the beginning of our planned period dedicated to interviews, with Italy being the first affected country in Europe, and the first to implement drastic restrictions. This situation imposed a change of strategy, due to the inability of most stakeholders to provide access, even remotely, to informants. Thus, we had been forced to change our sample of migrants, which is now composed of many 'old' migrants who have a long or 'stronger' story of integration, migrants that generally had a more successful integration and level of cultural and personal skills and were more open for remote interviews. In this case, personal contacts allowed us to reach most of the potential informants among economic migrants, former asylum seekers and refugees.

In total, under such extraordinary circumstances, we conducted ten interviews. This relatively limited number of interviews led to the implementation of 'contingency measures', such as relying more heavily on materials collected for previous work packages in order to identify and analyse data pertinent for this research, or supplement/integrate our findings with a recollection of (verified) stories from the press, media, or other public sources.

Nevertheless, despite all the limitations we still have a composite sample of MRAs, with different geographical, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. Six of them arrived in Italy between 2000 and 2013, while the remaining four arrived in Italy after the beginning of the so-called migration crisis of in 2014-15. Unfortunately, we have not been able to include any migrant arrived after the implementation of the stricter migration and integration policies (2019). Contrary to previous experiences, we also managed to have a larger presence of female informants, which now accounts for half the total (5 males, 5 females).

Looking at the nationalities of the interviewees, most of them (5) are coming from sub-Saharan Africa (3 from Cameroon; 1 from Guinea; 1 from Mali), three from Eastern Europe and the former USSR (Moldova, Georgia) and two from Latin America (Venezuela, Peru).

With regards to their status at time of arrival, we have economic migrants – including three former irregular migrants, all arrived in the early 2000s – family reunifications, refugees, and asylum seekers (all from sub-Saharan Africa). Now, most of them have long-term residence permits, while the refugees received humanitarian protection permits.

Their geographical distribution has been influenced by the constraints already mentioned before, with most located in Central and Northern Italy, which is an area with a traditionally high social capital and employment rate. At the same time, most of our informants are employed in the personal care and domestic work sectors, as through our available sources we could not reach any employed in sectors that often presents more risks and have a high presence of migrant workforce such as agriculture and construction. However, some of our interviewees had some past experiences working (occasionally) in such sectors. A detailed breakdown, including other information such as migration year, education, family status, languages spoken, and occupations is presented in Annex I.

6.4 Ethics

All interviews have been conducted with a close attention to the guidelines approved by the ethical board. Due to the limitations posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been forced to avoid face to face interviews and rely on phone or Skype interviews – all recorded using a portable recorder – which could not guarantee the same level of connection of face to face contacts. Due to either technical issues, or personal preferences by the interviewees, all interviews have been conducted via phone or Skype without video, which also impeded to observe facial expressions or body language, which may be a relevant complement for the analysis of their speeches. In some cases, we could not create a significant bond with the interviewees, which made the process more impersonal than what originally devised.

To mitigate potential gender-induced issues, we tried to have a female researcher to interview most of the women, however, due to external constraints this was not always possible. A male researcher concentrated on interviewing migrants with a more solid integration background in Italy, and coming from Eastern Europe, where cultural barriers in this regard were hypothesized as less relevant than for Muslim or African women. Still, we are conscious that this approach, coupled with the impersonality of phone interviews, might have made some informants more reticent about disclosing personal traumas or details. Indeed, in some circumstances, the interviewees have been less willing to open up and tell us about more delicate issues they might have faced, or to provide details in that regard. However, most of them still provided extensive narrations of their stories, and even described sensitive experiences, for instance regarding their journey and the violence they faced. In general, they seemed more open to discuss their experiences after their arrival in Italy. As mentioned before, most of our interviewees are migrant with a longer and often successful story of integration, with many denying having faced any ethically sensitive issue after their arrival; most of them were also educated person with high school or university degrees. This helped to establish a favourable working environment for the interview. Another element that favoured the ‘opening’ process of some informants, is the fact that they have already exposed their stories either to officials/researchers or even in public.

6.5 Individual Barriers and Enablers: Analysis of Interview Data

In this section, we use data collected in our semi-structured biographic-narrative interviews to analyse individual LMI's barriers and enablers identified by migrants in their life experience. This is done with a particular focus on the most critical turning points experienced by our informants, organised along some main common themes that we have identified in our analyses. A final part is also dedicated to a brief and rather initial illustration of the effects of the pandemic in the lives of migrants, according to information collected during our latest interviews. In conclusion, this allows us to identify a few clusters of migrants sharing similar experiences.

6.5.1 Migratory Channels and Legal Status

Everything begins at home. The migration channel, how the migrants reached Italy, represents in most cases the beginning of our stories, the starting point from which the migrants narrates what happened before and after, a watershed between their previous life and their current one, in other words the beginning of their life as migrants. Still, for some their consciousness about being migrants begun even before, at the beginning (or planning) of their journey, or if they already spent a relevant time living or working in other countries before reaching Italy.

Interviewee 3 is a 33-year-old man from Cameroon. He arrived in Italy in 2003 through family reunification and got Italian citizenship in 2017. His mother migrated in Italy in the mid '90s, while he stayed with his aunts and cousins in Cameroon, where he finished primary education and started high school before being able to reach his mother in Italy at 15. Once in Italy, he

lived with his mother in a large city in northern Italy and completed his secondary education in a technical institute. He recalls that at the beginning it was difficult for him to integrate, because of the language barrier and some prejudice "I was the only black in my class". People were crucial for his integration path; he is deeply thankful to his Italian friend who supported him through the high school and later at the university. He felt immediately the need not to be a burden for his mother, which is the reason why he constantly looked for jobs and went through many to support himself during his studies. He found most of his jobs through institutional channels such as job agencies and he is currently doing a master's degree and works as a freelance translator, while looking also for another job. He feels Italian and declares to be more attached to Italy than to his home country "Living and growing up in Italy changed me... I matured here [in Italy], my mentality changed".

Interviewee 6 is a younger man from Cameroon with a humanitarian residence permit. He currently works as a socio-sanitary operator in a nursing home. In Cameroon he was a student at the university and took part to some political protests. For this reason, he had to leave his country. He arrived in Morocco (after having passed through Niger and Algeria), and spent there 2 years, doing different jobs, such as gardener, farmer, and manual labourer. However, one day, the police took him, and since he was without documents, beat him and returned him to Algeria. So, he decided to go to Libya and then to Europe. He reached Sicily in May 2016 and then, when he applied for asylum, was transferred to a tiny village in Tuscany. After some time, he participated as a volunteer to the beer fair organized in the village. This helped him to know some people of the community. He also got to know some elderly people, who used to give lessons of Italian language (as volunteers) in the reception centre where he has been accommodated. However, the interviewee observes that things were not easy in the reception centre: especially, due to the huge workload, professional workers were often in burnout. Sometimes they lacked to provide the necessary information. Furthermore, they lacked to provide a personalised assistance and to take into account and assess the specific competences and educational path of each foreigner hosted in the reception centre.

Andres (pseudonym, Interviewee 10) is a man from Peru in his mid-30s, currently in Italy with a work residence permit. At present, he works as a domestic worker, and also does occasional jobs (generally in the black). He is married with two children. In his home country, he completed secondary education, got married, and worked as a mechanic. He decided to migrate because he was attracted by the possibility of a better life in Italy, where some of his family members already moved. "It was easy to find a job in Peru, but the pay was not good". He arrived in Italy in 2009, with a work visa, thanks to his father who already migrated to Florence a few years prior and managed to get him a job from his same employer. "I arrived in Italy from Peru in 2009 with a work permit, thanks to my father who was working for Mr. [...]". He managed to find me a job for him too and once arrived I immediately stated working for him". In 2011, his wife and kids reached him through a family reunification procedure. Between 2011 and 2014, he worked for a few years with more or less stable contracts for logistic and transport companies. Afterwards, he could not find another regular job, but only temporary ones. It is in this period, he also started working more regularly as a domestic worker, and cleaner. He found most of his subsequent jobs thanks to family contacts or through the local Peruvian community. He also states the same worked for his wife.

These three biographies from our sample illuminate how the most evident division is between legal and illegal entry channels. In general, among legal entries we can identify three main paths. Family reunifications normally means that the person who arrives in Italy can count on at least a basic local network that can assist with basic needs (i.e. accommodation) and provide useful contacts to find a job. People arriving with work permits, which means they already have a job when arriving in Italy, a category we had difficulties to reach as they are in low numbers, particularly in recent years and is represented by Interviewee 10. A residual sub-

category are legal entries for different reasons (i.e. study), that might later become work-permits, represented in this research by Interviewee 5.

Irregular entries can be divided between those who get into the reception system (interviewees 6, 7, 8, 9) and those who are arriving 'on their own' and remain or become 'invisibles'. In recent years (post 2014) those who enter the reception system are mainly asylum seekers and refugees arriving by sea, and can be further divided in two sub-categories according if the person have been in the first or second line reception system³⁵. The category of 'invisibles' includes all those who arrived irregularly in Italy with no formal knowledge by the authorities, such as border-crossers, victims of human trafficking, people arriving from the sea not intercepted by authorities or rescuers. In this category, we should also include visa overstayer, although they are formally arriving through legal channels, in some cases with the help of smugglers as it was the case of Interviewee 3.

She arrived in Italy in 2000 with a tourist visa bought through the help of some smugglers specialised in "facilitation of unauthorised entries" of eastern European migrants in Western Europe. When she arrived in Italy, she felt alone in a foreign place, "I was scared, I only had a phrasebook in my pocket to help me with the language". Initially, she received help of a religious association and found her first job as a domestic worker within a few months through this association. (Interviewee 3)

Indeed, the legal status is another key element that conditions the opportunities of labour market integration and strictly linked with the migration channel. The stories of interviewees 3 4 and 8 are the only ones where an experience of irregular migration out of the reception system has been described. In all cases, the interviewees stated that the fact they were irregular migrants did not hinder the possibility to find jobs, although in the irregular market. The case of Interviewee 8 was also the only one where her first job experience, as a kitchen hand, have been delusional due to exploitation by her employer. However, after she quit, she found a better job as a housemaid which allowed her to be regularised after a few years.

We might argue that this was a more common situation at the times of their migration (early 2000s), when it was considered almost a common practice for domestic and care workers, and allowed them to benefit from the massive regularisations of undocumented migrants in that sector. However, such 'regularisation' practices were few and far between, with the larger being in 2002 and 2006, long before the more recent so-called migration crisis. Another common element is that they all could rely, at least in part, on ethnic networks and later managed to regularise their positions and somewhat successfully integrate. In recent years, invisible migrants (undocumented and not into the reception system) become much more vulnerable due to a more restrictive legislative framework and can only count on either strong ethnical networks or charities for assistance.

We also have to point out that most of our informants (interviewees 6, 7, 8, 9) are past beneficiaries of humanitarian protection, a status that granted a temporary residence permit that could also be converted into a work permit; which allowed several hosts of CAS and SPRAR centres to find regular jobs (interviewees 7,9) and even start an independent path outside of the reception system. The so called Salvini Decree of 2018 cancelled the possibility of issuing humanitarian protection permits and deprived tens of thousands of undocumented migrants of the right to be hosted in reception centres. Those in the reception system might even not be able to convert their temporary permits to work ones. Or they might face the risk of losing accommodation or services. In the previous work packages, it emerged that some guests of SPRAR were forced to work in the irregular market because otherwise they would

³⁵ Until the 'Salvini Decree' (DL 113/2018) the SPRAR system was also open to refugees and asylum seekers, now is reserved to beneficiaries of international protection and unaccompanied minors.

lose the right to be hosted in reception centres³⁶, or because they could not obtain the relevant documents (i.e. residence) in order to have a regular contract.

Furthermore, another general element of vulnerability is the fear of losing the work permit, which almost obliges migrants to accept any kind of job, often disregarding their skills and ambitions (i.e. Interviewee 13, WP3). Also, the temporary nature of most permits, and the lengthy procedures for their renewal, might also have consequences on the personal lives of the migrants that can be trapped either in or out of the country. *“There was one time when my permit expired, and I applied for a renewal... But it takes months and you cannot travel and be guaranteed to be allowed back in if you don’t have completed the procedure. I was supposed to come back to Georgia to assist my sick father and I had to wait to go back home for fear of not being able to come back. At least all worked out in the end”.* (Interviewee 4).

The stories narrated by our interviewees and enriched by previously collected data show how different migratory channels have influenced their integration in the Italian labour market, both directly and indirectly (in conjunction to agency and resilience). There is also a strong connection to the migrants’ vulnerability (legal status) under the impact of public services and bureaucracy. The way one arrives in the country also means who would that person be in the eyes of the State, what s/he can or cannot achieve (and expect), also in terms of jobs. In short, different entry channels lead to very different statuses. Irregular entries outside of the reception systems are not able to find legal work or residential contracts, nor to get access to any public services (unless their status is acknowledged). The literature, as well with conversations with stakeholders, tells us that, unsurprisingly, these categories are facing higher risk of exploitation, work and live in unsafe conditions, or end up working for criminal networks (see, for reference, Collini Federico and Ibrido 2020).

6.5.2 Entrance to The Labour-Market

The experiences recalled by the migrants when they first tried to enter the Italian labour market can prove to be very relevant in their paths towards their integration in the labour market, as the first job can often be a major milestone in their integration process. In this case, we consider if such ‘early entrances’ in the labour market have been seen as a relevant turning point by migrants, and how they shaped their lives.

Mariam (interviewee 4) arrived in Rome in 2001, without knowing the language and with a degree she knew would not have been able to use. In the first days, she was helped by a Georgian family that moved to Italy in the ‘90s, and with whom she was in contact already before moving. Within a couple of weeks, through some contacts in the Russian speaking community³⁷, she already found a job as a live-in babysitter in an upper middle-class Italian family. Given her irregular status, she was unable to get a contract. Luckily, her new ‘family’ soon kind of ‘adopted’ her too, and proved extremely supportive, they were able to go along with her ‘fractured English’, and helped her with learning the language (the main barrier back then) and her various needs to ‘settle’ in Rome. Less than a year after her arrival, she had the opportunity to regularise her position when her employers adhered to the regularisation of undocumented migrants (mostly targeted to domestic workers) that came along with the “Bossi Fini” migration law reform of 2002. This was a particularly fortunate circumstance, which also radically changed her prospects in Italy, not living anymore the life of an irregular migrant. Ultimately, she ended up working with a regular contract in that family for three years, being integrated ‘almost as a family member’. By this time, she still planned to go back to Georgia after a couple of years, and, attracted by better salaries, she moved to the North, where, through some acquaintances in the ex-soviet migrant community, found a regular full-time job

³⁶ For instance, beneficiaries (i.e. Asylum seekers) lose the right to be hosted in the SPRAR centres if they have an income of more than 5889€ per year, which is not enough to make a living outside.

³⁷ The enlarged community of people that migrated from former USSR states.

to assist an old person. Yet, thanks to her excellent references, she soon found another job as a live-in babysitter through an agency, which lasted for about five years, until they did not need a babysitter anymore.

Linda (Interviewee 5) arrived in Italy in 2015 to attend a master's degree in a fashion institute and came back to Italy in 2017 after an internship abroad. "After [I finished my master's degree] I realized that in Italy looking for a job is very difficult without a network." Still, she found a job in a showroom, as marketing and PR assistant. She describes her first job as a very disappointing experience: "I accepted many things, such as receiving a very low salary..." After one year, she decided to quit her job "I wanted to go back to Venezuela and visit my family, but I did not have the money for the ticket". I thought, "If I do not have the freedom to go back to my family, something went wrong". I realized I had to: they were exploiting me, because I was new in the country and in the job market". (Linda, Interviewee 5)

For Mariam, local contacts were instrumental to find her first job; however, it was her entrance in the labour market that represented her first step of integration, an occasion to get in touch with people and experiences that shaped her future life in Italy. Her first job was a very fortunate experience. It quickly allowed her to overcome the language barrier, the trauma of being alone in a foreign country, and to be regularised. It also helped motivating her to try to follow her desires and try to have her degree recognised in Italy.³⁸ In short, her first work experience allowed her to be able to rely on herself and to approach the labour market also through formal channels (agencies). In other cases, the entrance in the Italian labour market was a rather negative experience, as it was for Linda (interviewee 5), or Interviewee 1.

Looking at the full sample, we can divide between formal and informal sector experiences. In many cases (also based on evidence from previous WPs), the first jobs were in the irregular market. This was expected by some migrants, particularly domestic workers (see the interviewees 3, 4), but for refugees and asylum seekers it was often as a necessity to get an income, or due to the legal constraints.³⁹

However, the formal or informal nature of the first job does not predetermine a positive or negative experience, as we can see from the examples of Mariam and Linda. For interviewees 3 and 4 entrance to the labour market (although the informal one) was instrumental to their further integration, as it allowed them to learn/improve their knowledge of Italian language, find a reference point (their employers). On the other hand, Interviewee 8, who also got her first job in the irregular market, had a negative experience. Experiences also varies among economic migrants and asylum seekers that are involved in integration programmes. "There [he found his first job as a welder for a small company through the SPRAR] I felt treated as a slave [...] After some months, as soon as I found another job as a mechanic, I quit". (Interviewee 7)

It should be noted that in no cases a delusional first impact with the Italian labour market impeded our informants to keep looking for other jobs, nor convince them to get back home or migrate in another country.⁴⁰ In some cases it was a valuable lesson that motivated them to look for better options (interviewee 7), or to realise their value and what do they actually want to achieve, and what they would not endure anymore (Interviewee 5, 9).

In general, the entrance into the labour market is easier for economic migrants who can rely, at least in part, on a local network (Interviewees 4, 10), or to asylum seekers hosted in the

³⁸ One of her employers was a psychologist, who recognised she still had passion for her old profession and motivated her to pursue this career in Italy.

³⁹ This emerged mostly from interview data gathered for the Sirius WP4 and WP3 national reports.

⁴⁰ Some tentative explanations we can propose in this regard can be linked to our sample of informants (their resilience, people whom, despite all, remained in Italy and in some cases later had successful integration experiences); high difficulty to move abroad or the impossibility to go back home.

SPRAR⁴¹. The difference between guests of the CAS and SPRAR system can be clearly seen from the experiences of Interviewee 7 who found his first job through the SPRAR system, and Abdoulaye (Interviewee 9, CAS guest) *“I found my first job as a handyman in a construction company... I found it by myself, looking on the street until I find a group of people who were looking for workers”*. For others like him, entrance into the labour market is also a domain where agency can play a relevant role, and influence either a quicker entry into the labour market, as well as a more or less successful integration (i.e. Interviewees 1, 2, 9).

6.5.3 Trauma-vulnerability

In this sub-section, we explore the broad concept of trauma and vulnerability, and how it influenced the integration of MRAs into the Italian society and labour market. The main elements we examine are the exposure to exploitation, prejudice, discrimination, psychological stress, and violence.

Soon after she started her job at the PR firm, she felt that her work was not valued. “I was young, I was the only person of the staff speaking English, where English was the main working language. I was the only one with a master in fashion business. Nonetheless, I was the worst paid”. Among the reasons which may explain this situation, she mentions her status of foreigner: “I don’t know... I don’t know why... maybe they want to prove you for long time... maybe they do not care how much you earn... maybe it was because I was young and foreigner”. She started to feel exploited by the manager and the boss of the showroom. “I did everything. I accepted many things. I agreed to have a contract for far fewer hours than I was doing: it was a part-time contract for 4 hours while I worked full-time (8 even 10 hours). I was always the last to go out. I wanted to show that I was interested, that I wanted to grow. [...] I often felt humiliated ... not respected ... and I felt that my being a foreigner was a problem, they treated me differently. They thought “you’re a foreigner, I’m giving you an opportunity!” And every day I asked myself “why don’t they see my potential? Why don’t they invest in young talent?”. Linda also felt another type of prejudices: “they thought that I should have been rich to work in the fashion market and manage to survive in Milan...so I didn’t need money”. Another prejudice she was aware of was the fact that for her boss being foreigner meant being temporary: “For them I was not thinking about building a future in Italy or in the company I was working for”. (Linda, Interviewee 5)

The story of Linda presents a rather common situation faced by migrant workers, which is present also in a sector such as the Fashion business. It also shows another peculiar form of prejudice (common to most trainees, not just foreigners), linked to a bad business culture and lack of ethics. In the end, Linda learned much from this job experience that made her realise some of the most severe flaws of the Italian labour market, she ultimately quit her job and promised herself that she would not have accepted to be exploited anymore, even if this would have made finding a job more difficult.

Forms of exploitation, particularly linked to first jobs, are also recalled by Interviewee 7, who *“felt exploited”* while working regularly for a small welding company, and immediately started looking for a new job, or interviewee 8 *“After 4 months [working in a restaurant] I did not received any salary yet. Thanks to an Ivorian friend who spoke with my boss, I managed to get the salary, but I was immediately fired”*. Interviewee 9 also mentioned the risk and the fact that he always *“...tried to avoid being exploited”*. Furthermore, almost all informants had experiences with the informal labour market.

In general, prejudice and discrimination have been experienced by many of our interviewees (including those from WP3 and WP4), both in their everyday lives and on the workplace. This was also particularly evident when trying to rent an apartment or find a room for interviewee

⁴¹ The SPRAR system provide integration services including professional formation and labour market integration, often through placement projects and traineeships.

9. Looking specifically at LMI, Interviewee 2 felt discriminated when looking for jobs and even described being victim of racist comments both at the workplace *“during the first weeks at my second job... actually my first real job as an employee... I was discriminated by some of my colleagues, because of my colour”* and outside. *“When I was a teenager, I stopped playing football in a local team due to repeated racist insults”*. Recalling his experience as a migrant teenager who went to school in the early 2000s, he remembers how *“We [migrants/persons of colour] were ‘fewer than they are now [...] I was the only black in my class’”* and experienced episodes of racial bullying and discrimination at school, in some cases even by teachers.

Interviewee 1 felt some discrimination and prejudice by employers or recruiters due to the fact that she was *“another Easter European migrant”*, notwithstanding how educated she was, or if she spoke the language extremely well. *“They clearly favoured Italian candidates even when on paper I had a better qualification”*. She felt she *“had to prove her value much harder than others [...]”*. She did not feel a significant change of attitude even after gaining Italian citizenship. *“They still look at your name and my place of origin more than citizenship”*. On the contrary, Interviewees 3 and 4, who are also Easter European women but arrived in the early 2000s did not report any relevant issue with discrimination beside the occasional racist or prejudicial comment that they ‘learned to ignore’. This is possibly due to the fact that they migrated long time ago and reached a better level of integration with the community and their employers.

Gender and age issues were not explicitly mentioned in our interviews with the informants for this work package. However, it has been acknowledged as a factor that can influence the path towards labour market integration. The only issue that was mentioned is how some jobs were easier to get for women, particularly in domestic works (Interviewees 3,4). In our interviews, we recorded no story of violence experienced by migrants once arrived in Italy. Still, we have some informants who suffered violence during their journey here. It is also possible that episodes of violence or trauma happened to other interviewees, but they just refused to tell us, as it happened with some informants in WP3 and WP4. Psychological trauma is a more subtle issue, and, even if not acknowledged directly by all our informants, we can see how it was present in some form in several of the life experiences, particularly in relation to the migration journey, experiences in the reception centres. The only direct link with labour market integration can be related to negative work experiences such as a stressful work environment, or cases of exploitation mentioned before.

6.5.4 Resilience

Resilience is a broad concept that can encompass the aspirations, motivations, expectations, and ambitions of our informants. Also, how did they manage to cope with them in the struggle between ‘dreams’ and reality.

It came the moment when he realised it was time to leave, to try a new life in Europe, or he would not have a life at all there [in Guinea]. He left, conscious that it would be a tough journey, but not of all the challenges that he would have to endure. “The desert was the hardest part, that and violence, which started in Mali, and continued in Libya”. He lived the same situation in Libya, where the locals expressed a strong racism towards ‘black African people’ “They kept calling us negroes even if I am not [more] black [than them]”. There, he was determined risk dying in the sea trying to reach Europe, then face again all he had faced on the way there, burdened by an additional, unbearable, sense of failure. “Torture is dying many times, if you drown in the sea you only die once”. He boarded one of the many rafts that were leaving for Italy and was rescued after a few days in the Mediterranean.

He arrived in Italy without any form of I.D. or document, was inserted into the reception system and brought to a CAS in Northern Italy, where he remained for about two years. There, he had some Italian language lessons, which can be considered his ‘first real step in terms of integration’. It is during his permanence in the reception centre that he started to get conscious he wanted a new life in Italy, a real life, where work is a central part of it. He realised that he

was meant to be here. He started doing volunteer work in the cooperative that run the reception centre and helped other hosts whenever possible. He was soon valued as a translator thanks to his language skills. His first job in Italy [outside of the reception centre] was in a construction firm that literally recruited him “from the street”, and “gave me occasional jobs from time to time” despite lacking a specific formation for construction works. According to him, “Patience is fundamental for foreigners looking for a job. Patience [and dignity], also helps avoid exploitation, if they [employers] want you, they’ll come back for you [proposing more decent conditions], otherwise, you’ll just find something else further on”. Indeed, this stance actually payed off in several instances, such as when a local agricultural entrepreneur came back offering him and his companion a higher salary for a job they initially refused. He finally left the CAS once he obtained a humanitarian protection resident permit and was hired as a cultural mediator by the cooperative managing the centre, which recognised his language skills, and the attitude during his volunteering. This proved a particularly important step for his career. Since then, he did several jobs, but always remained a freelance cultural mediator and translator. He also recalls the importance of determination and self-consciousness in order to be able to successfully integrate, that is how he faced discrimination. According to Abdoulaye, one should never forget to be a human being that deserves respect “if you stop caring for yourself, they’ll just exploit or disgrace you”. Don’t ask for more, just what you should get as a human being [...] We’re all equals”.

The story of Abdoulaye (Interviewee 9) is a story of struggle, fear, and risk faced by a young man who abandoned his country to take ‘the Libyan route’ towards a new life in Europe, and a story of determination to integrate into the host country. It can be taken as an example of the relevance of resilience for a successful integration in the Italian labour market and the society in general. It is also a clear example of some of the resilience strategies that can be employed to address difficulties, and to overcome traumas and vulnerability (journey, discrimination). Determination, aspiration, and patience were particularly helpful on his road towards integration and finding jobs. In his case we can point out at least three relevant epiphanies. The first was when he realised he preferred to face an almost certain death rather than coming back, so that all further actions were aimed at creating a new life in Europe. The second is when he felt destined to be in Italy, and this pushed him to create a stable life in the country, to integrate and help others to integrate. The third when, after refusing a job and being proposed better conditions, he realised you can actually have some leverage and obtain fairer conditions. He was adamant on this point, which we can translate as “do not undersell yourself, do not put your dignity up for sale”, something he also tried to teach to fellow guests of the reception centre.

In general, personal attitude seems to be a key factor for several of our interviewees. Furthermore, will and motivation can also be included among [a sort of agency-driven] resilience. Indeed, during our conversation with some informants, it emerged that personal qualities, often linked to their personal attitude, or shaped by events or peoples, had a relevant impact in the way they managed to integrate in the labour market. Interviewee 9, for instance recognise the help received, but place also on his agency the merits of his integration: *“I received help, suggestion, but [integration] it was also a personal thing, due to my commitment, my willingness to succeed”*. Resilience is also a way to address vulnerability. In the stories of interviewee 1 and 2 it also emerges how, in their opinion, determination and a confident attitude were very important to overcome the prejudices and to get most of their jobs, which were obtained following formal channels (job agencies, CV submissions, direct interviews) and not personal contacts. Other important motivational factors rely in the aspirations of our informants, the reasons to leave and reasons to stay, to persist in the struggle to integrate. In this regard, two recurring elements in the stories of our informants, are the desire for independence (Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 9) and the fear of failure (often referred as ‘going back’ or ‘coming back’). The second is present in the story of Abdoulaye and Interviewee 2, who explicitly indicates this as a cultural element. *“You don’t want to go back, because if you come back you failed, you are a shame for your family”*. Indeed, those a

major element that helped them overcome hardships and obstacles, with a direct impact in their labour market integration.

6.5.5 Expectations and Aspirations

Expectations are another element that can influence the integration process of migrants but is more often shaped by the life and work experiences. In general, from our informants, we can identify different kind of expectations and matching.

The plan for several economic migrants, particularly from Easter Europe (Interviewee 3,4), was to stay just for a few years and then go back to their home country. In neither case, it was fulfilled, and they ended up staying much longer, or losing any desire to go back to their home country. On the other hand, Economic migrants from Africa or Latin America generally plan to make a fortune and stay longer in the host country (Interviewees 5, 8, 10). Family reunifications mostly come here with the ambition of having a new and stable life (Interviewee 2).

Refugees and asylum seekers recalled not having any clear expectation before; beside saving their life or aim for a better one, they would have expected a better situation. Most wanted to reach “Dreamland” Europe, and possibly France or Northern Europe, not necessarily Italy.

“In Africa we imagine Europe as the Paradise... while in Africa we’re in the Purgatory... You see it as in TV, this makes you dream... [...] Down there [in his country] you almost never hear story of failures... because that would be shameful. Thus, you get the expectations that is a paradise, [when reality is much different]”. Thus, this has an influence of the expectations, but “This dreamland might work for students who go with visa to study in European universities... not for those who arrive through Libya”. (Interviewee 2)

For them staying here was a matter of necessity, they could not leave once in the reception system. *“I was confused. I did not know where I was: I have heard talking about Italy in 2006 because the Italian team won the world cup. That was the only thing I knew. [...] Once in Italy I applied for asylum and was transferred to a reception centre in a tiny village in Tuscany”.* (Interviewee 7) Still, most quickly accept this reality and are even happy to be here (as it is the case of Interviewee 9 and other successful stories collected for WP4⁴²).

Change of expectations is common in several stories. We can observe that often expectations and aspirations change and adapt with the stage of life of the migrants, as well as the experiences they face. Higher expectations and ambitions are more common at the beginning, while migrants that are here from longer generally aim to a stable life, and a stable job, even if this will mean not being able to pursue their original ambitions.

This can be considered a form of resilience in adaptability, which is also present in other themes (i.e. skills). We can see a general tendency to accept of their current status and learn to live with it. This can be a negative process of fatalism, a condition that moves the migrants to accept their situation, realise there is no comeback even if their original aspiration or expectations were not met (Interviewee 1, 6). On the contrary, they can positively realise they have now a real new life elsewhere (Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 9, 10). This can also be related to family, affections and the ‘anchoring’ of our informants to Italy.⁴³ This can move migrants to persist in their attempts to find their way into the formal or informal labour market, or to leave it just to come back (interviewee 4).

⁴² For more details, see Sirius WP4 report available at <https://www.sirius-project.eu/publications/wp-reports-results>

⁴³ In one case, a marriage proved crucial for an interviewee to remain in Italy (interviewee 1). In other cases, (long-term) migrants managed to have their family reach them, and also provided help for them to find jobs. (Interviewee 3, 10).

6.5.6 Luck or agency?

A final element we can include in the broad theme of 'resilience' is the 'superstition' or 'religious' element. Several interviewees referred to a dimension that can be related to luck, fate, destiny, or 'God's will', often using expressions indicating God, Allah, or deities, with a more profound meaning than simple interjections. This can be considered relevant, although in most cases seems more an ex-post acceptance of what they have achieved. In general, faith seems to be an element that can support the person, but in very few cases faith was a motivational factor that directly helped them in LMI. An exception is the impact of 'luck', that seems to play a more decisive role on the integration of MRAs. There are many elements that emerged in the stories of our informants that are totally out of their control but in most cases proved crucial, such as meeting a very good employer that proved very helpful in their integration process (i.e. interviewees 3, 4, 9), a mentor, or local persons that motivated them or gave help.

I [realised I] was so lucky to have been employed by this family [...] they really helped me with everything [...] it's largely thanks to them I managed to integrate. (Interviewee 4)

"I received a very good advice when ⁴⁴I was in the reception system and following it has been one of the most intelligent things I did in my entire life". (Interviewee 9)

"A woman heading a local association was crucial [in his life course]. She managed to organize an event in the secondary school of the closest village where the asylum seekers met the children and other locals. There I played the drums. This gave me the opportunity [to build a network]. I also started to teach music as a volunteer in the secondary school". (Interviewee 7)

However, even if the element of luck and randomness cannot be ignored, this can also be considered a sort of agency through resilience: the ability to seek or recognise help, and to make the most of the offered help in terms of labour market integration.

6.5.7 Skills

The importance of skills is another common element that emerges in our stories. In this section we look at the experiences of our informants (including some from previous WPs) to cover this theme in a broad meaning, including language, skill match, skill recognition, education, as well as the role of agency as a peculiar skill.

When Mariam (Interviewee 4) moved to Italy, she knew that she would not be able to find a job related to her studies and the professional experience she had in Georgia, and would most likely end up doing domestic works, as she did. Yet, as time passed and she realised her initial plan to stay just for a few years was not going to work, she started to look at ways to have her degree recognised and go back to her former career. Unfortunately, at the time, her degree was only valid in CIS countries and she would need to attend additional courses in Italy for a recognition. Her jobs never allowed her to go back to university and attend classes, and, forced between having a job and studying, she had to shelve that idea, hoping to be able to get back to it the day she would finally come back to Georgia. Unfortunately, even that plan did not work out and she never got back to her old profession. Still, she always tries to improve her skills whenever possible, with language courses and professional formation (accounting, personal assistance), in between jobs or while perceiving unemployment subsidies. She does not want to be a domestic worker or a 'badante' for her entire life.

The experience of Mariam presents us with a clear case of skill mismatch and how skill recognition can be a barrier for foreign workers approaching the Italian labour market. At the

⁴⁴ The interviewee did not specify which advice, but from the general discourse, it seems linked with language learning and education/formation.

same time, she also presents a high degree of consciousness about what to expect, the kind of work that could be found. This is also confirmed by Interviewee 3 who was working as a bank clerk in her home country: she had *“no illusion to find an office work or something similar”* and getting a job as a domestic worker was *“absolutely what I expected”*. In both cases, such realistic expectations were motivated by the experiences of others who migrated before.

Skills recognition can be an issue even when there is a formal recognition such as the case of Interviewee 1. She reported a rather negative experience where skill recognition plays a relevant part. First she felt rejected by the Italian academia, after she tried to join a PhD but, she says, *“the system was too closed”* (at least in her area in the Universities she tried to apply), and would give her very little chances to develop into an academic career *“without the ‘right contacts’”*. Even afterwards, she felt that, despite having her master’s degree recognised, it was not valued, even though she was conscious about the fact it was not a skill in high demand in the labour market. The young woman became delusional about her perspective in Italy, and generally describes her LMI path in Italy as difficult and unrewarding. In this case, marriage became the main reason why she remained in the country. As we have seen when describing vulnerability and entrance in the labour market, a similar case happened to Interviewee 5 (Linda), where her skills were not properly valued by her employers.

In general, skill recognition proved to be initially a barrier; however, education and professional formation have been highly praised as a major enabler. Voluntary work in some cases helped to integrate and gain valuable skills or build networks useful to find a job (Interviewees 2, 7, 9). Our informants concur on the importance of professional training and skills building, as well as the need to adapt in order to find a job, no matter their previous skills or aspirations. The flexibility and adaptability are a form of resilience that in most cases was crucial to integrate in the labour market. With regards to education, we should point out the importance of obtaining a middle-school or high school diploma, which is useful to overcome the language barrier and to get a professional qualification⁴⁵ that can be useful to find a job. Many express interests in obtaining higher education (i.e. Interviewees 1, 2, 4, 9), but only a minority actually follow through, mostly for economic reasons or incompatibility with their jobs. Based upon our data, we can argue that those more likely to enrol in a University are young migrants with a strong desire to pursue this aim from the beginning, while finding a more or less stable job reduces such chance.

6.5.8 Language as a factor of agency

Skill recognition and formation are relevant issues for the integration of MRAs in the Italian labour market, however, there is a basic skill that is universally recognised as the foundational step. In almost all the stories we have collected, the first real step of integration has been recalled as overcoming the language barrier. Language is immediately recognised by our informants as a barrier than needed to be overcome, and a major enabler once learned.

Such is the importance attributed to language that Interviewee 4 recalls a small pocket dictionary being one of the dearest things she had with herself once arrived in Italy. *“When I arrived in Italy, I was scared; I only had a phrasebook in my pocket to help me with the language”*. (interviewee 3).

Nonetheless, the knowledge of Italian was not a requirement for some migrants who could rely on local contact or networks in order to find their first employment, although it was one of the priorities to keep the job and properly integrate, particularly for domestic workers (i.e. interviewees 3, 4). Migrants hosted in reception centre also highlight the importance of learning the language. *“Following the advice to learn Italian and commit myself to do it was one of the most important things he could do to integrate in Italy [...] in the end I did not do the A1 or B2 courses but I did directly to the middle school final exam, and I passed it”*.

⁴⁵ In some cases, the middle school diploma or even a high school diploma are a prerequisite to access professional trainings (i.e. for courses to become a Socio-Sanitary Operator).

(Interviewee 9). Language classes has been considered the first step for integration, if not the only real one provided while in the system (Interviewee 6). In some cases, once they learned Italian, Informants with excellent language skills often found a job (freelance, full-time or part-time) as translators or cultural mediators (Interviewee 1, 2, 4, 6, 9). Finally, language is also relevant for health and safety on the workplace, or to gain consciousness about workers' rights and obligations. Evidences from our conversations with stakeholders confirms that the jobs where you don't need to know the language are often the jobs that are more at risk of exploitation (a clear example is the phenomenon of 'caporalato' in constructions and agriculture).

6.5.9 What is agency after all?

Agency can also be considered as a sort of peculiar skill that in the story of our informants play a role in different forms and phases and is present in several of our themes. Human agency is generically defined as the power of individuals to freely make choices and perform actions that affect the course of their lives (Giddens 1984), with its constitutive elements of being: iteration, projectivity, and practical evaluation (Emirbayer and Mische 1998).

In our case, we can identify agency (to perform actions that affect the course of one's life) in relation to migration itself, such as how to plan and execute the journey, and the subsequent steps, evident in stories 3 and 4. Agency can also take the form of a peculiar skill, which is the agency of seeking and utilising the help offered, of recognising vulnerability and limits, as we have seen when covering 'resilience'. Material or immaterial help, psychological guidance, counselling, or a simple advice received by someone (employer, operator in the centre, friend, host family) requires subsequent actions to bear fruits, and, when successful, is often recognised as a major turning point in their lives (Interviewees 3, 4). This is particularly relevant in the beginning of the integration process, and can be the first real step towards a MRA integration into the labour market. Agency is also present in relation to the entrance in the labour market. Several migrants pointed out how their integration in the labour market was practically just on themselves, without much support from CSOs or public institutions. In this regard, agency is also important for guests of the CAS systems, where LMI programmes are not implemented (Interviewee 9). Economic migrants and, generally, migrants arrived until the mid-2000s, generally received no support and in some cases, even the relationship networks they managed to build was mostly by themselves, presenting a proactive attitude of our informants.

6.6 Covid-19

The pandemic caused by the SARS-COV-2 virus deeply affected the lives of almost everybody. In some of our interviews, we tried capture the specific impact it had on the current lives of ('our') migrants. In particular, we managed to raise the issue with three of our informants, which allowed to see a few different outcomes.

The first story has been told us by Interviewee 3 during the second month of lockdown. The Covid 19 crisis deeply affected her life lately because she planned to 'retire' and move back to Moldova in March. *"After so many years I finally decided to go back to Moldova... to my husband. To retire there. [...] I was already scheduled to leave in a few weeks... The border closures forced me to remain in Italy, while my son with his family was blocked there [in Moldova] after they went to visit..."* She was without a job or a salary. Luckily, she could count on family members and friends to support her during this period, awaiting the time she could finally go. Still, she felt fortunate enough as she still has a place to stay. Although this story is not directly related to the impact of Covid-19 on LMI, her attitude has been admittedly shaped by her life experiences, including her integration in Italy, that taught her to endure many things, *"I faced so many things and I will with the virus too if God so wishes"*. This story can be

summarised as “entrapment” and present us with a highly negative impact of the Covid crisis on a migrant’s life and highlight the importance of resilience.

The second story is that of Interviewee 9, who was denied an important job opportunity and had to resort to a plan-B. At the beginning of 2020 he was prospecting a major breakthrough in his professional career, but Covid-19 pandemic disrupted his plans *“They proposed me a new job at the beginning of the year [2020], an important job... it would have been just great... but then the COVID came and this job never came”*. Luckily, he managed to find a temporary job as an operator in a reception centre, thanks to his ample experience in the field and the contacts he managed to have in the past years. Now, his major aim is to get past this situation and keep working. Still, he thought about some possible paths for the future *“Maybe I will attend university in the future [...] I just want a stable life here”*. This story can be summarised as “ruined dreams” and present both a negative and positive aspect. In particular, we can highlight the role of agency and the importance of networks and experience in order to find a job even in critical situations.

The third story is that of Interviewee 4 and tells us how a time of crisis might become an opportunity to rethink in a different way a sub-optimal condition. Shortly before the Covid crisis, Mariam was facing a difficult time to find jobs, and at the beginning of 2020 she took a full-time job as a ‘badante’ (live-in caregiver) for an old lady. This was something that she would not have normally wanted to do but had to accept out of necessity. Nevertheless, after a few weeks, the Covid-19 pandemic started, and this contributed to change her perspectives on life and the importance of finding the good side in everything. She felt again a sensation that was forgotten in the last period, she felt lucky again, at least she has a job and is in a secure environment. She also took the chance to think about her next steps and is positive about the perspectives of doing the long-delayed professional formation courses once the crisis will pass. This story is a clear example of how external factors can influence the expectations and motivations of people.

A common element of the three stories is the extreme consciousness showed by our informants, as well as the acceptance of their condition in such extraordinary times, one that including the only unemployed interviewee, who (at the time) could at least count on external support from family and friends.

6.7 Different migrants – different needs

Reassessing the various themes, we can identify some ‘categories of migrants’ with the associated common clusters of experiences. The first and most evident difference is between asylum seekers and refugees and economic migrants.

Economic migrants can be furtherly divided between regular and irregular entries and among those who could rely on local contacts, family or ethnic networks, and those who were ‘on their own’ and thus have to rely more heavily on agency and resilience. A common element is they generally come with predefined expectations and ambitions and often managed to quickly enter the job market either formally or informally. Economic migrants who arrived through illegal channels are forced to resort to the irregular market and thus more vulnerable to exploitation, although it was not always the case among our informants. Irregulars are unable to access public services and forced to rely on charities, CSOs or ethnic networks to receive support. Regular or regularised economic migrants also face a barrier represented by the legal framework and bureaucracy as they are dependent on work permits, at least until they are eligible for a long-term permit. This *de facto* obliges them to accept any kind of job, often disregarding of their skills and ambitions. Regular migrants have the advantage of being able to access to public services, welfare and professional formation, and placement services (i.e. employment centres, job agencies). Their main barriers are thus linked with migration channels, legal status, and language; while the major enablers are resilience, agency, skills and, above all, networks.

We can associate to economic migrants also the experiences of those who came to Italy through family reunifications. They generally had higher expectations, could rely to at least an initial support (their families), and had to rely on themselves (agency, resilience) to integrate in the Italian labour market. The main barriers and vulnerabilities were discrimination and skill mismatch.

Asylum seekers and refugees present vulnerabilities potentially more similar to irregular economic migrants, but without the ability to count on local networks to support them. Their potential of integration in the labour market is strongly dependant on their legal status, particularly after the Salvini Decree of 2018. Other common barriers are language, skills, and vulnerability. Contrary to economic migrants, they have not defined real expectations besides the generic aim 'to have a better life', or knowledge of the local environment. The asylum seekers and refugees interviewed all had been through the national reception system, either in SPRAR or CAS, thus, unlike most economic migrants, they experienced a higher involvement of CSO support in their integration. They usually find their first job after several months since their arrival, and in case of SPRAR beneficiaries, they can count on a more extensive integration programme including LMI. CAS guests are instead left with only minimal support and have to rely mostly on themselves in order to find a way into the Italian labour market. The main enablers for asylum seekers and refugees are represented by agency (including the ability to create a network of contacts), resilience and skill building (professional formation).

6.7.1 Migration cohorts and generations

Although pre economic crisis migrants would not normally be our focus, we can observe some notable differences between old and recent arrivals. Eastern European migrants (Interviewees 3, 4) reported to perceive less mistrust, and that it was easier to bound with families, particularly in the domestic work and care area. Their barriers were mostly linguistic and linked to their irregular legal status but were relatively quickly overcome.⁴⁶ The situation was marginally different for migrants coming from sub-Saharan Africa (interviewees 2, 8). They are relying on ethnic or informal networks and often work in the informal market (Interviewee 3, 4, 10). Reportedly, it was also easier to find a job in general. For instance, they all found a job within weeks, or even days after their arrival. This was probably due to a better economic situation and a lower presence of foreign workforce. Some of our informants become references for their community and actively helped with the integration of others in the labour market (Interviewee 3). In our sample, more recent arrivals are mostly refugees and asylum seekers who have been included in the reception system, but the experiences of Interviewees 1 and 5 seems to confirm a less favourable environment and a higher chance of facing discrimination and exploitation (vulnerability), something that can also be linked with their different expectations and delusional experience.

6.7.2 Dreamers vs disenchanteds

Indeed, the last major division we can identify from our stories is between migrants who are content with their integration experience so far, and the disenchanteds. In this case, the main element that characterizes the two categories is the match (or mismatch) of expectations versus reality.

High skilled migrants who had bad experiences when entering the Italian labour market, and their skills not recognised are those more prone to feel delusional (Interviewees 1, 5). They realised that the situation in Italy or the possibilities to integrate in the labour market are not up to previous expectations. In this case other factors seems to play a crucial role in keeping

⁴⁶ They were able to benefit from a more favourable normative framework and the mass regularisation of undocumented migrants of 2002 and 2006.

them in the country: because life is still better than in the home country, for contingent reasons (i.e. family), because it is impractical or impossible to move again or simple resignation and acceptance (i.e. interviewee 6). Unsurprisingly, the most negative experiences come from those who did not originally want to come to Italy, or at least did not have a strong motivation to stay (i.e. Interviewee 1).

On the other side, those who report to be happy, or sufficiently happy, about their experience in Italy so far are a more varied group, ranging from economic migrants (interviewee 3, 4, 10), family reunifications (interviewee 2) to asylum seekers and refugees. In some cases, the informant found here an even better life than he would have ever imagined. In other cases, this is motivated by different factors that, despite facing hardship, make them happy to be in Italy, and motivated to stay and pursue their life or integration path. In one case it is the fact of having matured in the country, and feel Italian (interviewee 2), or the feel 'destined' to be there (Interviewee 9). In other cases, the motivation can be the same of the passive acceptance experienced by the disenchanted, such as the possibility to have or give a better life to the family than in the home country. This is particularly evident for long-term migrants who managed to bring their family to Italy, and often experienced a positive integration (Interviewees 3, 10).

6.8 Critical Analysis of The Adequacy of LMI: Comparative Analysis

Looking at our past researches (particularly Sirius WP3 Report), the main themes and policies identified as barriers or enabler for a successful integration of MRAs in the Italian labour market by the various stakeholders can be summarised as the following: language learning; the duality of the reception system; a changing and fragmented legal framework; lack of institutional coordination; lack of targeted active labour market policies; irregular economy and labour exploitation; vocational training and skills recognition (Maggini and Ibrido 2019). Those are generally confirmed by more in-depth analysis of the perspectives of CSOs and social partners.⁴⁷

In addition, we have to consider another series of elements that have been identified by the literature and several stakeholders, linked to the socio-economic context and the structure of the Italian labour market. Most foreign workers are concentrated in the highly industrialized and developed Northern regions, while only a small quota, mainly seasonal workers, resides in the less-developed and more agriculture-dependent Southern ones. Generally, foreigners in the Italian labour market experience low levels of unemployment and, at the same time, poor quality jobs. They are mostly employed in a 'complementary' labour market that generates "ethnic specialisations" (or occupational segregation) in low-skilled jobs often avoided by the natives. Those are also the jobs that have been less affected by the recent negative economic cycle, except for the sector of manufacturing and construction (Ambrosini and Panichella 2016; Sciarra and Chiaromonte 2014). This results in significant wage difference and a slowdown in the process of labour and social integration. At the same time, it creates a phenomenon of "ghettoization" of migrants (Fullin, Reyneri 2011). Indeed, our interviews with migrants employed in domestic work and care, supplemented by anecdotal evidence, tend to confirm both the segregation/specialisation of work (which becomes almost unescapable, no matter the previous skills and background), and the relatively ease to find a new job in the sector, even if low-paid or irregular.

Moreover, the Italian labour market (for both nationals and foreigners) is furtherly divided between regular and informal (non-regular) work. Interviews conducted with social partners for WP5, supplemented with survey data, indicate that migrants are much more exposed to the irregular economy and labour exploitation, with consequent higher safety risks. This is also confirmed by the fact that almost all our informants among MRAs have had experiences with the informal labour market, and a few cases of exploitation, either when having a regular or

⁴⁷ For more detailed information on the subject refer to Sirius WP4 and WP5 reports.

irregular status. Agriculture and construction are two economic sectors that show a particularly high level of exploitation, despite a reduction thanks to new legislative measures implemented in 2017. The phenomenon of migrants' exploitation in agriculture, has been also highlighted by several union-led campaigns in the recent past, mostly, but not exclusively⁴⁸ focused on Southern Italy.

In general, no major contradictions emerge between the barriers and enablers identified by stakeholders and MRAs. Language is surely the issue with a unanimous consensus both among stakeholders and migrants. It is regarded as the first true barrier that needs to be removed at the beginning of any path of integration and, conversely, as a main enabler once learnt/overcome. This goes along with cultural mediation and integration. However, we assist as a general inadequacy of such services in the first-line reception system (CAS), particularly after the budget cuts implemented with the Salvini's decree.

Skill recognition is also confirmed as a relevant barrier both by stakeholders and MRAs. However, several MRAs show a quite pragmatic attitude and adapt to learn and work in areas for which they have not studied/trained. Indeed, if skill recognition is often a barrier, vocational training and skill enhancement are recognised as a major enabler, despite often resulting in jobs not in line with one's past qualification (for those who had one).

The problems connected to the duality of the system, divided between first reception (based on centres for extraordinary reception) and second reception (based on the SPRAR system), are also confirmed by the experiences of migrants hosted in reception centres and gone through the integration services provided. SPRAR centres, which until 2019 comprised beneficiaries of humanitarian protection and asylum seekers, received an 'integrated reception' and individual integration programmes to promote socioeconomic inclusion and integration, which often translated into a successful integration in the labour market. Such services are completely absent in first line reception centres (CAS), where only basic language and civic integration culture are provided (often on a voluntary base). However, an additional issue for the beneficiary of those programmes is the total dependence on operators for migrants hosted in reception centres. This criticality has been addressed by some NGOs running the centres (i.e. CIAC), that are offering programmes aimed at preparing the beneficiaries to an autonomous life, with a special focus on LMI.

The legal framework, particularly the 'Bossi-Fini law' and the accompanying decrees that regulates seasonal workforce in Italy, have been identified as major barriers by most social partners (trade unionists, entrepreneurs, CSO representatives, some policy makers⁴⁹). The implementation of the decree n. 113/2018 (the so-called Salvini decree), which removed the asylum seekers from the SPRAR centres to concentrate them in first reception centres where labour market integration services are not mandatory is another barrier that has been recognised by several stakeholders.⁵⁰ Legal barriers are also recognised by the migrants, particularly for the procedures related to obtaining and renewing residence permits and the

⁴⁸ The phenomenon is having a higher incidence in Southern Italy thanks to the larger size of the agricultural sector but is actually present virtually everywhere. It also tends to involve different ethnic groups in different regions, thanks to the ethnic specialisation, or ghettoization mentioned before (i.e. sub-Saharan migrants in Southern Italy, Sikh workers in Latium). Furthermore, it also involves seasonal workers from Eastern EU member states (i.e. Bulgaria, Romania).

⁴⁹ Unsurprisingly, the opinions among policy makers are generally following their political orientation, with those from the centre-right, particularly Salvini's League, being strong supporters of strict immigration policies, including the Security Decrees approved in 2019. On the opposite side, centre-left policymakers are generally more open to inclusive policies for migrants, and critical of the recent changes to migration policies implemented during the Five-Star Movement-League coalition government (for an insight on the Italian immigration law see WP2 National Report. For an overview following decrees from 2019 refer to the WP4 national report).

⁵⁰ Unfortunately, we have not been able to interview migrants directly affected by this change of policy.

difficulties to enter the country legally, which resulted into an increase (abuse) of asylum application by de-facto economic migrants and in illegal arrivals. A further distinction emerges between those who have all their identity documents and those who have not. Furthermore, the ‘Salvini decree’ abolished the possibility of enrolling in the registry office for asylum seekers with temporary asylum-seeking residence permits, de facto forbidding undocumented migrants from having access to public and banking services. However, this provision has recently been declared unconstitutional by the Italian Constitutional Court.⁵¹

On the other hand, distrust, prejudice and discrimination has been acknowledged, but identified as relevant issues only by a minority of stakeholders, while been mentioned by several of the MRAs we have interviewed. In general, interviews with migrants highlighted a growing sentiment of distrust and fear among the native population rather than open racism. Still, several interviewees felt discriminated when looking for a job even through ‘institutionalised’ channels such as agencies and job interviews.

Stakeholders often present different approaches towards MRAs, with most of them (trade unions, employers organisations, policy makers) having a generalised one towards unspecified ‘migrants’, which can be translated mostly as economic migrants or long-term migrants. A more targeted approach is typical of associations or organisations involved in reception services (CAS, SPRAR) or ad-hoc projects targeting specific categories of vulnerable migrants. Irregular migrants are instead targeted only by a relative minority of associations and trade unions for work-related and exploitation issues.

Gender and age are identified in the literature as potential barrier to LMI, particularly for some specific religious or cultural backgrounds. This issue has been confirmed from interviews with stakeholders. Additional barriers linked to personal and psychological conditions for asylum seekers and refugees (i.e. violence, psychological trauma experienced in their home country and/or during the journey to Italy) are also often acknowledged by stakeholders.

The competence of the stakeholders surveyed seemed adequate when examining targeted services for vulnerable categories, such as unaccompanied minors, women and victims of abuse. Generally, those serviced are managed by CSOs or social cooperatives that are (or become) specialised to cater their needs. However, in several circumstances, particularly for the guest of first line reception centres (CAS), we often lack adequate support. This is reported both by some operators who admits the lack of training and resources, and by some current and past beneficiaries.

As briefly mentioned in the introductory paragraph, the stakeholders’ power to actually help the integration of MRAs in the Italian labour market is strongly dependent on a series of factors that range from structural to political. NGOs can mostly provide either support, activate projects, and use voice to try influencing political actors, as it happened following the approval of the ‘security decrees’. Trade Unions on the other hand can act in some cases as service providers while making policy recommendations and promote anti-exploitation actions⁵². Labour unions and NGOs remedies are also among the few promoting policy solutions level in favour of the integration of irregular migrants. Those were in part recognised by the Government in the “Relaunch” decree (D.L. 19 maggio 2020) that address part of the consequences of the COVID-19 crisis.⁵³ However, if we look at direct experiences of MRAs,

⁵¹ Decision published on 9 July 2020, that declared this provision not in line with Article 3 of the Italian Constitution.

⁵² We have several campaigns at both local and national level, promoted by Confederal (CGIL, CISL, UIL) and autonomous trade unions (i.e. USB).

⁵³ It consists in a regularisation of irregular migrants, targeted to some specific categories of workers such as agricultural, domestic and care. There will be two paths for the regularisation and emergence of irregular workers. The first is a work permit for those who are actually working in the above-mentioned sectors, who will receive a regular contract from their employer. The second concerns those who are currently unemployed but, in the past, have been working (with a regular contract) in those sectors can receive a 6-month temporary permit to find a new job.

there is not a direct unanimous recognition of the role of stakeholders in their LMI. Again, this is particularly evident for the economic migrants who are mostly relying on informal networks or individual capacities/resources to find a job and pursue a path of integration, and those involved into the reception system. Still, the help received by some categories, such as CSOs, is generally appreciated by our interviewees, especially by those who arrive without a family network. In this regard, they do perceive CSOs as more sympathetic to them compared to public stakeholders. However, not all CSOs' services are considered as being particularly helpful to find a job.

As we saw, the perspective of stakeholders and MRAs on the major barriers and enablers for labour market integration are relatively similar. If we look at the actual expectations and needs of MRAs, as expressed directly by them, we have a comparable situation. Some of the older migrants actually received more or less what they expected. This stands true also for some of the more recent arrivals (2015-2017) but could be influenced by the fact that most of them were still within a SPRAR programme. Some of the interviewees even declared that they did not know themselves what they have really expected. CAS guest on the other hand often a very different opinion of the reception system, based on the actual condition of their centre. They are particularly concerned by the lack of support and action to favour integration, with CAS centres being often just a place where they receive accommodation and food, if not a sort of prison. The main divergences between the needs expressed by migrants and stakeholders, are more evident for the categories of policymakers and entrepreneurs. (dependent on political orientation, sensitivity on the matter, and business culture).

The most effective method to promote a successful integration we found: the cooperation among different social partners and the social dialogue practice, as several stakeholders interviewed and surveyed have pointed it out. Most prominently, this cooperation happens among third sector organisations, and the third sector and trade unions; still, the best results are seen when we have a full chain of cooperation, where each social partner - third sector, trade unions, social cooperatives, private companies, - plays a key role in cooperation with the government/local administrations. The phenomenon of migration is no more a contingent issue but is becoming systemic. Thus, it necessitates a new approach that can address it as such, stepping up from the project-based approach. With regards to the reception system, we should terminate the dualistic system composed of first reception (CAS) and second line reception centres reserved to unaccompanied minors and beneficiary of international protection (SPRAR), and adopt common and high standards, centred among the recognised 'best practice' of the original SPRAR system combining reception (even for short/medium term) and integration measures.

6.9 Conclusion

Our research allowed to have a more in-depth view of the lives of MRAs who try to integrate into the Italian labour market. It also allowed to reassess our previous findings on the light of such direct experiences in order to identify the main critical barriers and enablers, and how they are in line with the opinions of stakeholders and previous informants.

Unfortunately, our informants mostly allowed us to shed light on the world of regular or regularised migration, which is only a part of it, and not on the most vulnerable aspects of undocumented migrants (out of the reception system) or victims of severe exploitation. It also did not allow to explore more in depth the experiences of migrants living in areas with more unfavourable socioeconomic conditions such as the southern regions. Notwithstanding the reduced sample due to the constraints caused by the COVID-19 crisis, the methods (in depth biographical interviews) and techniques used for the analysis of our data, provided us with valuable information that allowed to identify several main themes which are relevant turning points for the future integration of MRAs in the Italian labour market. It also allowed to identify

the different paths experienced by the various categories of migrants, above all between economic migrants on the one hand, and refugees and asylum seekers on the other.

Indeed, we could observe structural differences among different categories of migrants, and their paths. In particular between asylum seekers, refugees, beneficiaries of humanitarian protections, and long-term migrants. These differences led us to identify migration channels, the related legal status and the expectations of MRAs are the first main theme. In this case we can identify several patterns according to regular/irregular entries and between economic migrants and asylum seekers and refugees who on arrival are placed into the national reception system. For economic migrants the reasons behind the decision to leave the country are often linked to a desire to improve their economic situation, have a more 'secure life' and in some case they keep the idea to come back to the home country after some years. They are also more conscious about their right and obligations, but at the same time present a large degree of 'adaptability' in this regard. Refugees and asylum seekers on the other hand have less defined expectations besides the generic aim 'to have a better life', or knowledge of the local environment. Their reasons to move to Italy are more often motivated with the necessity to leave their home countries, with no intention to come back.

The entrance into the labour market is also often linked to the migration channels an legal status, with an additional difference between economic migrants that, with few exceptions, are relying on ethnic or other informal networks to find their first employment and others who are 'on their own'. Economic migrants (regular) and family reunifications are largely left 'on their own', if they cannot count on ethnic networks or local contacts, with few dedicated services beyond those provided to the general resident population such as welfare provisions, job placement and orientation, trainings. This is also reported by asylum seekers and refugees who successfully exited the reception system (those who have been granted a residence permit and found a regular job). Indeed, here a relevant aspect is the rather limited involvement of many categories of migrants with CSOs, and trade unions. Among migrants not involved in the reception system, only a few resorted to the help of charities and CSOs in the first period after their arrival. Among our sample, the informants did not report to have turned to trade unions, and often not even to other associations. In general, the experiences with the entrance in the labour market can be often identified as epiphanies that led either to positive or negative consequences in the LMI of MRAs, particularly in conjunction with expectations.

To sum up, we can identify the main barriers as linked with the legal status, language barrier, situations of vulnerability such as discrimination and prejudice, the risks of exploitation (both for regular and irregular jobs). On the other hand, the main enablers we have identified through our analysis of the biographical narratives are almost symmetrical to the barriers and linked to the themes of resilience (motivation, resistance and, above all, adaptability) and the broad concept of skill, including agency. We can also note how several themes, such as migration channels, entrance into the labour market or skills, can present themselves as both barriers and enablers, according to the perspective.

In conclusion, when comparing the opinions collected among the stakeholders and the direct experiences of our MRAs informants, the results confirm most of the previous findings (particularly from WP3, WP4, WP5). Generally, we have consciousness of the problems faced by migrants by CSO and stakeholders. However, there are still some criticalities among policymakers and employers. In general, the Italian background (legal framework, socio-economic conditions, programmes) does not constitute a generally favourable environment for the integration of MRAs in the labour market, although some notable exceptions are present due to the fragmented nature of the system. When looking at the general picture, we can thus summarize the main issues as linked to a very complex and unfavourable legal framework, lack of widespread and structural policies for the integration of MRAs, where CSO cannot fully fill the gaps left by the State, and an environment that sees a fragmented business ethics and culture of inclusion (on some workplaces).

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6.11 Annex I, Demographic information on MRAs

Pseudonym of the Interviewee *	Date of interview	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of origin	Migration year	Education	Current occupation in host country	Occupation in country of origin	Languages the individual speaks
Interviewee 1	27/03/2020	32	F	married	Moldova	2011	tertiary	cultural mediator, social worker, language teacher, translator	student, anthropologist, IMO trainee	Russian, Bulgarian, Romanian, Italian, Ukrainian
Interviewee 2	27/03/2020	32	M	single	Cameroon	2003	tertiary	student, part time worker	student	French, English, Italian, Bassa (local dialect)
Interviewee 3	04/04/2020	65	F	married	Moldova	2000	secondary	domestic worker	clerk	Russian, Moldovan, Italian
Interviewee 4, Mariam	10/04/2020	45	F	single	Georgia	2001	tertiary (biomedicine); professional education in Italy	Family assistance, freelance interpreter	student	Georgian; Russian; Italian
Interviewee 5 Linda	06/04/2020	28	F	single	Venezuela	2015	tertiary (fashion)	Unemployed	Assistant in a fashion house	Spanish, English, Italian
Interviewee 6	25/04/2020	32	M	single	Cameroon	2016	tertiary (physic)	Careworker (in a nursing home)	Student	English, French, Spanish, Arabic, Italian

Interviewee 7	25/04/2020	30	M	married	Mali	2014	Koranic school	Metal worker	Mechanic	Sangare, Bambara, French, Italian
Interviewee 8	16/05/2020	47	F	divorced, with children	Cameroon	2000	secondary	operator in a nursing home	hotel housekeeper	French; English; Italian
Interviewee 9 Abdoulaye	11/05/2020	24	M	single	Guinea	2015	secondary	operator, reception centre	student, professional football player	French, local dialects, Italian, English
Interviewee 10 Andres	10/06/2020	36	M	married, with children	Peru	2009	secondary	domestic worker	mechanic	Spanish, Italian

6.12 Annex II, Summaries of conducted interviews

Interview number	Short description of the interview	date of interview
1	<p>The interviewee is a woman from Moldova in her early thirties. Married, without children. She moved to Italy in 2011 with a family reunification visa, after her mother and sister already moved there since the early 2000s. Currently has Italian citizenship acquired through marriage with an Italian national.</p> <p>She grew up between Moldova and Bulgaria, where she her family moved in the '90s for work.</p> <p>She decided to move to Italy once completed her master's degree in Anthropology</p> <p>She also lived in another Western European country (Germany) for an exchange during her studies. After completing her master's degree, she decided to move to Italy to join her mother and sister. The main reason was the lack of opportunities in Moldova and the on the insistence of her family, while looking for new opportunities in Italy. She would have loved to continue her studies in Anthropology but marriage and the dysfunctionalities of the Academic world in Italy moved her away from her plan. She managed to find jobs (i.e. translator, language teacher) but in general felt delusional about her job opportunities in Italy. In short, her expectations were not met, and she admits that her marriage was the key reason why she remained in the county. In 2016-2017, she moved to the USA to follow her husband who was transferred there for work and later come back to Italy.</p> <p>In general, her experience is characterised by self-determination and she perceive her LMI integration in Italy as an individual achievement.</p>	27/03/2020
2	<p>The interviewee is a 33-year-old man from Cameroon. He arrived in Italy in 2003 through family reunification and got Italian citizenship in 2017.</p> <p>His mother migrated in Italy in the mid '90s, while he stayed with his aunts and cousins in Cameroon, where he finished primary education and started high school before being able to reach his mother in Italy at 15. Once in Italy, he lived with his mother in a large city in northern Italy and completed his secondary education in a technical institute. He recalls that at the beginning it was difficult for him to integrate, because of the language barrier and some prejudice <i>"I was the only black in my class"</i>, and even felt discriminated by some professors at school.</p> <p>People were crucial for his integration path; he is deeply thankful to his Italian friend who supported him through the high school and later at the university. He felt immediately the need not to be a burden for his mother, who had already done so much for him, that is the reason why he constantly looked for jobs, and went through many, to support himself during his studies. He was also a volunteer for the Italian Red Cross for several years, an activity that, he said, contributed for his integration in the community. He is currently doing a master's degree and works as a freelance translator while looking also for another job. He feels Italian and declares to be more attached to Italy than to his home country <i>"Living and growing up in Italy changed me... I matured here [in Italy], my mentality changed"</i>. Still, in Italy he experienced racism and discrimination, particularly as a teen; he even stopped playing football in a</p>	27/03/2020

	<p>local team due to repeated racist insults. The fear of failure is another element that pushed him forward and helped him <i>“The fear of disappointing my mother, and all her sacrifices was crucial to push me, not to come back”</i> [in this case he refers to be dependent on her mother, not moving back to Cameroon]. He also said that the sense of failure if you come back is linked to the African mentality, <i>“If you come back it is a failure and a dishonour for the family”</i>.</p>	
3	<p>The interviewee is a woman from Moldova in her mid-60s. Married, with children. She arrived in Italy in 2000 with a tourist visa bought through the help of some smugglers specialised in “facilitation of unauthorised entries” of eastern European migrants in Western Europe. She was forced to leave her country to find a job abroad in order to support her family, who was deeply indebted after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent economic crisis. Initially her husband was supposed to be the one to work abroad, but after a couple failed attempts, she decided to go because women <i>“had better chances to find a job in Italy”</i> according to anecdotal evidences at the time. Before the collapse of the USSR she recalls living a “decent life”, that would have never led her to migrate to a different country. She obtained secondary education and used to work as an accountant.</p> <p>When she arrived in Italy, she felt alone in a foreign place, <i>“I was scared, I only had a phrasebook in my pocket to help me with the language”</i>. Initially, she received help of a religious association and found her first job as a domestic worker within a few months through the association. She admits that it was exactly what she expected to get in Italy, she had <i>“no illusion to find an office work or something similar”</i>. Since then, she worked as a domestic worker and care person (badante) for Italian families in the area near Venice. She was regularised in 2002 thank to the ‘sanatoria’ and describes her relationship with several employers as ‘very good, and very helpful’, which also resulted in sincere friendship with some. All her jobs were found thanks to someone’s references and words of mouth. She originally planned to stay in Italy only for a few years, until saving enough money to pay back their debts, but ended up staying here, and also became a reference point for the Moldovan community. She personally helped several other women to find jobs as a ‘badante’ or housekeeper. She also managed to bring her family to Italy through a family reunification visa. In general, she describes her experience in Italy as very positive, and feels lucky for it; also expressing gratitude to all the people who helped her in the moments of need.</p> <p>Covid 19 crisis deeply affected her life lately because she already planned to ‘retire’ and move back to Moldova in March. The border closures instead forced her to remain in Italy without a job or a salary. Luckily, she could count on family members and friends to support her during this period, awaiting the time she could finally go back to her husband in Moldova.</p>	04/04/2020
4	<p>The interviewee is a woman in her forties from Georgia. In Georgia, she was born and raised in a city near the capital, and – a gifted student – completed university studies in medical biology. She used to work as an unpaid trainee at the local hospital but approaching her late 20s she felt the need to pursue her own independence, also economically, a perspective she could not realistically achieve in her home country at the time. She decided to move to Italy because it was one of her favourite countries and one –along with Greece – where there were realistic chances to move. She arrived in Italy in 2001 with a temporary visa, remained in the country as an irregular migrant until 2002, when she benefitted of the regularisation of irregular migrants employed in domestic work. Once arrived in Rome, she did not know the language, speaking only English beside Georgian and Russian she received help from</p>	10/04/2020

	<p>some local contacts, a Georgian family who already migrated in Italy in the '90s. Thanks to them, within a few weeks she found a job as a live-in babysitter for an Italian family "it was very quick for me to find my first job, probably not even 15 days after I arrived". At the beginning, it was not easy for her, feeling lonely, alien, and homesick. Still, she soon established a good relationship with her employers, who helped her with the regularisation of her position and her integration in Italy, including learning the language. After three years, she moved to Northern Italy, attracted by better salary, there she found another job as a live-in babysitter, this time through an employment agency, also thanks to the good references provided by her previous employers. Back then, her plan was still to work in Italy for a few years, put aside some money, and then go back to Georgia, where the economic situation would hopefully improve and allow her to go back to her job and have her own family. About skill recognition, initially she was fully conscious she would not be able to find a job in as a medical biologist; however, she later tried to have her diplomas recognised, but proved impossible. She would have needed to attend university in Italy, but never had the time to do so as she needed to work full time to support herself and put aside money. Between 2009 and 2011 she did mostly occasional jobs paid by the hour before deciding to move back to Georgia. Soon after moving back in her home country, she realised how difficult it was for her to re-settle there and, after one year when she could not find a regular job, decided to go back to Italy in 2012. Since then, she moved to different cities in Northern Italy and went through different jobs, mostly related to domestic work, found mainly through acquaintances/informal networks. She now hopes to be able to attend a professional course that would allow her to work as an assistant in a medical office, or as a socio-sanitary operator. Recently, she could not find a job as a waiter, babysitter, or housemaid, so for the first time she had to accept a work as a live-in 'badante' (care-person), besides being a freelance interpreter. Still, at the eve of the COVID-19 crisis, this proved to be a stable and relative safe job.</p> <p>She defines all her work experience as very lucky, with no major issue with any of her employer, her only regret is the impossibility, until now, to find a job related to healthcare.</p>	
5	<p>The interviewee is a young woman from Venezuela (mid to late twenties). She arrived in Italy in 2015, to attend a master in a private fashion school. She used to work as communication assistant for a fashion company. Her plan was to remain in Italy and find a job in the "country of fashion". The interviewee talks about her projects and the reasons why she left Venezuela: <i>"I wanted to be happy, to grow up and to have the life I dreamed of. I am always been close to Italy and its culture: my grandfather was Italian. Instead, in Venezuela, things became day by day more and more complicated. I was not living the life I wanted, and I was ready to risk in order to learn new things and grow up..."</i>. However, after she finished the master, the interviewee realized that in Italy looking for a job is very difficult without a network.</p> <p>The interviewee talks about her first job as a very disappointing experience: "I accepted many things, such as receiving a very low salary..."</p> <p>After one year, the interviewee decided to quit her job "I wanted to go back to Venezuela and visit my family, but I did not have the money for the ticket". I thought, <i>"If I do not have the freedom to go back to my family, something went wrong". I realized I had to: they were exploiting me, because I was new in the country and in the job market"</i>.</p>	07/04/2020

	<p>The interviewee is currently looking for a new job, after having worked for three months as assistant for a big fashion brand. She took a design course online and is also prone to find a job in a different sector (such as tourism and events 'organization). She says <i>"I keep going, between up and down. I would like to become a manager, but I have to be realist"</i>.</p>	
6	<p>The interviewee is a young man from Cameroon (32 years old) with a humanitarian residence permit. He currently works as a socio-sanitary operator in a rest home. In Cameroon he was a student at the university and took part to some political protests. For this reason, he had to leave his country. He arrived in Morocco (after having passed through Niger and Algeria), and spent there 2 years, doing different jobs, such as gardener, farmer and manual labourer. However, a day, the police took him, and since he was without documents, beat him and returned him to Algeria. So, he decided to go to Libya and then to Europe. He reached Sicily in May 2016 and then, when he applied for asylum, was transferred to a tiny village in Tuscany. After some time, he participated as a volunteer to the beer fair organized in the village. This helped him to know some people of the community. He also got to know some elderly people, who used to give lessons of Italian language (as volunteers) in the reception centre where he has been accommodated. However, the interviewee observes that things were not easy in the reception centre: especially, due to the huge workload, professional workers were often in burnout. Sometimes they lacked to provide the necessary information. Furthermore, they lacked to provide a personalised assistance and to take into account and assess the specific competences and educational path of each foreigner hosted in the reception centre.</p> <p>The interviewee said that a woman carrying a local association helped him a lot, by organizing some language courses in the reception centre and by helping him to find a job as a cultural mediator. This woman proposed him to apply for the civil service as a receptionist in a local association specialized in different activities (especially teaching Italian language to foreigners). For the interviewee working in a nursing home means giving back the help he received from the Italian community and especially from elderly people.</p>	25/04/2020
7	<p>The interviewee is a young man from Mali (30 years old), with a humanitarian residence permit. He did not have the opportunity to attend the public school. After some years of Koranic school, he started an apprenticeship as a mechanic. When the war started in Mali, he decided to leave the country. He arrived in Italy in 2014. He didn't know what Italy was. "I was confused. I did not know where I was: I have heard talking about Italy in 2006 because the Italian team won the world cup. That was the only thing I knew". The interviewee remembers that once in Italy he applied for asylum and was transferred to the reception centre of a tiny village in Tuscany. After 3 months, he was transferred again to another reception centre in the middle of the countryside. During this first period, he experimented loneliness. He missed his friends and his family.</p> <p>The interviewee points out that a woman heading a local association was crucial in his life course. She managed to organize an event in the secondary school of the closest village where the asylum seekers met the children and other locals. For the occasion, the interviewee played the drums. That event gave him the opportunity to build a network. He also started to teach music as a volunteer in the secondary school.</p>	25/04/2020

	<p>The interviewee underlines the importance of friendship “what have changed my life here in Italy is friendship. I do not have friends in name only. My friends are special friends”.</p> <p>The interviewee speaks about his first job in Italy, which he found thanks to the SPRAR centre where he was accommodated. He worked as a welder for a small company. He felt he was treated “as a slave”. After some months, as soon as he found another job as a mechanic, he quit. Another difficulty mentioned by the interview is the house searching. In Italy, networking is crucial also to find a house.” Thanks to a Nigerian man who work with me, I found a bed. The bedroom has no windows. But what should I do? Life is hard!”.</p>	
8	<p>The interviewee is a woman from Cameroon with a long-term residence permit. She is divorced with 4 children and currently works as a nurse in a nursing home. She arrived to Italy in 2000 and found her first accommodation at her brother's home. Her dream was becoming a fashion designer. Her brother found her a job, so she started to work the day after her arrival as a kitchen hand in a restaurant. However, that was not a nice experience: after 4 months, she has not received any salary yet. Thanks to an Ivorian friend who spoke with her boss, she managed to get her salary, but was immediately fired. Then she found a job as housemaid in a family and after some years obtained a residence permit (thanks to the 2006 regularization). She also worked as a cleaner before applying for a working position at the nursing home. Sometimes she thinks about her dream to become a fashion stylist. She could not pursue it (she has to work in order to renew her residence permit for work) and currently she does not have time. However, she managed to sew some dresses with a fabric coming from Cameroon and sell them in a market.</p>	16/05/2020
9	<p>The interviewee (9) is a young man from Guinea in his mid-twenties. He arrived in Italy through the ‘Libyan route’ in 2015, after having been rescued from a boat in the Mediterranean. He grew up with his family in Guinea, where he completed his high school study and was a talented football player. He decided to leave his home country because he felt his life was in danger due to the ethnic conflicts that have been present in the country since 2011. For him life was not where he was, he wanted a better life in Europe, and he was ready to face a tough journey to get there. He endured many sufferings and violence on his way to Libya, but this is also what ultimately motivated him to keep going, to have the courage to jump into a boat and reach Italy.</p> <p>In Italy he was inserted into the reception system and brought to a CAS in Northern Italy, where he remained for about two years. He had some Italian language lessons, which can be considered his ‘first real step in terms of integration’. During his permanence in the reception centre that he started to get conscious he wanted a new life in Italy, where work is a central part of it. He realised that he was destined to be here. He started doing volunteer work in the cooperative that run the reception centre and helped other hosts whenever possible. He was soon valued as a translator thanks to his language skills. His first job in Italy was in a construction firm that literally recruited him “from the street”, and “gave me occasional jobs from time to time” despite lacking a specific formation for construction works. According to him, “<i>Patience is fundamental for foreigners looking for a job. Patience [and dignity], also helps avoid exploitation, if they [employers] want you, they’ll come back for you [proposing more decent conditions], otherwise, you’ll just find something else further on</i>”. He finally left the CAS once he obtained a humanitarian</p>	11/05/2020

	<p>protection resident permit and was hired as a cultural mediator by the cooperative managing the centre, which recognised his language skills, and the attitude during his volunteering. This proved a particularly important step for his career. Since then, he did several jobs, but always remained a freelance cultural mediator and translator. He also recalls the importance of determination and self-consciousness in order to be able to successfully integrate, that is how he faced discrimination. In the past years, he relied more on job agencies and formal channels to find jobs. More recently, the COVID-19 pandemic prevented a 'life-changing' job offering to materialise, but still managed to find a temporary job for a social cooperative managing a reception centre thanks to his network of contacts.</p>	
10	<p>The interviewee is a man from Peru in his mid-30s, currently in Italy with a work residence permit. He is married with two children. At present, he works as a domestic worker, and also does occasional jobs (generally in the black). In his home country, he completed secondary education, got married, and worked as a mechanic. He decided to migrate because he was attracted by the possibility of a better life in Italy, where some of his family members already moved. "It was easy to find a job in Peru, but the pay was not good". He arrived in Italy in 2009, with a work visa, thanks to his father who already migrated to Florence a few years prior and managed to get him a job from his same employer. In 2011, his wife and kids through a family reunification procedure reached him. Between 2011 and 2014, he worked for a few years with more or less stable contracts for logistic and transport companies. Afterwards, he could not find another regular job, but only temporary ones. It is in this period, he also started working more regularly as a domestic worker, and cleaner. He found most of his subsequent jobs thanks to family contacts or through the local Peruvian community. He states the same worked for his wife. He is now looking for a long-term permit, however, due the COVID-19 crisis (its economic consequences); he lost his regular job as a domestic worker for a family. Nevertheless, he now feels at home here and states that the kind of life he is able to give his children here, despite not being luxurious, is adequate, and safer than what would be able to guarantee in his hometown in Peru. The good level of integration reached by his kids, now going to middle and high school are also a contributing factor to his anchoring.</p>	10/06/2020

6.13 Annex III, Individual biographies

1. Mariam

Migrant's life is full of surprises, where plans often survive very little to reality. Yet, there is a good side and a way toward integration in everything. Such an optimistic approach to integration can be illuminated by the story of Mariam (a fantasy name), one of the 'oldest' migration stories among our interviews, having reached Italy for the first time in 2001.

Mariam is a woman in her forties. She is from Georgia, born and raised in Rustavi, a town near the Capital [Tbilisi]. Growing up, she lived in a rather typical 'middle class' family for Soviet Georgia. She always liked studying and excelled at school, which made her being accepted into the university, where she graduated in medical biology in the mid-nineties. It was only then, in her mid '20s, after her graduation and the beginning of her internship as a lab technician in the local Hospital, that she started to think about moving abroad. The fall of the Soviet Union proved disastrous for the Georgian economy and the chances to find a job and, more than that, a decent salary, were slim, and so those of becoming effectively independent. Her quest for independence was, ultimately, the reason that pushed her to migrate. 'That period was terrible for my country. After graduating, I was working in a lab at the hospital, as a volunteer, an intern... I was not paid. I wanted to become independent and have my own salary [...] but there was no work. That is when I decided I shall leave.' At that time, many people were migrating, to Western Europe. Ultimately, the only practical destinations were Greece, and Italy. It was easy for her to choose Italy as the place to go: it was her favourite country. 'The beauty, the culture, all the things I appreciate the most are there [in Italy]. Otherwise I could have gone somewhere else [...] everybody was trying his fortune abroad back then'. Furthermore, she had some contacts there who would prove to be crucial in her initial settling. Her initial plan was to work in Italy for a few years, help her family, save some money and then come back to Georgia, 'back to normal', where the economic situation would hopefully stabilize and she could get a house, a job, a family.

It took some time to start implementing her plan, but ultimately found a (legal) way to come to Italy in 2002. Along with a friend, they managed to get a visa to accompany a circus troupe participating in an International competition that was held in Italy and, at the end of the competition, moved to Rome and remained there, overstaying the visa and becoming illegal migrants. It was also her first time abroad⁵⁴, and she was now about to start a new journey in a place very different from 'home', without knowing the language, just some English, but with a strong will to succeed. In Rome, she was initially helped by a Georgian family that moved to Italy for long, and with who was in contact already before moving. Within a couple of weeks, through some contacts in the Russian speaking community (the enlarged community of people that migrated from former USSR states), she already found a job as a live-in babysitter in an upper middle class Italian (Roman) family. This is consistent with the pattern experienced by several economic migrants to these days, where, particularly for domestic work, they rely intensively on ethnic or informal networks of acquaintances to find a job.

Given her irregular status, she was unable to get a regular contract. Luckily, her new 'family' soon kind of 'adopted' her too, and proved extremely supportive, they were able to go along with her 'fractured English', and helped her with learning the language (the main barrier back then) and her various needs to 'settle' in Rome. Less than a year after her arrival, she had the opportunity to regularise her position, benefitting from the regularisation of undocumented migrants (mostly targeted to domestic workers) that came along with the "Bossi Fini" migration law reform of 2002. This was a particularly fortunate circumstance, as it never presented itself again in later years. It also which radically changed her prospects in Italy, not living anymore the life of an irregular migrant. Ultimately, she ended up working with a regular contract in that family for three years, being integrated 'almost as a family member'. By this time, she still

⁵⁴ Outside of the former USSR.

planned to go back to Georgia after a couple of years, and, attracted by better salaries, she moved to the North, where, through some acquaintances in the ex-soviet migrant community, found a regular full-time job to assist an old person. Yet, thanks to her excellent references, she soon found another job as a live-in babysitter through an agency, which lasted for about five years, until they did not need a babysitter anymore. Luck, is a word she often uses to describe her initial period in Italy, reporting no major issues in terms of integration, besides some bureaucratic nuisances, and stressing the impact finding good employers had on her new life in Italy, particularly at the very beginning. The only real complain was about the procedure to receive and renew the residence permit, and how it once almost impeded her to go back home to Georgia to assist her sick father.

(Quest for recognition)

When she moved to Italy, she very well knew that she would not be able to find a job related to her studies and the professional experience she had in Georgia, and would most likely end up doing domestic works. Yet, as time passed and she realised her initial plan to stay just for a few years was not going to work, she started to look at ways to have her degree recognised and go back to her former career. Unfortunately, at the time, her degree was only valid in CIS countries and she would need to attend additional courses in Italy for a recognition. Her jobs never allowed her to go back to university and attend classes, and, forced between having a job and studying, she had to shelve that idea, hoping to be able to get back to it the day she would finally come back to Georgia. Still, she still tried to improve her skills whenever possible, with language courses and professional formation (accounting, personal assistance), in between jobs or while perceiving unemployment subsidies.

(Return home)

After her five-year job, it was the beginning of the global economic crisis, and she just found several temporary jobs as a waiter, domestic worker or babysitter in various towns in the Italian North East. She felt the need to try to change something in her life, and in 2011 moved back to Georgia, where things, supposedly, were much better than when she left it. Indeed, the economic situation improved compared to the '90s, but was still not particularly favourable, also due to the many political changes in the mid to late 2000s. After living abroad for so long, with only the occasional visits to her family, she did not easily manage to get back to a life in Georgia. Furthermore, that time both her parents died and she did not have many friends and relatives left there beside her brother and his family. Ultimately, after one year, the inability to find a job in Georgia, particularly in her old biomedical field, where she faced competition by both established former colleagues and the new generations convinced her to move back to Italy and, by now, she does not foresee to move back to Georgia again. This was a moment in her life when she realised her belonging was not anymore 'at home'. Her ideal job, her 'old job', a husband/fiancée, a family of her own might have changed things, anchored her again to her land, but it was not the case, she recalls.

(comeback and rooting)

Through our conversation, in hindsight, she now realises that her original plan of going back to Georgia after a while to restart her life there was ultimately detrimental to her life and experience in Italy. She admits that now she would have done many things differently, instead of pursuing any job that could have allowed saving more money for her 'new life home'. She would have focused more on herself, probably found a way to finish her study and really pursue a career in biomedicine in Italy, or at least look for more stable jobs and opportunities for a full new life in Italy.

Now, that she is back to Italy and at a later stage of life, she feels is facing slightly different challenges and looks for more stable jobs. She fully realised she will never have the chance to work in the medical field as a lab technician but would still like to work in a field related to healthcare. Her main ambitions are to get Italian citizenship and do professional formation to become a socio-sanitary operator or an administrative medical assistant. However, at the

moment this remains largely a wishful thinking. Since her comeback, she moved to different towns in Northern Italy where she managed to find jobs, again mostly found through acquaintances/informal networks, or to rely on unemployment benefits in between, living a more or less normal life. At the same time, she had more difficulties in finding long-term occupations, although she never had difficulties in finding apartments or rooms to rent. More recently, she could not find a job as a waiter, baby sitter or housemaid, so for the first time she had to accept a work as a live-in 'badante' (care-person), besides being a freelance interpreter. This was another new experience that she had to accept out of necessity, something that she would not have normally wanted to do, but was forced to accept because she was unable to pay for a rent, a situation she accepts but also reminds her of the more precarious time we are now facing. Nevertheless, after a few weeks, the Covid-19 pandemic started and this again somehow changed her perspectives on life and the importance of finding the good side in everything. She feels lucky again, at least she has a job.

2. Linda

The struggle for the future (Background)

Linda (a fantasy name) is a woman in her late twenties. She was born and grew up in Caracas, in a 'middle class' family. She always knew what she wanted to do: working in the fashion market. Hence, while she was attending her bachelor's in communication, she started working as assistant for a fashion designer "I wanted to know more about the fashion world". Meanwhile, the situation in Venezuela was precipitating: inflation, chronic shortages of basic goods and mass protesting. "I wanted to be happy, I wanted to have a different life". Linda's grandfather was Italian, she thought that going to Italy was the "most logic solution" because "I have always felt close to Italy". She started to study Italian and after her graduation, she applied for a master program in fashion business in a popular school in Milan. Her determination to build a different future ("I wanted to know many people, to be surrounded by a culture of art and fashion, to build my professional career") and her optimistic personal attitude ("I like taking risks to grow up and learn new things") were the main reasons that pushed her to migrate. As soon as she realized "in Caracas I could not live the life I wanted, I could not have the opportunities I wanted", she left her country, aware of the multiple things she had to leave (her family above all). She arrived in Milan in October 2015.

The disenchantment: experimenting the job world in Italy.

In November 2017, after she finished a 6-months training in Hong Kong, provided by her school, Linda came back to Italy and in November 2017, she obtained a job in a showroom, as marketing and PR assistant. However, she soon felt that her work was not valued. "I was young, I was the only person of the staff speaking English, where English was the main working language. I was the only one with a master in fashion business. Nonetheless, I was the worst paid". Among the reasons which may explain this situation, she mentions her status of foreigner: "I don't know... I don't know why... maybe they want to prove you for long time... maybe they do not care how much you earn... maybe it was because I was young and foreigner". She started to feel exploited by the manager and the boss of the showroom. "I did everything. I accepted many things. I agreed to have a contract for far fewer hours than I was doing: it was a part-time contract for 4 hours while I worked full-time (8 even 10 hours). I was always the last to go out. I wanted to show that I was interested, that I wanted to grow. And then, my boss ... Sometimes he came to the office with prostitutes and we had to pretend nothing and laugh at his vulgar jokes. I often felt humiliated ... not respected ... and I felt that my being a foreigner was a problem, they treated me differently. They thought "you're a foreigner, I'm giving you an opportunity!" And every day I asked myself "why don't they see my potential? Why don't they invest in young talent?". Linda also felt another type of prejudices: "they thought that I should have been rich to work in the fashion market and manage to survive in Milan...so I didn't need money". Another prejudice she was aware of

was the fact that for her boss being foreigner meant being temporary: “For them I was not thinking about building a future in Italy or in the company I was working for”.

That first job in Italy made Linda learn many things, but also opened her eyes about the loopholes of the job world in Italy.

The awakening: quit her first job.

“After 3 years I wanted to go back to Venezuela, and I didn’t have the money for the ticket. So - I said to myself - if I don’t have the freedom to return to my family, something is wrong. And I quit my job. I realized that I had to wake up. I had to go away. They were taking advantage of me only because I was new to this country, new to this job. I used to see my boss coming at work with a Ferrari and me working as a slave for a misery”. Not having the possibility to visit her family, not having economic security was a real epiphany for Linda, who realized that she was not happy with that job, that she was only getting used to what little they gave her. “If I wouldn’t woke up, if I wouldn’t realize that they were not valuing me, that I had to find a better opportunity, maybe I would have ended accepting even worst things, working for a very low salary...I wanted to acquire experience, to learn... but that was enough”. Linda tried to ask her boss to increase her salary and change the contract, but without success, so she quitted her job.

Never give up

After quitting her job in June 2017, Linda found a new job in November 2017 at the customer service of a very famous brand. It was not the job position that best suited her profile. Furthermore, it was a replacement for a maternity leave, for just three months. She accepted to earn some money and also because she hoped she could find a different job position in the marketing area of the same company. However, when the contract ended, she was again without a job. “I look for a job every day. I try to learn new things when I can. For example, I recently finished an online design course. I am in contact with the school where I did the master’s degree. And then I always look at LinkedIn and also other sites like fashion jobs. But nothing... because I have no channels... even my friends are in a survival phase. So many dreams, expectations. I keep going on, between ups and downs. I would like to become a manager. But I have to be realistic”.

After 5 years in Italy, Linda have found that it is extremely difficult to obtain jobs opportunities in line with her profile. “My potential is not recognized... but I am not going to stop. This will not stop me”. However, she keeps experiencing the shortcomings of the Italian job market: “some days ago I had an interview as a stylist’s assistant. The job seemed quite interesting. But when we started to talk about the contract, they asked me: “are you receiving the unemployment social allowance?” “Yes” I replied. So, they proposed to me “it is convenient for you too not to have the contract, isn’t it? so that you can keep receiving the money from the State”. Linda replied that she could not feel ok with that situation and decided to keep looking for a job.

“I am still happy to live in Italy, but it is a never-ending struggle” she sighs.

3. Abdoulaye

Background

The story of Abdoulaye (a fantasy name) is, one of the ‘youngest’ migration stories among our interviews, having reached Italy at the beginning of the migration crisis in 2015. His story can be taken as a clear example of the struggle, fear, and risk faced by those who must abandon their country to take ‘the Libyan route’ towards a new life in Europe. It is also a story of determination to integrate into the host country, where he started as a refugee in a reception centre and is now working to help the new hosts of the reception centres.

Abdoulaye is a young man in his early 20s, he is from Guinea and grew up in Conakry, the capital. There, he was living with his family, enrolled into high school and was also successful in one of his main passion, football, where he was soon recognised as a talented player. In general, he recalls living a good life at least until 2010, but then things started to worsen. It was on a football field that the idea of leaving the country started to mature in his head, amid the recent ethnic conflicts and Ebola outbreak that plagued the country. Then, all of a sudden, the moment came when he realised it was time to leave, to try a new life in Europe, or he would not have a life at all there.

The Journey

The final decision matured overnight, without informing anyone, not even his family. Thus, he suddenly left, carrying little more than the clothes he was wearing, conscious that it will be a tough journey, but not of the all the challenges that he would have to endure. "The desert was the hardest part, that and violence, which started in Mali, and continued in Libya". He could also see the hostility of the local population, that was interrupted only by few episodes of generous people helping him to survive, offering water or some food to those deprived figures who were him and his remaining companions. The same situation he lived in Libya, where the locals expressed a strong racism towards 'black African people' "They kept calling us negroes even if I am not [more] black [than them]". Nevertheless, he survived doing some occasional works until finally reaching the coast. There, after a few weeks looking at the sea and the sand, he realised it was better to risk dying in the sea trying to reach Europe, than face again all he had faced on the way there, burdened by an additional, unbearable, sense of failure. "Torture is dying many times, if you drown in the sea you only die once". With no money to pay the traffickers, one night he took advantage of the darkness and boarded one of the many 'rubber boats' that were leaving for Italy every day, and was lucky enough to be rescued after a few days and brought to Southern Italy.

A new life

After his arrival in Italy, without any form of I.D. or document, he was immediately inserted into the reception system and soon brought to a CAS ("Centro di Accoglienza Straordinaria", a reception structure) in Parma, in Northern Italy, where he remained for about two years. During his stay in the CAS, he had some Italian language lessons, which can be considered his 'first real step in terms of integration'. Helped by a talent for languages and his knowledge of French, he also enrolled into an educational programme that granted him a middle-school degree. It is during his permanence in the reception centre that he started to get conscious he wanted a new life in Italy, a real life, where work is a central part of it. He realised that he was meant to be here, not to continue his journey to France or other countries like many of his companions. He started doing volunteer work in the cooperative that run the reception centre, and also helped other hosts whenever possible. He was soon valued as a translator thanks to his knowledge of several dialects that were also spoken by many hosts of the reception centres, and asylum seekers. His first job in Italy [outside of the reception centre] was in a construction firm that literally recruited him "from the street", and "gave me occasional jobs from time to time" without any specific formation for construction works. Later, he also received occasional job offer to help in agricultural works. He was also proposed professional formation courses sponsored by the regional government but rejected the opportunity because he already found a job. He finally left the CAS once he obtained a humanitarian protection resident permit and was hired as a cultural mediator by the cooperative managing the centre, which recognised his language skills, and the attitude during his volunteering. This proved a particularly important step for his career as a cultural mediator and translator. In 2017 he moved to Ferrara (another town in the same region), where he lived with an Italian family that also helped him found a job in a restaurant in the city centre, where he started as kitchen hand and later was able to work as a waiter when in between jobs. Between 2017-19 he often worked as a cultural mediator and freelance translator, which made him travel all across the

region, and sometimes also to different parts of Italy. These experiences allowed him to create a network of acquaintances in the field that later helped to find more jobs/contracts.

Looking at this period, the main barrier he experienced towards a successful integration in the labour market and society were initially related to a language barrier, which was (relatively) quickly overcome. He witnessed prejudice in some potential employers and found it difficult to find a place to rent, even when having a job contract. He also faced occasional episodes of racism. Presenting an extremely mature attitude, Abdoulaye reported how they can become life-lessons, such as the importance of exercising patience and restraint – i.e. ignoring someone from the street or on a football field or the train calling him ‘monkey’, or to stand his grounds and ask to be shown the respect proper for any person when mistreated by some clerks in public offices. Thus, among the most important lessons he learned, some of the most important can be linked to a few keywords: patience, resilience, dignity, determination. Patience and determination were particularly helpful to survive and persevere on the road towards integration and finding jobs. “Patience is fundamental for foreigners looking for a job. This is important also to avoid exploitation. “Patience [and dignity], also helps avoid exploitation, if they [employers] want you, they’ll come back for you [proposing more decent conditions], otherwise, you’ll find something else further on.” [In short: do not undersell yourself, do not put your dignity up for sale]. Looking at individual qualities, Abdoulaye also relied highly on will, determination, and ambition to succeed. People were also instrumental for a successful integration, and not just in the labour market, giving him advices and help, also in finding jobs and places to stay. This was also confirmed by the relevance of building a sort of ‘professional network’ in the field of cultural mediation and social cooperatives.

Rooting and COVID

By the end of 2019 he moved back to Parma, where he was for the first time on his own, where he found job in a logistic company through an agency that lasted for about one year. This was also due to the reduction of work as cultural mediator or for social cooperatives, as a consequence of the new course on migration started by the Five Star Movement – Salvini’s League government. In the past months he went through different short-term jobs, mostly obtained through employment agencies. At the beginning of 2020 he was prospected a major breakthrough in his professional career, but Covid-19 pandemic disrupted in part his plans, as this promised job that never came through due to the crisis. However, he still managed to find a temporary job as an operator in a reception centre, thanks to his ample experience in the field and the contacts he managed to have in the past years. Now, his major aim is to get past this situation and keep working, maybe even attend university in the future and making a stable life here. In general, when asked about his time and experiences in Italy Abdoulaye considers himself as if he was destined to be here. “[During this time, I realised] Italy was awaiting me. [...] This is the county that welcomed me and saved me.” This is the country he started to love, and where he sees himself in the future.

6.14 Annex IV, Ethnodrama

ONE STORY, MY STORY

ACT ONE: the journey, a body and a name, and ...

The interior of a house kitchen, a young man, and an old man (around 80 maximum 85 years) are seated at the table. The old man looks sulky; his eyes are looking down, his head resting on one arm. With his hand he holds a spoon and with the end he slowly imprints marks on the orange plastic tablecloth. Each new sign is marked by the movement of the lips. The cold light

of a neon light mercilessly illuminates a plate and two pieces of bread forgotten on the table. In the distance, a voice can be heard announcing the news of the day: “new surge in deaths in Italy: coronavirus victims have exceeded 15,000 units. The most at risk are the elderly ...”.

The young man is kneeling on the ground, intent on cleaning, a yellow-green patch of soup, which also dirties the old man’s shirt with a bucket full of water and a rag. “Pietro, you are not well today huh?” he says.

(Pause)

The old man: “no, today I have a tired heart ... and then my body does not want to know ... it turns ...”

The young man: “in Cameroon it is said” salt should not be asked to be sweet “

The old man stops absorbed. Stop leaving marks on the tablecloth. “I’m afraid ... not because of the virus, no ... but I can’t get out anymore ... I miss the air.” He addresses the young man with a soft whisper, like a prayer “Martin, can you tell me that story?”

(the voice of the radio becomes to fade away as it blends in with the noise of the rag that is immersed several times in the water and wrung out).

The young man “it was day, the sun was already high, we were exhausted, and suddenly I hear” Earth, Earth “... initially a small breath that becomes screams in a crescendo, I suddenly woke up with a start”

(You can hear the noise of the rag and the water even louder)

“But there is no land ... at the beginning I can’t see anything, only bodies, many, but then yes, then finally I see the earth and, while the ship approaches the beach, I see a cross and then I think: now, here, I can be myself again, I will never have to forget my name to be accepted, I will no longer be forced to call myself Ali, or Mohammed, as in Morocco. I went to Morocco because I could no longer stay in Cameroon: I was studying physics at university, I had participated in some student riots and the regime’s police clearly made me understand that I had to leave if I wanted to stay alive. I stayed two years in Morocco. I did everything: gardener, bricklayer assistant, farmer... But I had no documents, and I was a Christian. Many times I have been forced to hide my identity. Then one day the Moroccan police found me, beat me and took me to Algeria. So, I said to myself, “Martin, you have to go find a new life” and then I joined the line of people who went to Libya. “Let’s try it, if it’s the only possibility.” And while I was looking at the cross on the Italian coast, I thought inside myself “I’m Martin, it’s me, I can scream it”. And while I was finally taking back my name, I felt that I could start returning to the life I had before, and I could finally build my future.”

The old man suddenly comes to life and smiles: “you have the same eyes as Damiano, my twin brother. Fever took him away when he was 12 years old. I loved him so much. For the past few years, he has been visiting me every night. And every night is a different adventure. The only reason the day exists is this wait. Only when he is there I live. “

ACT TWO: Sleepwalkers

Time suspended – the characters appear frozen in a white-tiled bathroom, the only action is a broken, intermittent neon light. The old man is in a bathtub and Martin is next to him, with a sponge in his hand. The characters begin moving in slow motion, Martin begins to meticulously wash Pietro with the sponge. Every part of the body is caressed by soft, careful, sweet gestures.

The old man winces “Is someone coming? It’s her voice ... “. He calls “Clara?”. The prayer repeats itself.

After a pause, the old man resumes “no ... I know ... it’s that she promised me ... it’s been months since ...”. He pauses again.

The young man looks at Pietro and starts washing him again, cleaning his face with even gentler movements. He focuses on the eyes. "When I arrived in Italy I was confused. It was all different, even the seasons. I had nothing. No documents, no work, no future. I had dreams but those disappeared quickly. You understand that you must find yourself first of all. "

The old man interrupts him: "Damiano filled my life. Every now and then he comes back to fill it again. But here... I'm alone... and I wonder who I'm useful to? What do I need? I am an old shoe."

The young man resumes immediately, so that those thoughts do not settle: "You see, when I arrived in Italy, I didn't even have shoes. They gave me shoes in Italy. Instead in Cameroon I always had the money for cigarettes. We needed money, of course. We needed to learn the language, of course. But not only. We needed help. Companionship. I felt like crying if I thought of Cameroon. Relationships are very important in my life. I missed my friends. The talks, being together. This was the thing I missed most."

ACT THREE: "je v'ai reussir, je v'ai reussir, je v'ai reussir" (find ourselves again)

Twilight. A room with two beds. The old man is sitting in a wheelchair. The young man dresses him. Slowly. He continues his story "We were the first migrants to arrive in S. L., 150 kilometres from here. At the beginning everyone looked at us very badly, they were saying "they don't do anything, they are always on the street ... they also have cell phones". In the reception centre I was not well. The operators all considered us the same. They didn't think everyone had different skills. But no, you have to understand who you have in front of you. There are those who only were breeders. Instead I have studied. And then I continued to study. Alone. I was studying 6 hours a day. The others were talking, I was studying. The first thing I bought as soon as I got some money was a dictionary. In the newsstand in the central square of S. L., next to the florist. Do you understand where? There. I had to learn Italian. If you understand what people say, the world opens up to you. And studying helps you overcome fear. Nelson Mandela said so. Three times a week some elderly people from the village came and taught us Italian. They understood that we were sad, that we didn't just need to study. From that moment on we became friends with some. They were the first to believe in Martin."

Martin leaves the old man's shirt open. And he follows Pietro with his eyes. Pietro tries to button it by himself, with trembling hands, and persists despite the constant failures.

"Every day I thank my mom who gave me birth and who made me understand what is good and what is bad. Since I was a child, I have always been committed to being a man, which means a good person with us. But to be a good person, you have to work, otherwise you are a criminal, you have to help the community where you are." And then I said to myself: "Martin you have to go out! You can't stay in the centre waiting for a document. Life is not in there. Life is out! "

The old man seems to be recovering "are we going out? Can we leave? Let's go to the park ..."

ACT FOUR: Anchoring (or landing)

A spacious room. The old man is in a wheelchair next to a window. Eyes narrowed. The young man is sitting next to him.

Martin (looking at the public): "In Italy it is a big problem to find a job, but also to find a home. The Italians do not say "I do not know this person, but I'll give him a chance...". If they don't know you, they won't even listen to you. But I put a lot of effort for it. I sent an email to the director of this place with my resume and went to the interview. The elderly Pietro. I saw older people helping us out. And I thought I had to return all of this. Of course, I would have liked to continue studying and graduating here in Italy. I have a good level and I have done many things. The civil service, volunteering with AVIS, the cultural mediator for CARITAS. But then I said to myself "I have no parents, I am no longer in the reception centre, I have to pay the rent. It is no longer time to study. It's time to find a girl". The young man face opens in laughter.

A radio in the distance plays the song “la mer”. The young man sets his gaze on the dozing old man. He puts a blanket on his legs and smiles “Sleep Pietro. I tell you this story every time I’m on duty. It is our ritual. Each time I add new details. Things that come back to mind, which sometimes I wish I had completely forgotten. When I talk about me ... here ... you see ... it’s like a therapy. It does me good, it serves to heal me, and to forget this past, which was difficult. It’s like getting rid of a burden.

You like it too much ... it’s absurd to think so, but I think my story consoles you. You don’t feel alone. You know that I too have experienced loneliness, nostalgia and the desire to feel still useful ... and the fact that sometimes you feel that you have lost yourself, what you have been “. All men should have another chance. You are like me Pietro, I wish you too could be reborn...!”

OFF-SCREEN VOICE

Maybe that is why some don’t like to dwell on the details of their past life. They do not want to get stuck in their story. After all, this is also one of the reasons they left their country: to escape an already written fate. Still, they often find themselves forced to be just what they have been. If you are an asylum seeker you must tell your story as soon as you enter the reception centre, once, twice, infinite times. Until it becomes a worn canvas, always the same, colourless. After all, it is also the exercise that needs to be done to “prepare” for the hearing in the Commission. And if it doesn’t go well, that same story will have to be told again to the judge. Telling your past also serves to make yourself well-liked by the employer, by the people you meet, serves to demonstrate that you are a person you can trust.

Your history then risks becoming the only protection, the only home. And there is the risk of getting stuck, harnessed, buried. So, some try to build another one, in which they reinvent themselves, become someone who more easily enters the model cut out from social structures, from legal norms, from cultural formants. Still others give their story to third parties, get rid of it. The events passed through are too painful to be recognized as their own. There is a risk of denying or forgetting.

Yet a man, a woman, are much more than the past - an inextricable tangle of nourishing and poisonous, rotten and vital roots - that accompanies them when they set foot on Italian soil. They are full of hope, or of despair. In any case, on the edge of a “new life”, waiting for a “rebirth”.

This is also true for Pietro and many elderly people. But sometimes the past is the only thing left.

7 Switzerland

Paula Moreno Russi, Anik Fischbach and Maria Mexi

7.1 Background information on the national context: country-specific critical issues

In recent years, immigration has become a controversial topic in European societies, with increased focus in debates on labour market and civic integration (Van der Brug et al., 2015). Historically, migration has played an important role in the Swiss economy, while foreign population recruitment has contributed to the economic growth of the past century. Today, Switzerland is widely recognised as a country of immigration. At the end of 2017, the foreign resident population of Switzerland was 2,053,589. Around 70% of the permanent foreign resident population came from EU-28/EFTA states. The main reason for 47% of those entering the country in 2017 was to take up employment (SEM, 2018).

Historically, the country has driven active economic recruitment policies, opening the door to foreign labour forces when needed while being quite restrictive in its integration and naturalization policies. An understanding of Switzerland's selective regime of migration and mobility is crucial to grasp how integration policies are shaped and conditioned. Nationals of EU-28/EFTA countries are admitted to the Swiss labour market as a matter of priority, in accordance with the provisions of the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons (FMFA), while third-country nationals are admitted selectively. They may be granted a permit with gainful employment only if a set of requirements are fulfilled. A principle of priority (precedence), which states that employers must prove they have not been able to recruit a suitable employee from the priority categories, considered together as the 'internal workforce', must be respected and personal qualifications are thoroughly examined.

Given the admission system, persons from third countries on Swiss territory who have the legal possibility to work, and for whom the question of integration into the labour market arises, are mainly those who have arrived in the context of an asylum application or who have arrived in the context of family reunification. Today, one third of nationals who migrate to Switzerland for family reunification, education or asylum application represent, collectively, an important part of the immigrating population. According to the legal immigration framework in Switzerland, third-country nationals may arrive through family reunification if the relative they are going to join meets satisfactory conditions from the point of view of economic independence, and is able to provide for the needs of the family member joining him or her. The priority and place given to different types of migrants at the policy level on labour market integration is therefore fundamentally different according to the reason for immigration, the perceived need of integration support and the cost of the non-integration of the specific population on the social welfare system. In these circumstances, the reflection on labour market integration policies has focused more on the challenges of integration for people arriving in the context of asylum than for family reunification. However, young migrants, whether they arrive in the framework of an asylum process or for family reunification, have also taken an increasingly important place in those discussions and policies put in place in recent years.

According to the Swiss Law, integration in general and the labour market integration of migrants in particular is – and should be – the duty of the ordinary structures, also called 'established frameworks', such as unemployment, welfare or education services. However,

some of the ordinary structures foreseen for the local population cannot accommodate specific categories of migrants because migrants do not meet the criteria for entry into the system (e.g. level of knowledge of the local language, basic knowledge, years in the canton as a taxpayer, etc.), or because the services they offer are not adapted to the needs of certain groups of migrants. The Swiss policy of integration of migrants into the labour market focuses on, amongst other things, enhancing the employability of those migrants who need it, preparing those who can't be taken over by ordinary structures by preparing them to engage in education measures or to engage them in other ordinary measures, or supporting them to enter into the labour market.

The analyses conducted within the framework of the SIRIUS research project, of which the present report is part, have shed light on how the various actors involved view the most challenging issues that arise from the integration of migrants into the Swiss labour market. Through an analysis of discourses and a series of interviews with actors at the governmental level (confederation and canton), political actors, members of integration support services, members of civil society organizations and social partners, we can observe a general consensus on the perception of the major barriers and enablers for migrants' labour market integration. Most actors agree that integration is a responsibility to be shared between individuals and institutions, while the different sectors, particularly the private sector, must be included in the relevant processes and policies.

The different actors also agree on the main obstacles that migrants face in their labour market integration. The principal barriers are lack of knowledge of the local language, lack of basic skills (for some migrants), lack of knowledge about how the Swiss labour market functions, lack of a social network, and unfamiliarity with the country's social codes or the cultural gap, amongst others. At the level of those policies and services in place, barriers for the labour market integration of migrants include varying approaches towards migrant integration and economic performance (e.g. Grin and Sfreddo, 1998; Demont-Heinrich, 2005; Manatschal, 2011; Eugster et al., 2017); lack of cooperation among all actors at the different levels of the state (federal, cantonal communal), from different areas of work (social assistance, unemployment services, education department, integration offices amongst others) and actors from civil society including employers' associations and labour unions. Turning to consider language learning, problems for migrants regularly put forward by most actors comprise insufficient places on courses, difficulty finding the right course from those offered by the different actors, or the difficulty of financial access. The recognition of diplomas is also reported as a factor that hinders migrants' labour market integration; information on recognition processes is difficult to find, while the processes themselves are often seen as administratively complicated and expensive.

The main discrepancies among the stakeholders' discourses concern the perception of migrants' skills. While for some actors, in particular for some policymakers and private sector partners, migrants' skills are often insufficient or unsuitable for integration into the labour market, other actors such as members of civil society organisations are more temperate and consider there is a problem with the recognition of migrants' skills and past experiences. This lack of recognition of the skill level and previous experiences of migrants on the part of employers, public services and even from the Swiss society is seen by some stakeholders as the result of different prejudices. This point is illustrated by the discourse of one governmental actor active in the integration area when talking about migrants from the asylum framework:

"There are three types of prejudices that cumulatively represent one of the biggest barriers to integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons into the labour market. The first, the prejudices of the authorities that think that this population does not have the level to be integrated. The second, the one from defence circles, that say that as they cannot work, they cannot integrate. Some of the migrants start to think they are not able to work as well, as a result from the other prejudices, and they lose self-confidence. Finally, there is the prejudice of public opinion and the employers, which with all these prejudices, think that refugees and

temporarily admitted persons don't have the capacities. Integration projects need to break down those prejudices by showing through examples, that migrants have the capacity to work and to integrate." (SIRIUS Switzerland Workpackage 3, Stakeholder Representative 9)

Another area of disagreement is the institutional responsibility for support. Depending on the type of migrant or the type of support, some actors may shift responsibility between different levels of the state (federal, cantonal, municipal) or different institutions at the same level, such as at the cantonal level. The discourse of civil society actors also suggests they take on several tasks they believe should be assumed by the state.

The main enablers mentioned by most actors are (among others): access to primary information, access to training and skill development programs, and individual support and network development. Different offers are viewed favourably by the actors. Several actors, and particularly civil society and trade union actors, consider however that although many offers have been developed, that information, access or capacity available remain limited. Rapid integration and access to integration offers as early as possible were also put forward as a crucial element for integration, and in particular for the integration of migrants from the asylum field. Rapid access and individual support have been in place only in some cantons since 2019. Better coordination between the different actors potentially active in the integration of migrants, and greater inclusion of the private sector, are considered factors for the better integration of migrants into the labour market.

In terms of policy to support the integration of migrants from asylum, major reforms have aimed to address various obstacles and to formalise and institutionalise some of the enablers. In particular, the Integration Agenda, implemented since 2019, aims to develop the range of action of the integration of refugees and temporarily admitted persons, with faster implementation of measures and by strengthening individual support and case management (BFH and Social Design, 2016).

Inter-institutional coordination initiatives have also been set up, which are described as positive; however, according to different actors, some ordinary structures continue to fail to adapt to the specific needs of migrants. Some government actors, and more specifically civil society actors, consider there is still a lot of work to be done to raise awareness among those actors working in ordinary structures.

7.2 Methods

The main purpose of our biographical method was to capture and better comprehend labour market integration dynamics, especially the nuances from the viewpoint of migrants themselves, by addressing critical events and emerging reflections that help migrants to identify their needs and expectations. Key questions guiding our research were: what do migrants mean by 'integration'? And how do they experience integration? How do migrants perceive the barriers and enablers of labour market integration? What were the 'turning points' and 'epiphanies' that helped migrants identify these needs? How has the reality of labour market integration met migrants' aspirations of what life would be like in their host country? To what extent do migrants feel they have agency to challenge the barriers to labour market integration? To what extent do their perceptions (related to labour market integration) differ from the discursive representations of their policymakers and civic actors?

Data were collected through qualitative field work and biographical interviews with 11 migrants: five women and six men of varied ages. To identify interviewees, we relied on our 'personal networks' and on the snowball sampling method (e.g. friends of friends, connections of colleagues etc.).

The respondents are from the following countries: Peru, Brazil, Costa Rica, Colombia, USA, Turkey, Syria and Eritrea. They arrived in Switzerland between 2014 and 2019. Three interviewed from Syria are temporarily admitted persons who arrived under the asylum

framework, two are recognised refugees (from Turkey and from Eritrea) and the six others came through family reunification.

Their professional current situation is diverse; they are active either as students, interns, employees or self-employed persons in the sectors of construction, horticulture, electricity, health-care, informatics, social work, art, development, human rights and research. Four of our interviewees are currently job seekers. Most of the interviewed migrants could not continue to work in the sector in which they were trained in their origin country, those who did had to study for it again or turn to self-employment.

7.2.1 Ethical considerations pertaining to our research

Our biographical research with migrants included a variety of interview subjects, it included migrants of various ages, genders, religious or spiritual backgrounds, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. Given the sensitive nature of the fieldwork, particular safeguards were taken. Each subject was treated with care and sensitivity and in an objective and transparent manner. Particular care was taken to show the most appropriate respect for participants' ethnicity, language, religion, gender and sexual orientation and safeguarding their dignity, wellbeing, autonomy, safety and the security of themselves and their family and friends. Our researcher-interviewers were committed to conducting research in a respectful, responsible manner and in a way that would not speak on behalf the interviewees or make anyone vulnerable for participating in the project. All our interviewees were voluntarily and formally consented to participate in research after having been informed of the potential risks and benefits of their participation. For each interview, a relationship of trust was built between the interviewee and the researcher conducting the interview, which sometimes required several meetings. All the information provided by the interviewees was anonymised and data protection precautions were taken, following the ethics standards applied by the SIRIUS project. Several of the interviews could not be recorded, so as to reassure the interviewee and allow him or her to talk about his or her background more freely. The sensitive character of the interviews was one factor that made it difficult to interview young migrants. In general, during fieldwork, we avoided sensitive and potentially re-traumatizing topics, such as sexual violence and torture. As most narratives reveal, migrants experience numerous forms of institutionalized, embodied, and mental trauma throughout their journey into Switzerland. Yet it is important to specify that, overall, the interviews went smoothly and that the majority of the people who accepted to be interviewed seemed to have appropriated their backgrounds enough to talk about them without serious emotional outbreaks. Also, we did not encounter any adverse incidents, such as abuse, exploitation or self-harm.

7.3 Individual barriers and enablers: analysis of interview data

In addition to the ethical considerations, in any biographical interview it is important to acknowledge that the research process can sometimes provide a 'space' where a migrant's experience can be shared and his or her voice heard. By looking into the narratives and experiences of migrants, our research also seeks to empower migrants themselves, particularly those who may have been victimized (Couttenier et al, 2016) or relegated to marginalized spaces within the host society. As Maillet et al. (2016) stress, if research is to be a form of resistance, then it must be used to challenge dominant (native) narratives around 'vulnerable' populations, including those which (re)produce violence through the creation and enforcement of social hierarchies. Our research was thus driven by the aspiration to have these migrants' stories and experiences included within the current discourse on human migration and labour market integration.

As the interviews reveal, it is possible to identify common patterns in the narratives of the migrants who participated in our research. Themes such as motherhood, social or political

activism, recognition of migrants' own skills or trauma and vulnerability connect the different stories we uncover. The majority of our 11 participants identified related turning points, which they defined as life changing moments or/and as enlightening events that had long-term effects on them and are as well directly or indirectly linked to the discourse about their own experience of the labour market.

Life previous to migration as well as questions related to socialization, family or political background and the motivation behind their decision to migrate determined in many cases the ambitions of our interviewees, their perception of 'work', their attitude, professional choices and how they cope with the difficulties related to labour market integration. The themes of motherhood or building a family, and of political or social activism, were particularly dominant in the interviews of the majority, and these themes related to migrants' discourses about the motivation that pushed or forced them to migrate, as well as the discourses about their professional ambitions and aspirations.

7.3.1 Motherhood as a driving force

Gender influences all aspects of the migration process, why and how people migrate, and the opportunities and resources available at destinations (Kofman, 2003; UN Women, 2013, IOM, 2017, ILO, 2018). Valentine (2007) has affirmed the dynamic and fluid nature of the identity formation of ethnic minority (East Asian) mothers residing in Britain, demonstrating the active participation of individuals in constructing their own identity and experiences of inclusion and exclusion in the host country. Consonant with this finding, our research affirmed that gender interacts with motherhood, migration, and choices of integration. Motherhood was a central theme in the narrative of several interviewed women. It was at the core of their motivations to leave their origin country and influenced their identity formation and integration path in the host country, as well as their professional ambitions. This finding is crucial in terms of integration policymaking and planning: leaving gender and family considerations out can expose women migrants to further risks and vulnerabilities, and perpetuate or exacerbate inequalities within host societies.

Willingness to migrate for their children represented a turning point for the interviewed women. The decision to migrate changed their own lives and moreover made them realize that even if they were attached to their career, the well-being of their children represented a priority. The desire to provide better life conditions and future opportunities and/or the need to be close to their own children who previously migrated to Switzerland in fact pushed some interviewed women to leave a well-established career.

The story of Alicia, a 55-year-old woman from Brazil, is exemplary. Alicia grew up in a humble household in a close-knit family where a certain conception of morality, commitment to her own family and work represented the most important values. These values determined many of the choices in her life. Following the path of her father, she started to work at the age of 15 pursuing the career as a police officer. In her mid-twenties she was already a mother of three, a recognized police officer as well as a graduate student in criminal law. She worked for almost all her life in the judiciary sector and in the department of the protection of minor victims of sexual abuse. As her ex-husband moved to Switzerland in order to start a 'better' life and their children decided to move with him to Geneva, she had to decide if she would leave her life and her work in Brazil to follow them to Switzerland. Since she noticed during her first visits that she was losing intimacy with her children, she decided to migrate to be close to them even if it implied leaving her career to be a mother in Switzerland who at the beginning didn't or couldn't have any meaningful professional ambition.

In this case, motherhood was the driving force for migration and indirectly had an impact on Alicia's ambitions for her own life. In fact, she underlines that since her focus was to reconnect with her children, she didn't have any professional ambitions and she was ready to take any work to be able to have enough money to live. Alicia developed professional aspirations only later, after she had re-established a strong relationship with her sons, and as she got the

residency permit and felt legitimate in looking for a job that corresponded to her professional profile.

Other participants also claimed that since they decided to move to Switzerland for their children, they were ready to take jobs in the informal sector or underqualified jobs such as for example a house cleaner, since the priority was providing a safe environment for their family. Switzerland represents a country that can offer a safe environment as well as better educational and professional opportunities compared to those offered in the different countries of Latin America such as Brazil and Peru. To be able to provide this security for their children they had to choose to give up work and a career they loved.

Considering the biographical interviews of the women where the subject of motherhood was central, it is important to notice that their discourse about motherhood and family was strictly related to the subject of work and career. In their narrative about their life before their arrival in Switzerland, the participants underline how important it was to work and provide for their families. It was especially clear in their cases that the importance/sense of work as 'a must' was part of their primary socialisation, it had been transmitted by their own family and was a central subject for them. Since their childhood, work had been essential to survive.

For these women, combining private and professional life represented a challenge but at the same time was considered as an experience that rendered them more resilient towards challenges in the pre-migration life, as well as in their new country. It gave Alicia in particular a way to cope emotionally with the struggles she encountered in the labour market and the integration process.

7.3.2 Preserve the couple and build a family

Diana, a 40-year-old woman, arrived in Switzerland in 2014 to join her Swiss companion. She grew up in a large family with parents who worked hard to provide educational opportunities for their children. She studied international relations and then started at the bottom of the ladder at the professional level and progressed to various project management positions in the field of international cooperation. At work she met her current husband, a Swiss colleague with whom she started a relationship for a few years. After the end of her partner's contract and given his willingness to return to his home country, he suggested to Diana to come and live in Switzerland. The plan for Diana was initially to do a Master's degree and experience living with her lover. Diana was accepted at a university but the authorities refused her a permit because she had a degree already. The couple decided to move faster than expected to the marriage stage in order to be able to live together. During her studies in Switzerland, Diana explains that she put a lot of pressure on herself. She says she spent most of her time working hard rather than socializing and getting to know her host country. Diana explains the pressure she put on herself by the fact that she always tended to be a bit workaholic, but also by the fact that her husband, who is very demanding, often mentioned the high demands in Switzerland to her, and the message was reinforced when he corrected her university works for her. Generally speaking, the view that women had to do more to prove their abilities, and migrant women even more so, was also very much on her mind and played a decisive role in the ardour with which she worked during her studies.

For other women interviewed who did not yet have children, the decision to migrate was correlated with the decision to continue living with their partner and possibly start a family with him later. For these two women, Alicia and Diana, the decision to migrate was not an easy one. They both report on the obstacles they faced in their working lives before they reached the point where they were in their country of origin and which they both considered fully satisfactory.

A related case is that of Lucia, who had worked in several NGOs in Colombia before deciding to do a PhD in England to live closer to her Swiss companion who no longer wanted to live in

Colombia or England but in Switzerland. Talking about the period when she took this decision, Lucia explains: *"there was a personal crisis during which I was thinking, to what extent am I going to continue sacrificing my personal life for work,"* and this crisis was answered when she finally decided to join her partner in Switzerland at the end of her PhD: *"During my thesis, my boyfriend proposed marriage to me and that meant that I had to take a decision, knowing that I was not going to go back to live in Colombia. If I wanted to have a family with him, it meant staying in Switzerland for at least a few years. But I have the feeling that I only now realise the consequences of this decision."*

The arrival in Switzerland of Elias, an Eritrean man, was also motivated by the desire to settle down with his girlfriend. Elias had lived in several European countries in a series of postdoctoral positions.

In all three life stories – of Diana, Lucia and Elias – however, the decision to follow their partner did not go hand in hand with the idea that they would ‘sacrifice’ their professional life to do so. In all three cases, the area of expertise in which they were working professionally (international cooperation, international law and human rights) before their migration was one they considered suitable for them to continue working in once they moved to Geneva. And although they did not expect their professional integration to be easy, they had not imagined it to be quite so difficult.

7.3.3 Social or political activism as a cause of migration and a method of coping with struggles in the host country

Political activism and identity represent another central theme that accumulates the biographical interviews of several refugees, as well as other migrants, and on different levels. It thus provides evidence on the question of the interconnectedness of the various processes of 'identification', such as political, ethnic, gender, class or occupational identity (see Nandi and Platt, 2012). Social identity theory highlights the potential for specific identities to be triggered in varied social contexts (Tajfel, 1974; Tajfel and Turner, 1986; Abrams and Hogg, 1999; Abrams, 2010; Jenkins, 2014), which can have implications for individuals' resources, experiences and status (Jenkins, 2014; Sparadotto, et al 2014). Deaux et al. (1995) have stressed that social identity theory is most applicable to ethnic, political and religious identity. Considering that identification can be contextually specific (Nandi and Platt 2015, 2016) and has implications for others through processes of inclusion and exclusion (Tajfel and Turner 1986), the relationship between political identity, ethnic identity, and 'integration' should not be ignored. As our biographical research reveals, in many cases, political convictions were the cause of migration, but even if this was not the case, social or political activism also had an impact on migrants' aspirations for inclusion into the host society, and on how they coped with the new reality after their arrival in Switzerland.

For example, Omar, a 36-year-old man of Kurdish origins from Turkey who was granted political asylum in 2014, shared how he eventually came to join a Kurdish association in Switzerland, with the aim to support Kurdish rights activists – as he has done in the past and prior to his migration journey. Omar, a highly active political activist in Turkey, experienced various forms of oppression there and was forced to flee to preserve his freedom. This experience – being an activist and becoming a refugee – is understood as relating to how life is managed before and after the refugee journey, how political identity determines life-changing choices and aspirations of 'being included' in the host country, but also how political self-affirmation and related actions can be considered as enlightening moments and turning points. He says:

"In my family, being Kurds wasn't a big matter, we weren't religious and we didn't have existential discussions about the Kurdish identity. It was at the university that it changed: everyone starts to ask you "who are you?", and you have to decide which ethnic or religious group you want to belong to. I began to reflect on my identity, to do some research on politics

and history. I opened their eyes on what was happening around me, to the Kurdish people in Turkey.” (Omar, Interview 3)

During his first years of university, he launched with some university colleagues a leftist democratic association that supported the Kurdish people and was politically engaged against the government’s oppression of them. This had an impact on who he wanted to be and the decision to mobilize himself determined finally the course of events that forced him to look for asylum in Switzerland.

As with other interviewed migrants arrived under the asylum framework, after becoming a migrant in a foreign country his priorities changed. In the first period he had to put aside political engagement in order to focus on himself. Political activism lost its importance, priority and in some moments its meaning; surviving and becoming included in the new society seemed more important, as Omar among others explained:

“Capitalism is not something easy to solve. We live in an individualistic world where everyone thinks to themselves. Which is sad but true. I come from a rich culture, where relations among people are strong. Thanks to this relation we could fight against the power and the oppression, but here I had to adapt to this system in order to survive, I become in some moments an individualist person as well. On the other hand, I still think that everyone has a social responsibility and has to dedicate some of their own time to a social cause.” (Omar, Interview 3)

Even if they are put aside at times along the way, political ideologies affected the majority of refugees in a positive and empowering way, and they represented a driving force even after migration. Political ideologies provided a narrative to help the refugees to accept new challenges and a new reality in Switzerland as the host country. For some who had to leave a well-established career, they learnt to accept their past because they believed that giving up their professional life for a political or social cause is more important than money and social status. Their engagement can be a source and a way of coping with the difficulties related to their professional integration process.

Some interviewed participants continued to be politically active, while others stopped as they arrived in Switzerland. A minority decided to completely put aside their political engagement and ‘forget’ the previous life they were forced to leave. This can be interpreted as a coping strategy considered necessary to fit into the new reality (in Switzerland) and to fight any nostalgia and break the ties with a previous life. This was the case of Daner, a Kurdish migrant from Syria, who had to leave as the government discovered he was involved in some Kurdish movements. When Daner arrived in Switzerland he wanted to forget his previous life and avoid people from Syria, previous political convictions no longer had a place.

Some of our interviewees decided not to become a full or proper part of the labour market for political reasons, they report their belief that work represents nothing more than a way to gain money. According to some, forms of injustice, such as discrimination, are reproduced by the labour market and that they think they will never be able to successfully fight these, which in turn pushed some of them either to accept low qualified jobs to just survive or short terms jobs in the informal market. Having a political reading of the labour market affected the attitude of some towards the labour market. This attitude defined for some a feeling of hopelessness and a lack of ambition, or in some cases a ‘re-reading of their own ambitions.

The story of Nathan, a 30-year-old from Nigeria, shows how he gained political consciousness after his migration and how a political reading of his own reality can have an impact on his own life choices, on the ‘integration process’ and on his path in Switzerland.

Nathan grew up in extremely poor conditions in a marginalized neighbourhood in Nigeria. As he turned 18, he was pushed by his family to follow the path of his older brother and migrate illegally to Italy in order to send home some money that would allow the survival of his brothers and his parents. His arrival in Europe strengthened his disillusion with the idea of Europe as

an 'Eden', the sense of deception and dissolution were stronger than expected. As he arrived in Europe he was young and full of aspirations; he carried on the dream to become a well-recognized and rich artist. Being a street artist in Nigeria was often considered as a real vocation. His aspirations were destroyed rapidly, since being an artist is not a real 'job' or a respected vocation in Italy and he was, overall, simply 'a black kid from a poor African country'. He had to change his expectations and adapt to the new reality. In order to gain money, he had to become first a street seller and then a drug dealer. After one year of working on the street, he was arrested and condemned to one and half years of prison. In this regard, he identified his detention in the prison as a turning point that changed everything in his life as a migrant as well as his expectations:

"Everything changed in prison [...] I don't want to go back but I miss the prison, the people who I met, the situation in which I decided who I wanted to be. I started to meet people and discover their stories. In prison I started thinking. I asked myself what brought me here? I looked around me and I saw black people, Arabic people, a few Italian from the margins. And I saw a pattern. I started to see races. I started to see myself. I understood what kind of artist I wanted to be. I started to change my way of writing and my plans. At first my choices and my purpose were always related to money. But there my work and my thoughts became political." (Nathan, Interview 4)

Reflecting on colonialism and the power relations among white and black people, Nathan reports he began to understand the meaning of structural violence and racism. He realized that he did have and still has the right to look for a better life in Europe after all Europe had done to African countries; he began to believe there is no such thing as economic migration because migration is always driven by political relations. On one hand, this new consciousness empowered him by giving him a sense of new legitimization that in turn affected his expectation of a better and equal life. This expectation pushed him to leave Italy and search for better life conditions in Switzerland. On the other hand, Nathan decided that he would never become part of the official integration system nor of the formal labour market system because for him it reproduced structural racism and inequalities. He decided to become politically active by becoming part of militant associations and he looked for support in alternative communities that occupied, for example, squats. Political consciousness shaped his main ambitions (to become a politically active artist) and his professional choices, respectively to look simply for informal work to have the minimum to survive.

Political awareness and commitment to well-defined causes have also shaped Elias' professional project. Concerned about the political situation in his country of origin, he has always been involved in movements denouncing its political and human rights. His condition as a migrant and his field of study also prompted him to become professionally involved in migration law. Despite the fact that Elias is convinced that his commitment to the rights of migrants was an obstacle in his administrative battle with the Swiss authorities to settle his permits, his commitment continues to be a priority in his life and professional project today, and how he has begun to realize it takes this into account. Elias explains that his commitment and freedom had been important in the decision to become self-employed or to give up the desire to work for the United Nations, for example:

"This kind of autonomy is very important for me. At least, I should be able to say whatever I want to say on media, on TV on radio on whatever. I have my own blog. I want to be free to publish whatever I want in my own blog. If I work for the UN I won't be able to do that. Also to leave space for my activism. Because I am an activist know. You know, when I started activism, the main reason was the political situation in my country. These days, however, it's not only the political situation. Actually, one of the biggest things that preoccupied my mind now is migration in Europe. Integration in Europe. And I have to express myself freely on these issues. Because these are issues that affect me today and these are issues that will affect my daughter when she grows in Switzerland tomorrow." (Elias, Interview 10)

Commitment to causes dear to them, as we see in the cases of Daner and Elias, is also seen as a way of coping with the difficulties encountered during migration for several of the people interviewed and who arrived in Switzerland outside the framework of asylum. Thus, Diana and Lucia decided to look for associations whose causes corresponded to their values in order to be able to be active, feel useful and to meet new people.

Lucia tells us about the loneliness and lack of activity she experienced when she arrived in Switzerland. In Diana's case, her commitment came after her migration when she saw in Switzerland the idea it was easier to find work if one did voluntary work was very present. Even though she had always found that all work deserved a salary, she decided to look for activities that could help her to fulfil herself: *"My idea was not just to strategically choose something here I could find a job but rather to find something that would make me happy or make sense."* (Diana, Interview 9). Diana, concerned about the suicides in Switzerland, decided to do volunteer work for an association fighting against suicide and also to commit herself to a federation that finances international cooperation projects, volunteering work in her field of expertise. In this case, she had to apply for a part-time volunteer position:

"This position was a huge change because it allows me to be in my field again. Technical details but being able to immerse myself in a logical framework, checking indicators, drawing the line between objectives, results, products, activities ... I feel like a fish in water. And even though I don't have a salary, it makes me happy. That's the problem. The work itself fills me up. I feel like I'm back where I belong again. I feel like I'm back to that level of intellectual discussion. It's hard for me to stay at home alone to take care of the household. I think it's good for the people who choose to live this way, but in my case it doesn't fill me up. The fact that I have managed to have this volunteer work that is very much connected to my work and has a regularity to it gives me the confidence that I have the abilities to work in the field here. I get positive feedback from them. I think now it's about seeing how a third party can see and value my work so I can get a job with a salary." (Diana, Interview 9)

Lucia, who has always considered herself an activist, also differentiates between political commitment or commitment to a cause and an activity that could be seen as 'proper work'. For example, she explains that she has always felt concerned about politics and has often been involved in associations. When she arrived in Switzerland, the political system of participatory democracy appealed to her, and she takes an interest and studies each vote in depth and makes her husband's family and her friends aware of the various subjects on which they must vote, even though she herself cannot vote. This interest in each voting subject allows her to get to know and understand Switzerland better. Lucia is also involved in an association to fight against waste, as she feels concerned about environmental issues and talks about her political activism with regard to her country of origin which she expresses mainly through social networks. Regarding her voluntary activities in her field of expertise, Lucia sees them in a different light. Like Diana, Lucia explains that she has always considered that all work deserves a salary, but that she has reconsidered the idea of getting involved in an organisation in her field of expertise as a volunteer to facilitate her entry into the labour market. Unlike Diana, Lucia's experience has left her with a bitter taste and she no longer sees this option as a facilitator for her professional integration.

"But then I said to myself, ok, I have to reconcile with that, and I have made some approaches to do things as a volunteer, but in my experience, in reality it is very difficult to move from volunteering to real work [position], volunteers are not treated well, the interest of the volunteer is exploited, because they know that you need the experience, a certificate, and so they try to get all they can from you without anything in exchange, I find that quite reproachable, especially in the field of human rights. I enjoyed the work, for example working as an interpreter, but it's very difficult for them to stop seeing me as the interpreter. They don't see me as someone who knows the field or who is an expert in this or that field. In the same organization, there was a position, and I thought I had a chance because I already knew them and so on, but I was never contacted at all." (Lucia, Interview 8)

7.3.4 Valuation and recognition of skills and potential, the impact on migrant self-confidence

Professional integration is largely dependent on people's qualifications and the possibility of finding a place in the labour market requiring their skills. The possession of certain basic skills has an impact on a person's integration process in the new country, and the possibilities to acquire them may influence their trajectory. Furthermore, we will see that the host society's valuation of skills, whether hard or soft, also emerged as a key element influencing the choices, experiences and agency of the migrants interviewed.

Quickly learning the host society's language represented a priority for most interviewees. Participants realised that a good level of knowledge of the local language was essential in order to access the local labour market as well as to be able to communicate with the domestic population. Little knowledge of the local language was also identified by many as one reason for having under-qualified jobs. Learning, or improving language knowledge, was often seen as a tool for empowerment. In this regard, the greatest obstacles weren't the apprenticeship of the language *per se*, but the access or the means to learn it. More specifically, for migrants under the asylum framework the problem concerned the administrative system related to learning the local language. For other migrants, finding and being able to pay the courses was the problem. In general, some of the interviewees also mentioned the lack of opportunities to improve their knowledge by practicing because of the lack of network (see also Pecoraro and Fibbi 2010) or the lack of opportunities in everyday life.

Regarding migrants under the asylum framework, barriers imposed by the integration office were mentioned. Asylum seekers who weren't yet recognised couldn't in many cases attend language courses straight away; recognised refugees or temporarily admitted persons on the other hand either didn't have the possibility to attend the courses because they were already full or they couldn't attend courses after the B1 level. One interviewee mentioned that in his case, the different language schools for migrants only offered courses up to the B1 level; the canton did not financially support financially migrants who wanted to achieve a higher language level. This represents a problem for people who would like to find employment in 'higher qualified' sectors, where the employers often require a B2 or a C1.

Migrants who had to pay for language courses themselves, consider the cost of courses in Switzerland to be a factor that does not help the integration process. Navigating the course offer and finding the right course was also seen as a difficulty that may have hindered them learning the local language.

On another note, many of our participants also criticized the system, as well as the Swiss employers, claiming that the level that they achieved in class could be considered as sufficient to be able, at least, to start to work. People who didn't encounter problems related to the apprenticeship of the language were the ones who started to work quickly or who started to volunteer in some associations:

"They always said that the language is a barrier, which is essential. I agree, language is important to communicate, to understand, to work. But you can work even if you don't master the language perfectly. The problem is being confronted with people, sometimes colleagues who work in the social and the integration sector, who laugh about your accent or treat you with condescension only because you don't talk as they do." (Alicia, Interview 1)

For Alicia, a negative view from others about her level of proficiency in the local language was an important factor that hindered (or could have hindered) her learning process. This negative appreciation of the effort can be detrimental to a person's confidence in their abilities and may discourage them from practicing to improve.

The host society's valuing of their other knowledge, skills and experiences is also an element we often find linked to the critical events that emerge from migrants' narratives about their path to professional integration. A low valuation, translated by a lack of administrative recognition, a lack of recognition of the different actors encountered, of any person or sometimes even of

the surrounding environment, together with other factors, could have a negative impact on the self-confidence of some migrants and subsequently also on their attitude towards their integration into the labour market.

On the official and administrative level, problems with the accreditation of prior learning and the recognition of diploma were defined as a relevant barrier, and was a central subject in the narrative of many participants. Problems concerning the recognition of their previous degree and professional experience achieved in their origin country, translated by a complex and expensive administrative procedure, led the interviewed migrants who had been considering official recognition either to not to embark on or to drop out of the procedure. Moreover, official recognition did not guarantee recognition by employers. In areas where official recognition was not necessary, the lack of employer recognition was also a reason for reorientation. Many of our interviewees preferred to completely change their working domain and start from the bottom, by exercising low-qualified jobs or starting new training in a different sector. The sectors were really varied among the interviewed persons. Some were eventually able to choose a sector in accordance to their wishes and predisposition; this was possible, in the majority of the cases, thanks to the support of an association that was able to guide them considering their desires and skills.

The example of the impact of skills valorisation on the way the individual will design and implement her professional project can be illustrated by Diana's story. As soon as she arrived in Switzerland, Diana received messages suggesting that there was a discrepancy between the level of requirements in Switzerland and her skills. After working in international organisations as a project manager in her country, she tried to enrol for a master's degree at two universities in Switzerland before finally being accepted at a third university. The two refusals, added to by a recurring speech from her Swiss husband who told her that the level of requirements in Switzerland was very high and who often corrected her, were decisive elements that added to her high level of requirements, put her under a lot of pressure to work tirelessly and leave aside her social life and strongly impacted her mental and reproductive health.

7.3.5 Deskilling

Alicia is a 55-year-old woman from Brazil. Even if she grew up in an extremely humble household, where even having a meal was challenging, her sisters and her didn't grow up with any particular traumas. She received a quite strict education; they all grew up with the main idea that to live you have to work. As she turned 18 and she had to choose between attending the university of letter or enter in the police school, she decided to follow the professional path of her father. Being a police officer granted her a good salary, a steady contract and good life conditions. In order to have more chances to upgrade in her career, she attended the university of law where she specialized in criminology. Meanwhile, at the age of 28 she was already mother of three children and had behind her more than ten years of professional experience in the police. After having worked for years in the judiciary sector she was assigned to the department of the protection of minors. For eight years she worked with young people, especially with children victims of sexual abuse. During the same period her ex-husband moved to Switzerland in order to start a 'better' life. Their children decided to move with him to Geneva. When Alicia could finally benefit from her retirement at the age of 46 she decided to join her children in Switzerland. At the beginning she didn't plan to remain in Geneva; she wanted to continue to work as a lawyer in Brazil and benefit from the good salary to visit her sons in Switzerland. However, as she noticed that she was losing the intimacy with her children, she understood that she had to move to Switzerland. For the first three years, since she didn't have a permanent residence permit, she has been going there and back, working in Geneva occasionally as part-time cleaning lady and as a care assistant:

“When you accept working as a house-cleaner, there is something that moves in your head. Your values, your emotions, your dignity are touched and questioned. In my country I am someone. I had a job, a higher education. I belonged to my society. Here I was no one, I didn’t know anyone and I didn’t know anyone. I didn’t speak the language. I started to feel depressed and lost. I also had to adapt to my children, who meanwhile became young free men used to live in Switzerland.” (Alicia, Interview 1)

For many of the interviewed migrants, working meets their need to feel active and useful in the new country as well as feeling they belong to the new society. Finding a job represents not only a way to survive but to create a new sense of belonging. Those who couldn’t find a job complain about a sense of uselessness and powerlessness. Some coped with these feelings by looking for alternative ways to be active and to replace the sense of belonging. Some became members of local communities or of militant groups. Thus, volunteering work, internships or entering low qualified jobs became for some a way of being active and to cope with the internal feelings and impact on self-confidence of not being able to integrate properly into the labour market.

As we have seen, the lack of recognition of skills can lead people who find it difficult to find work aligned with their skills to move on to other fields or to accept jobs requiring a lower level of qualification. For Alicia, the moment when she took the step of accepting a lower-skilled job was a moment of crisis that could be described as an existential crisis. While this choice may stem from a need to earn a living, it can also be a strategy for coping with other difficulties along the way, such as frustration or a feeling of not being useful as in the case of Lucia. In her own words:

“So I said to myself, I have to look for alternatives to occupy my time while I find a job, because it’s full of frustrations, so it’s doing things as a volunteer, reconciling myself with the academy, so I’m seeing if I can publish something from my thesis in a journal, I’m learning French. I think having patience is what has cost me the most so far, and also reconciling with the idea that doing jobs that are less qualified for me, like babysitting, well, it’s not bad. In the end, it’s a job, I can earn some money, but for me it’s hard, you know. It’s not a shame but it’s a little bit, why did you study so much if you’re going to end up babysitting someone else’s kids. But maybe it’s more my ideas than people’s. I think that if I tell people that I’m working there, nobody will judge me, because they are also aware of how difficult it is to find a job, even for Swiss people.” (Lucia, Interview 8)

The choice to accept less skilled work is not easy for Lucia, who has a PhD. Although she feels that it will be morally beneficial and to some extent financially beneficial, she is not comfortable with the idea that people can judge this choice. She herself feels that those years of education would be wasted. However, the choice of deskilling for Lucia has to be made strategically. The information received on public policies, such as sound advice, encourages Lucia to move towards undeclared jobs for fear of then being forced to remain locked into a field if she enters an unskilled but declared job:

“I can’t get a job as a waitress, or a job that will be reported [declared] to the unemployment. The people I’ve met here tell me, if you get a job as a waitress, unemployment services, officially are going to label you in this kind of jobs, because you opened the door to do that. It doesn’t matter if you have a master’s degree or a PhD. So, I have friends who work in the restaurant business etc. and they say, here they give you a job, but I say, no I can’t because until I get past the unemployment story etc., I don’t know what can happen. I told myself that I had to find an undeclared and flexible job so that could adapt to my time (French classes etc.) in the meantime, even if it’s babysitting.” (Lucia, Interview 8)

Interviews with migrants in previous work packages of this project have shown us that this fear was justified. Two of the highly skilled migrants interviewed in previous work packages explained that taking a low-skilled job that was very different from their field of expertise had been beneficial in terms of improving the local language, integration and the need to have an activity, but it had been a major obstacle for them when it came time to benefit from public

services to help them return to work. In particular, they found themselves obliged to seek or accept a job in the same field since according to unemployment policies only experience in Switzerland counts and found that this was a policy that could foster deskilling.

7.3.6 Precarity, concurrence with cross-border labour forces and the informal market

The choice of Lucia to first enter the labour market through an undeclared job has been part of her strategy to fight administrative and policies barriers. However, most of interviewed migrants legally entitled to work who entered the informal labour market did so because they could not find work in the formal labour market, even though they were looking for jobs requiring few or no qualifications. Maud attributes this difficulty to competition in the labour market.

“Today it is much harder to find work at once. During my first stay I found a job straight away. I felt safer as well. But now the demographic reality has changed. There are too many people, too many requests. My age represents as well an obstacle. I am forced to work informally and not declare because any employer is ready to offer a contract.” (Maud, Interview 2).

The political reality of some sectors of the labour market - *in primis* sectors of construction, restoration and cosmetics, where employers prioritize cheaper cross-border labour forces, represents a barrier and a challenge for entrance to the labour market. The question of increasing concurrence includes not only a concurrence among the Swiss and migrant labour forces, but also among migrants and cross-border workers, especially in the Italian part of Switzerland. Consequently, according to part of the migrants interviewed, many low-qualified jobs, as for example hairdressers, are occupied by a majority of underpaid cross-border employees who work in Switzerland but still live in Italy or France where life is more affordable. The interviewed migrants, in particular temporarily admitted persons, feel that with this context they are not attractive enough.

7.3.7 Paradise lost

With its many international organizations and the NGOs present in the territory, Geneva seems a favourable ground for the professional development of people with expertise in international cooperation or human rights. These are the few areas in which experience in a country of the south is supposed to be appreciated. Although Lucia and Diana, experts in those fields, did not initially want to migrate to Switzerland, the idea of a professional opportunity made the decision easier. Difficulties encountered after migration when it came to finding work in their field or to be accepted at Swiss universities were a source of frustration.

Lucia, for her part, explains that she realized how difficult it was to find a job in Geneva after the only interview she has had so far was unsuccessful. It was a job that did not pay very well but for which they were asking for languages, a PhD and experience.

“I started by talking to people who told me that they had been looking for two years, a year and a half. I thought, two years? How do people do it? I'm supposed to have arrived in the promised land of Human Rights (my sector of activity), I thought they were going to give me a job because I'm a woman, Colombian, I have a PhD, I speak several languages, ah but anyone has all that here. It's not exceptional here. Whereas in Colombia all that can be exceptional. And I still have this feeling that if I go back to Colombia, I will find work very quickly. [...] I guess I didn't imagine how difficult it would be to find work in Switzerland. It's like in the movie Our Lady of the Assassins that takes place in Medellin where a man says to a lady who witnessed a murder, Madam, we are in Medellin, not in Switzerland, you know, as if Switzerland was a paradise. Well, I don't see it as a paradise right now.” (Lucia, Interview 8)

The feeling of disappointment was also very present for Elias, an expert in the field of human rights who had lived in several European countries before migrating to Switzerland:

"I came in 2014 to be reunited, or to, establish my family in Geneva. Because my future wife, at that time, was here in Geneva and she did not want to leave Geneva. I had to ... to choose between my job and my marriage, basically. That's how I came to Geneva. And of course, I assumed, because by that time, before I came to Geneva, I had already lived in six different countries, in Europe [...], I lived in six others European Countries before I came to Switzerland, and I have never experienced in all of these countries, where I was living and working as a professional, at least as a postdoctoral researcher you know?, that was always guaranteed for me. But in Switzerland it was completely, very very difficult. When I came from Norway to Switzerland, when I resigned for my job. I had to quit my job, myself, by myself, by my own volition. Just because I thought it would be easier, not easier, but nor difficult, to find a job in Switzerland." (Elias, Interview 10)

7.3.8 The support of an association as an enabler to enter the labour market and as a turning point

The role of the associations, along with the personal accompaniment and support offered in Switzerland, was a central theme in the majority of interviews. The intervention and help offered from associations was for many a positive turning point for their professional paths as well as in other ways.

The majority of those interviewed asked for help because they felt disoriented and needed help in the search for employment, an internship position, in procedures for the recognition of previous qualifications, or again because they didn't have any local network that could help them to find an occupation in any domain. The centrality of the support of an association was also sometimes related to dissatisfaction towards public services and their own social assistance that weren't able to meet their needs.

For some interviewees, asking for support from an association was considered as a moment of action that eventually changed their professional path. Admitting to needing help, and to be able to ask for it, was an active decision and a way of taking control of their own situation that eventually had a positive impact on their psychological and emotional state. This was for instance the case of Alicia, a Brazilian police officer and expert in criminology who moved to Switzerland to be close to her children. After arriving in Geneva and having to work as a random house cleaner, she started to have panic attacks and to feel afraid to leave the house. After a particularly intense panic attack, she understood that she had to react. She decided to take French courses and eventually to look for a professional activity. In 2018 she participated in a coaching program where every participant was followed by a personal coach. Under the guide of the association she started to work as a volunteer in a new social project that supported the regularization of undocumented workers. Thanks to her volunteer work she got to know an association active in the support of the integration of migrants, which invited her for an interview for a vacant position and thereafter offered her a job as project coordinator. For the last few years, she has been working for the association that supports the orientation of migrants and undocumented migrants; she works on several projects and is responsible for the beneficiaries from the Brazilian community.

Many interviewees who benefit from the support of a civil society organization can also benefit from its network, which can be essential to get an internship position or a job. Some non-profit associations, for example, address the shortage of talents in under-represented sectors as the IT industry by offering training programs to refugees and migrants with related skills. The ones who benefited from these programs could find internship positions and finally a job.

For other participants, it was being personally accompanied that was crucial to overcoming the psychological distress related to migration as well as arriving in the new country. A loophole of the integration policy, which represents an obstacle in the professional integration

of migrants, is the absence of a psychological support system for people who have suffered psychological trauma; this especially concerns refugees who have followed a difficult migration path. Projects and actions that tackle this problem become for this reason extremely precious.

For Diana, getting in touch with an association had an impact on her self-confidence, but also on her relationship with her professional project and the strategy she would later adopt:

“In September, the association invited women to testify about their successes, and I was very touched by this event and the journey of these women, and I identified a lot with them when they said it wasn't our fault. And I think that this sentence alone, it's not your fault, put the structures and functioning of the labour market into more perspective, and it took some of the weight off my shoulders. It takes some of the pressure off you from putting yourself on the shoulders and also from seeing that you're not the only person going through it. That's when I decided to talk to representatives of the association to look for an alternative [...] they told me, you have the qualifications, the studies, the knowledge about what to do at a job interview etc. What you lack is the network. They proposed actions that I could implement to develop my network and to be able to access what they called the hidden market.” (Diana, Interview 9)

Moreover, many underlined that they became befriended with members of the association; becoming friends with them was an important step. This point was underlined by Daner, who arrived in Switzerland without knowing anyone. After escaping from his country because he was affiliated to a group of militant Kurdish people, he tried to forget his past; he has never wanted to become too much involved with other Kurdish and Syrian refugees because he wanted to build a new life, speak the local language, start to work and socialize with ‘Swiss people’. One of the biggest challenges to achieve this was, according to him, a lack of knowledge about the culture and customs. Becoming close to Swiss people allowed him to get a closer look and comprehension of the local culture, which in turn is essential to fit in the labour market:

“Without an inside [understanding] of the culture, it is not possible to relate to the new host country, to make friends and eventually to find a job. Learning how to behave in the workplace, how to work, how to relate to the other colleagues and to your own superior are essential to feel confident and to pursue a process of professional integration.” (Daner, Interview 5)

In his case, becoming close and building a friendship with the members of the association represented personally an important turning point. Reflecting on obstacles and the support that he started to receive through the association, he reports that what he noticed at this moment was what he missed the most, beside the language courses and an administrative support from the integration office, was an introduction to the local culture. As he experienced this introduction, he felt more comfortable and readier to face specific situations in his private and professional life.

7.3.9 The importance of the professional and social network

Diana's experience has shown us the importance of network development as a strategy for entering the labour market. When asked what she would have done differently in recent years, Diana explains that if she had experienced the difficulties she would have encountered and the network would have been so important, she would have mobilized her professional network from her country of origin before leaving as she was working in an area (international cooperation) where this would have been possible.

For Daner, meanwhile, the network has been a tool to learn more about the culture of the host country and its codes. Daner considered this element to be missing in helping him in his integration. In several of the experiences of the migrants interviewed, the opportunities to develop their network were critical events that facilitated their integration. Conversely, the lack

of a network was a hindering factor in the professional integration process of migrants. In the case of Lucia, the independence she has always shown throughout her adult life has allowed her to face many of the difficulties encountered during her migration. Accustomed to looking for answers to her questions on her own, she has made extensive use of tools such as the internet to find information like videos, testimonies and tutorials that she used to plan her integration strategy. Morally, the lack of a social network was however strongly felt and she began to look for new ways to meet new people.

“There are hard times of pressure, loneliness, what am I going to do, I'm not working. And there are also the seasons that affect morale. Winter, fall, it's very depressing. After summer it's different, you meet more people, there are festivals, the lake. Even if you go swimming alone at the lake, it's something else. And also if you don't have a job, you don't have money, you can't do many things. And you say to yourself, “Ah, I want to do things, I want to meet people. For example, I love yoga, and I always do yoga at home. I thought, I'll get a yoga class, but it's very expensive, I can't afford it. It's these limitations, there's nothing really free here [...] It was very sad. I was thinking, nobody's gonna come ringing my doorbell except Jeovah witnesses. No one's gonna come looking for me. I have to get out, interact, but it's been quite an effort.” (Lucia, Interview 8)

As previously mentioned, engaging as a volunteer in environmental associations has been a part of the strategies Lucia implemented to cope with the lack of network and the feeling of loneliness.

7.3.10 Nostalgia, traumas and ways of coping with psychological distress

The emotional state of the eleven migrants interviewed is a key factor in their journey towards integration. The difficult experiences they (may) have lived through before, during or after migration are events that leave a trace, giving rise to feelings from simple nostalgia to trauma. In some cases, migrants have identified specific needs to help them cope with and manage these feelings. We will see that the identification and management of these needs have been key steps in their journey towards professional integration.

Many migrants suffer from psychological stress, which can slow down or even block the process of integration into the labour market. As one interviewed woman from Peru claims, if you are a migrant you have to be able to cope with strong emotions such as nostalgia, and uncertainty about your own present and future. Friends and your own partner, as well as some social associations, can be central in this coping process.

The youngest of the interviewed participants, a young 18-year-old man from Syria, claims that in this matter the personal support of members of an association and a project in which he started to go to school to share with the other young people his testimony, were important. The story of Subi, who left Homs in Syria when he was 10-years-old because of the violent escalation of the conflict and who had to embark to a long and difficult journey to Europe, shows that to be able to build a new life and to start an integration process, it is necessary to face emotional trauma and find a strategy to cope with the past. It enlightens us as well about how the support of an association and its personal accompaniment can have an impact on this process.

“We told our stories, how we left our country, our journey with the boat ... and how we experienced our arrival in Switzerland. I see now how it helped me. I could free my heart and head, which was full of anger. At the beginning it was hard but after I learnt how to talk about everything. By talking I learnt how to cope with my emotions. I don't know where I would be today if I couldn't express myself in this way. I was listened to by the people and I could feel their solidarity, this helped as well.” (Subi, Interview 7)

The sense of emotional liberation was a turning point for Subi, and an essential step to being able to deal with the challenges and dimensions of his new life in Switzerland. He learnt to cope emotionally with his traumas related to the war and to his own migration path; he felt

more accepted by the society of the new country because of the empathy shown by the other young people. He understood, as he said, that only by confronting himself with his “nightmares” and his past he would be able to handle the new challenges and his path in Switzerland.

For some, working is the only way of coping with both traumas and nostalgia. This was the case for Mohamed, a 48-year-old political asylum seeker from Syria who worked as a hairdresser. He escaped from his origin country in 2013, since the daily life conditions had become unbearable. The neighbourhood where his family lived was constantly bombarded as well as the saloon where he was working. Mohamed’s family has always been against the Assad government, some brothers and cousins were active members of an extremist rebellion group. As some family members started to disappear and after Mohamed has been threatened with death several times, he decided to leave the country with his family and the family of one of his brothers. He arrived in Switzerland in 2014 after having stayed for one year in Libya and a difficult illegal journey through the deserts and the Mediterranean Sea. A few months after he arrived in Switzerland, he and his family – his wife and his 13-year-old son – received the support of an association that helped them to find an apartment and a job. Finding work represented for Mohamed his turning point. It was work that helped him to deal with his trauma and feeling of nostalgia:

“Working in a saloon in the same village where I was living and meeting people every day helped me greatly. I could learn the language by practising it, getting to know the people, and making myself known overcoming the first cultural barrier. I am a Muslim man after all, in a village that, especially a few years ago, didn’t have almost any people from other countries [...] The work didn’t allow me to become economically independent. But still, by working, I could keep myself occupied. Staying at home, watching all day on television what was happening in Syria, made me feel useless. I would become crazy.” (Mohamed, Interview 5)

The nostalgia of home, the distance of some friends and relatives are very present in everyday life; work was the only way for Mohamed to escape or at least to cope with this suffering. He could see that by working he could overcome as well difficulties related to a social and cultural integration.

Subi’s experience also shows us how the resolution of psychological stress or trauma can facilitate a migrant’s integration. Mohamed’s experience, on the other hand, explains how entering the labour market helped him to manage his emotional traumas.

However, it can also be the case that the dynamics of influence act as a vicious circle where the various problems are intertwined and feed into each other. The solution is to find a way to break this vicious circle. As explained above when we were dealing with questions of competences, Diana, who had several years of experience as a project manager in international organizations in the field of international cooperation, enrolled in a Master’s degree in sociology upon her arrival in Switzerland. Comments from members of her friends that the level of professional requirements in Switzerland was very high, combined with the high level of demands she always placed on herself, led her to put a lot of pressure on herself during her studies and to give top priority to work. During this period, she and her husband wanted to have a child. Diana had a miscarriage which was followed by a period of medical examinations and several failed attempts to get pregnant again. Diana says that at first, the intense work for the university allowed her to drown the trauma of her miscarriage. But then she began to have problems concentrating and it took her longer than before to do the same tasks, which made her work even harder. The fatigue and pressure intensified the impact on her hormones and reinforced these reproductive problems. Starting psychotherapy with a fertility specialist was the first step that helped her realize that her pressure for work was having an impact on her reproductive health, and that in turn, the lack of confidence in herself as a potential mother had had an impact on her lack of confidence as a professional. Subsequently, a fieldwork for her thesis on the conciliation of motherhood and professional

life and, secondly, the award for the best Master's thesis, helped her to break out of this vicious circle and to better manage the trauma.

7.3.11 The administrative battle to obtain the permit, a first impression of the host country

Many of the biographical stories of the interviewed migrants highlight that the first contacts they had with Swiss institutions played a decisive role in shaping their path to integration. These contacts, which mostly took place with the public administration during the permit procedure or with universities for admission or job applications, are often described by the interviewees as their first impression of a country that was unfriendly and closed to them on arrival. Three of the interviewees who arrived in Switzerland to follow their partner, two of whom had married a Swiss man, said that this first contact gave them the impression that they were not welcome:

"We had to face such difficult bureaucratic processes that we wondered if we still wanted to get married. It was also documents, stamps, here, there, the Swiss government that you have to apply for a permit, no, an exam, to prove that it wasn't for the papers that you got married. It also seemed crazy to me. And that's when I started the inauguration into the Swiss bureaucratic world." (Lucia, Interview 8)

This first relationship with Swiss institutions is described as a first factor delegitimizing their migration, their status and causing a beginning of loss of self-confidence that conditioned the way they were going to position themselves in the new country.

In the case of Elias, who arrived in Switzerland to join his future wife after having worked in several European countries as a post-doctoral researcher, the administrative procedure for obtaining a stable permit turned into a long administrative battle which was only resolved three years after his arrival. In the case of Elias, the difficulties encountered with the administrative authorities conditioned his investment for his integration and his relations with the host society, also modifying his professional project:

"You know, it even affected me to the extent of not committing myself for example to learn French. I am now learning, but you know at some time, you just feel you are not welcome here. If you don't have that sense of belongingness, why should I learn the language. Off course at the end of the day it's me who are disadvantaged, if you speak the language you are on a more competitive position. But if you are struggling with a deep sense of injustice that shakes your core, you know, it's very difficult, very tough. [...] The decision of being consultant is my way of fighting back. I like the autonomy, I am the boss of myself. There is a certain degree of insecurity [...] But even if I take a job, from now, I would not take a full-time commitment, I want to keep my autonomy. Because I have lost trust in institutions, and that is very difficult." (Elias, Interview 10)

Discourses related to the recognition or misrecognition of asylum as well as the assignment of a permit of residency permit were also a common narrative of the majority of the participants interviewed and had an impact on the personal, administrative and especially professional level.

The question of permit represented a significant issue especially for temporarily admitted persons. The sooner a decision is made on whether a person will or may remain in Switzerland in the long-term, the quicker their integration can begin. Being recognised as a temporary admitted person and not as a refugee was defined by many as a negative turning point. There is a lack of information among the employers who often are convinced that they can't hire temporary admitted persons. But overall, employers often won't hire a person that potentially won't stay for long time employers in an insecure condition. The concerned asylum seekers became quickly conscious that the F permit represented one of the biggest barriers for a professional integration:

“Some don't know if they can hire someone who is only provisory admitted, some think that you won't stay, for others it is enough to read on the CV an Arabic name to find a reason not to hire you [...] The permit is ‘a new prison’, representing an obstacle in many different ways. It underlines that even if you are culturally or socially integrated, you don't really belong to the new country.” (Daner, Interview 6)

For all cases, the permit had a double meaning. It has administrative implications in the research of work, as well as a symbolic meaning: the permit – both the refugee permit and other kinds of permits – provide a sense of legitimation. The sense of legitimation also had an impact on their attitude towards their own position on the labour market.

7.3.12 Discrimination

As already the story of Nathan in the previous section shows, an important number of migrants, especially men from Arabic and African countries, claim that the structural racism and discrimination in the labour market represent a significant obstacle and a barrier to fulfil their needs.

Subi, an 18-year-old from Syria, claimed that discrimination can concern you even if you arrived in Switzerland at a young age and attended the schools in the new country. He escaped from war in 2013, he arrived in Switzerland when he was 13 years old. He attended the secondary school and professional formation; he has never felt discriminated against either by his classmates nor from the people close to him. However, when he had to look on his own for an internship position, he experienced how his name and his origin became a barrier from entering to the labour market:

“I sent plenty of applications to find an employer who was ready to take me as an intern. For months I looked without success. There is for sure a great concurrence among young people, but I think, as many said, that an Arabic name on the applications and my provisory permit will always represent an obstacle. On this matter, the problem is related to how you look for a job and how the employers consider the applications; employers in general get the cv and a motivation letter, they don't meet you. In this case it is normal that on paper I won't ever be prioritized.” (Subi, Interview 7)

These kinds of experiences were described by many of our interviewees.

Forms of racism or discrimination were sometimes reproduced by integration offices, related associations or orientation offices as well. Some underline that their own social assistance or officers threatened them with condescension by undervaluing their previous professional experiences and skills. On the basis of their origin alone, they lead them to begin jobs for which they are under-qualified; it was rare for them to be pushed to start new schools or training programs that would allow them either work in the same sector as before or in sectors that the interviewed would personally enjoy. Comments and attitudes based on racial stereotypes were very common and biased the professional and educational orientation.

A migrant from Turkey, Omar, who in the origin country was a mechanical engineering claimed the following:

“In Turkey we have great schools, good working conditions. It is a modern state, even more modern than Switzerland [...] But here migrants are represented as little qualified, with a primary or secondary degree. Only because of little knowledge of the local language, a racist preconception, there is the misconception that foreigners are not skilled enough.” (Omar, Interview 3)

The orientation and the evaluation of some stakeholders had a negative impact on the path of some interviewed migrants, and determined a turning point in their professional path. Some were forced to re-evaluate their professional plans and expectations and choose to pursue a professional path in a sector that either they didn't like or that didn't correspond to their profile.

They could see how extremely difficult it is for a migrant to be considered either as a qualified worker or as a person with achievable ambitions and professional aspirations. An asylum seeker accepted on a provisory basis declared as well that his own social assistant discouraged him from trying to apply for jobs as electrician and plumber, professions that he exercised for years in his origin country. The main argument of the social assistant was that to practice these professions in Switzerland a much higher educational level and skills are needed, skills that someone from Syria probably doesn't have. The judgement was again connotated as discrimination. Not only did it block a possible professional path but it also affected self-confidence and the relation between the person and the authorities, represented for example by the social assistants. The impact of this kind of orientation and the lack of confidence from the official support system was more important at the beginning – during the first 'integration phase' – and for those who already had difficulties entering the labour market because of a missing network, language difficulties, legal status or the lack of recognition of their own diplomas.

7.4 Variability of data

Considering the interviews, we can recognize the barriers as well as the coping strategies and turning points that migrants experience vary according to origin, age, gender, level of qualification as well as migration status, as well as other factors. The political reality of the region in which they were located as migrants also has to be considered as a variable that had an impact on their experience. On this point it is important to specify that the integration experiences of the participants interviewed took place in the cantons of Geneva, Vaud and Ticino.

7.4.1 Legal status and origin

There are some differences between refugees, temporarily admitted persons and migrants who arrived for family reunification reasons.

We could see how temporarily admitted persons encountered more difficulties and structural obstacles that blocked labour market integration. The legal status constrained their agency and was often considered as a negative turning point that migrants and refugees didn't experience. On the other hand, several migrants who arrived for family reunification reasons claimed to be discriminated against because they couldn't find any support and help because they weren't refugees. They had to pay themselves for the language courses and experienced more difficulties benefitting from the social assistance. Migrants who arrived for family reunification were confronted more with the question of legitimacy as well. Women who moved to Switzerland for familiar reunification or those defined as 'economic migrants' were often considered either as privileged migrants who took advantage of the national resources or/and as foreigners who didn't have the right or the reasons to be and work in Switzerland. They suffered a more subtle and invisible discrimination that often restrained their professional ambitions. Moreover, migrants who came to Switzerland for familiar reunification or as a result of a personal choice are often not considered in terms of psychological vulnerability, and have the feeling to have less access to the support offered to refugees who suffered under more evident and strong traumas.

7.4.2 Origin and gender

Despite women often being represented as disadvantaged and as actors who encounter more obstacles to professional integration than men, the majority of the interviewed female migrants had more facilities for finding a job almost immediately. A woman from Peru considers for instance that women have more advantages than men: they are able to find more easy jobs in the informal labour market in the sectors of service, cleaning and restoration. Moreover, women are more resilient and able to cope with situations of insecurity.

As we will see later in our analysis, many epiphanies are related to motherhood, both for the women with children interviewed and for those who do not yet have children. For the majority of the women interviewed, questions related to their status as a mother or potential mother had a significant impact on events experienced or on the strategies adopted on the path to professional integration. However, X men were also expressed that their role as husband and father had had a decisive role in their career path.

Discrimination showed more in the lack of professional opportunities in higher qualified jobs. Men suffered more than women a discrimination in regard to their origin. Especially men from Arabic and African countries and/or from the Muslim religion encountered barriers determined by racial discourses and structural discrimination.

7.4.3 Age of the migrant

The circumstances in which the interviews took place did not allow us to interview more than one young migrant who arrived in Switzerland before the age of 18. We will therefore not be able to discuss the situations of young migrants in a more comprehensive way. The interviewed young migrant (a young man from Syria, aged 18) had more facility to find work and an internship position compared to older people. According to the latter, he is more flexible and resourceful than his parents because of his age and early arrival in Switzerland. He attended school in Switzerland and his young age rendered him a faster learner. Attending schools in Switzerland provides a sense of legitimacy that sometimes older people don't feel. It also seems to impact on the coping methods of individuals. Younger people learn more naturally to cope with and handle discrimination and racist attitudes. Because they have learnt the language quickly, and often supported their parents from a young age (functioning as a translator among his parents and others, for example with the members of the associations, social assistants, teachers and doctors), they gained awareness that strengthened their coping capacities and resilience in the labour market.

7.5 Critical analysis of the adequacy of LMI: comparative analysis

The biographical analysis shows us the specific dynamics related to cases of family reunification. As previously stated, integration policies for this population, if not related to family reunification in the framework of asylum, is not a very present topic in the discussion on professional integration. Programmes and offers do exist, but most often they are implemented by civil society organisations, although sometimes subsidised by public funds for integration. As previous research shows (Wanner, 2019), the biographical stories of our women interviewees reveal that they very often feel that they have sacrificed their professional life for their marriage or family life. In cases where the interviewees were already mothers, motherhood represents a source of resilience against this sense of sacrifice. Work then becomes a means of providing a way out for her children. For the interviewees who did not (yet) have children, the stories show that they have to deal with a sense of frustration. The stories of family reunification cases also show us the difficulty of access to information. For two of the interviewees, even though they were married to Swiss people, and had access to information and networks important for integration, their experiences once they arrived in Switzerland show that they faced a certain loneliness, not only at the social level, with the lack of a network that had been able to cope with the same problems, but also at the institutional level.

7.5.1 Basic skills and local language

We saw in the first part of this report when we discussed the Swiss context that most actors in integration agreed there could be a lack of certain skills, such as basic skills among some

migrants, and a lack of recognition of skills. The possession of certain competences and the recognition or non-recognition of competences is one of the central themes in our biographical narratives. Regarding the possession of certain skills, the interviews show us that most of the migrants were aware of the importance of learning the local language, most of them expressed a firm intention to learn it and the difficulties encountered in their learning corresponded to the access to the course from a financial point of view or to the lack of places in more accessible courses. Lack of opportunities to practise the language was also often cited as a barrier, especially for those who were not in training or not in the labour market. The only migrant who did not have the willingness and motivation to learn the local language from the outset explained that the three-year administrative battle he faced to obtain his permit had been a major disincentive to learning the language.

As mentioned above, the subject of recognition of skills, experiences and qualifications was a central focus of the interviews. Most of the interviewees expressed that they had faced a lack of recognition or low valorisation of their competences, experiences and qualifications by public institutions, potential employers and sometimes even their close circle of acquaintances. This negative judgement of their abilities is not only a direct obstacle to migrants' access to the labour market, but it is also a factor that has an important influence on the legitimacy and self-confidence of migrants and, by repercussion, on the attitude they will have in their path towards integration into the labour market. As we have seen, in some cases, these blows to self-confidence or to the feeling of legitimacy can even lead to problems or traumas at the psychological level, thus dragging the person into a vicious circle.

One of the themes that is not very present in the experts' speeches and is well represented in our biographical interviews is the problem of deskilling (Berthoud, 2012). As we have seen, some of our interviewees have had to face at different moments in their careers the decision to continue to seek to use their skills and experience or to reorient themselves, sometimes even to start a new training course or to find work for which few or no skills were required. In the case of a reorientation to another skilled domain could be seen as an opportunity for a second professional life. However, for many of the people who had to engage in low or unskilled jobs when they themselves had high qualifications, this was often a source of frustration. However, for many of the people who had to engage in low or unskilled jobs when they themselves had high qualifications, this was often a source of frustration and loss of self-confidence.

7.5.2 Sustainable integration into the labour market

Once migrants have entered the labour market, they are considered to be integrated. The policymakers' view of the importance of rapid integration into the labour market leaves little room for reflection on sustainable integration into the labour market. Thus, as we have seen, certain factors such as the non-recognition of skills, the pressure for rapid integration coming from institutions, policies according to which only experience in Switzerland counts (such as that of the unemployment office) or the failure to take into account the will of migrants are all factors that threaten sustainable integration. They can be a source of de-skilling, or of integration into a labour market with hostile and precarious conditions, in addition to the waste of skills it represents.

7.6 Conclusion

Through the narrative biographical interviews, we were able to see how the different integration paths are influenced by several kinds of dynamic. These dynamics result from a combination of experiences, values, perceptions and reasoning inherent in the individual but also from external factors (e.g. policies, services) and other messages sent by the outside world and from the host society. The analysis in this report also shows how the experiences migrants have throughout their lives, including before migration and shape their expectations,

can become obstacles but they can also provide the right tools to face the barriers they encounter in the host society. These experiences can also lead migrants to re-evaluate their expectations throughout their journey. For many of our interviewees, we can see that these reassessments are the result of a combination of what we will call the “three possibles”, namely what they consider they can achieve as a person (confidence in their abilities), what they perceive their situation allows them to achieve, and what they think the society and context in the host country allows them to achieve.

As we have seen, throughout the narratives of our interviewees, many of the critical events were elements directly or indirectly influenced by the perception of one or more of their ‘three possibles’, which we can consider as epiphanies. Events related to motherhood or political self-affirmation experienced by our interviewees are events that have changed according to the stories, the perception of what they could achieve as persons, but also they can have an influence on the perception of what their situation allowed them to do. Contact with a specific association, access to a network, graduation, successful or unsuccessful experience in the world of volunteering or work, were determining factors in the re-evaluation of possibilities.

Questions of self-confidence, belonging and sense of self-assertation and legitimacy, central to our biographical narratives, are also strongly linked to the perception of “possibilities” vis-à-vis the wider social context. As Schütz and Luckmann (1980) stress, advergence to the problem of ‘collective belonging’ in cases of discrimination, persecution, fleeing one’s country, or emigration is by no means voluntary, but is determined by a ‘socially imposed thematic relevance’. Negative or difficult administrative experiences and the resulting feeling of not being welcome, low appreciation of skills, experience of prejudice or discrimination are all elements that negatively affected the interviewees’ sense of legitimacy and self-confidence. On the other hand, positive professional experiences, especially in other European countries, the exercise of an activity in which the migrant felt useful and valued, positive feedback from another person or institution, the expression of recognition of the difficulties faced by the authorities, local people or other actors representing the host society, access to integration support which empowers rather than victimises are among the elements that we find as part of the turning points and which have had a positive influence on the migrants’ sense of legitimacy and self-confidence, giving them the resources to cope with obstacles and fight for professional integration in line with their values.

In recent years, important efforts to improve support for the integration of migrants have been made in Switzerland. As we have seen in the narrative analysis, migrants ‘carry’ with them their stories, experiences, resources, problems, skills, capacities, expectations. These need to be sufficiently taken into consideration in the professional support offered by the various services. It is also worrying that most of the jobs accessed by migrants are precarious. In addition to case management, individual support or coaching programmes are very useful services to help migrants in getting a foothold into the labour market. Skills assessment programmes have recently been introduced for refugees and provisionally admitted persons. For migrants arriving for reasons of family reunification, options can sometimes be found in associations, but remain difficult to access. Furthermore, accessing vocational training is another good enabler for sustainable integration. Facilitating access to training during work or reorientation programmes after entering the labour market would be another set of positive factors for sustainable integration and would prevent situations of de-skilling (as the case of Lucia shows). Another insight provided by the biographical accounts about the proper types of services to support professional integration concerns the provider of the services. The fact that the support comes from an association is found by the migrants just as important as the support provided by public authorities.

Finally, beyond the willingness and implementation of support programmes for migrants, efforts still need to be made to change the mentalities and beliefs that exist around different groups of migrants and their skills. If we think back to the words of the official active in integration cited in the first part of this report, we see that in the light of the narrative

biographies, these words take on their full meaning. As a reminder, according to the latter, one of the most important problems to the integration of migrants arriving in the framework of asylum is the vicious circle in which the prejudices of one actor, influence the prejudices of other actors and so on. The effects of these different prejudices on the self-confidence of migrants in turn impact the image they project to employers and continue to feed the prejudices of other actors. While the official cited refers to migrants who arrived in the context of asylum, the analysis in this report allows us to apply the arguments also to other migrants from third countries.

A change of mentality is therefore one of the most important factors stressed. This must take place in all areas of society and to involve information and awareness-raising efforts. In particular, as stated again by the official cited above, a good way to break down prejudices is to show examples of successful professional integration. Both to demonstrate to employers and the various stakeholders that integration is possible, but also to demonstrate this possibility to migrants themselves. Moreover, the biographical stories show that an effort to raise the awareness of public officials even within the various offices also remains to be made, as is the case of the offices in charge of unemployment in some cantons, for example. Though information and anti-discrimination activities are part of the cantonal integration programmes, and efforts have been made by the offices responsible for integration in this regard, there is still a long way to go.

7.7 References

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7.8 Annex I, Demographic information on MRAs

Pseudonym of Interviewee *	Date of interview	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of origin	Migration year	Education (primary, secondary, tertiary)	Current occupation in host country	Occupation in country of origin	Languages spoken
Interview 1, Alicia	February 2020	55 years	Female	Married to Swiss citizen, three adult sons	Brazil	2014 (residence permit end of 2016)	University Degree in Criminology and Law	Project Coordinator in a Social Association	Police Officer and Project Coordinator in the Department of the Defence of Minors	Portuguese, French, Spanish
Interview 2, Maud	February 2020	58 years	Female	Married to a French citizen, a daughter	Peru	1995 / 2016	Secondary Education	Secretary and employee in the Administration Department (bank and hotel)	Informal Job as a Housekeeper	Spanish, French
Interview 3, Omar	February 2020	36 years	Male	Married, his wife is from Turkey, one little child	Turkey	2014	University Degree in Engineering	Intern as Coder in a Data Processing Enterprise	Mechanical Engineer	Kurdish, Turkish, French, English
Interview 4, Nathan	February 2020	30 years	Male	Single	Nigeria	2015	Primary Education	Street Artist	Artist	English, French, Italian
										Kurdish,

Interview 5, Daner	March 2020	34 year s	Male	Single	Syria	2014	Primary Education	Intern as Gardener	Plumber Electrician and	Arabic, Italian, French
Interview 6, Mohamed	March 2020	48 year s	Male	Married, to Syrian wife, one son	Syria	2014	Primary Education	Hairdresser	Hairdresser	Arabic, Italian
Interview 7, Subi	March 2020	18 year s	Male	Single	Syria	2014	Professional Diploma	Intern Electrician as	Student	Arabic, Italian
Interview 8, Lucia	February 2020	33 year s	Female	Married to Swiss citizen	Colombi a	2018	PhD in Human Rights area (UK PhD)	Unemployed and Baby-sitter	Project manager	Spanish, English
Interview 9, Diana	February 2020	40 year s	Female	Married to Swiss citizen	Costa Rica	2014	University Degree	Unemployed	Project manager in International Organisations	Spanish, English, French
Interview 10, Elias	March 2020		Male	Married to Eritrean refugee	African country	2014	PhD	Consultant	Researcher in other countries	Tigrinya, English

Interview 11, Eddie	February 2019	44 year s	Female	Married to French husband, two children	USA	2011	Degree in Communication and Degree in Interior Design	She has her own business in interior design	Fabric director in Design Studios	English, French
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7.9 Annex II, Summaries of conducted interviews

Interview 1 - Alicia

Woman, 55 years old, from Brazil

Alicia (Interview 1) is a 55-years-old woman from Brazil. She is the oldest of five children (three sisters and one brother). Her family was quite poor. Her father, who has always been little educated, was a police officer, her mother was a stay-at-home mum, she launched a private hairdressers' salon in their house. Even if she grew up in an extremely humble household, where even having a meal was challenging, her sisters and her didn't grow up with any particular traumas. She received a quite strict education; her father was an honest but also a strict and exigent man. They all grew up with the main idea that to live you have to work:

"We have always been conscious that we had to study and work in order to survive. This is one of the main values that our father transmitted to us. Nothing was given and to get something we had to work hard for it. I am really grateful for that, it is still the most important value in my life and in the life of my children" (Interview 1).

After finishing the public school, at the age of 15, she started to work in small jobs as for example graphic designer (at the time there wasn't the law that protected young people from work before turning 16). She worked during the day and studied in the evening; in fact, she attended the teachers' training school which she finished at 18 years. Her plan at the time was to become a teacher. Nevertheless, as she turned 18 and she had to choose between attending the university of letter or enter in the police school, she decided to follow the professional path of her father. Being a police officer granted her a good salary, a steady contract and good life conditions. In order to have more chances to upgrade in her career, she attended the university of law where she specialized in criminology. Meanwhile she got married to another police officer, at the age of 28 she was already mother of three children and had behind her more than ten years of professional experience in the police: "Raising three children, studying at the university and working for the police all in the same time represented the hardest and more challenging period of my life, and maybe one of the most significant" (Interview 1).

After having worked for years in the judiciary sector she was assigned to the Department of the Protection of Minors. For eight years she worked with young people, especially with children victims of sexual abuse. During the same period her ex-husband moved to Switzerland in order to start a 'better' life. Their children decided to move with him to Geneva. When Alicia could finally benefit from her retirement at the age of 46 she decided to join her children in Switzerland. At the beginning she didn't plan to remain in Geneva; she wanted to continue to work as a lawyer in Brazil and benefit from the good salary to visit her sons in Switzerland. However, as she noticed that she was losing intimacy with her children, she understood that she had to move to Switzerland. For the first three years, since she didn't have a permanent residence permit, she has been going there and back, working in Geneva occasionally as part-time cleaning lady and as a care assistant:

"When you accept working as a house-cleaner, there is something that moves in your head. Your values, your emotions, your dignity are touched and questioned. In my country I am someone. I had a job, a higher education. I belonged to my society. Here I was no one, I didn't know anyone and I didn't know anyone. I didn't speak the language. I started to feel depressed and lost. I also had to adapt to my children, who meanwhile became young free men used to live in Switzerland". (Interview 1).

In Geneva she started a relationship with a Swiss citizen who she married after three years; the marriage allowed her to get the permit to move definitively to Switzerland (2017). With a

residence permit she could look for a more adequate job and pursue a possible career. She felt ready and legitimated to start to really think about what to do and what she wanted to do with her professional competences and past experiences. willing to pursue a new professional path in Switzerland, was also related to her then emotional and psychological vulnerability. She started to have panic attacks and to feel afraid and oppressed to go out of the house. She decided to react and to take French courses and eventually to look for a professional activity. In 2018 she participated in a coaching program where every single participant was followed by a personal coach. Thanks to the association and her coach she decided to apply for criminology at the university, which would allow her to integrate her previous experience. At the same time, she started to work as a volunteer in a new social project that supported the legalisation of the sans-papiers. Thanks to her volunteer work she got to know an association active in the support of the integration of migrants, which invited her for an interview for a vacant position and thereafter offered her a job as project coordinator. For the last few years, she has been working for the association that supports the orientation of migrants and sans-papier; she works on several projects and she is responsible for the beneficiaries from the Brazilian community.

Considering her background and her qualifications she was expecting to be able to find an occupation more quickly. On the other hand, finding a job that she loves, especially at her age, is a privilege. She identified herself more now in her work; helping people because it is the best way to be fulfilled. Thinking about the first period of her staying in Switzerland, she considers one of the main challenges being confronted with people (employers as well as random people) ready to take advantage and abuse from their vulnerability: "As a migrant you arrive in Switzerland with the desire to work, to have a better life. But you will always find someone who will profit from this naivety. It is frustrating and puts you in a state of mistrust" (Interview 1). Another important difficulty was related not only to the lack of knowledge of the language, but even more to the attitude of the people who are not tolerant to different ways of speaking. Reflecting about the meaning of "work" and working and how this changes over the years and after the migration, she stated:

"If you don't work in Switzerland you can't live. But it is not only a matter of money and gaining your life. We are talking about dignity and belonging. When you work where you belong, you have a role and a function, you are important. When you stop working you are disconnected, you start to feel useless. That's the reason why I always needed and wanted to work, even as a housecleaner. It was a way to belong in some way to the Swiss society".

Thinking about her future, Alicia plans to work a few years and after the retreat to move with her husband to Spain.

Interview 2 - Maud

Female, 58 years old, from Peru

Maud (Interview 2) was born in 1962 in a little town in the periphery of Peru. Her mother was 14-years-old as she married her father, who was at the time 14 years older. The father was an abusive husband which brought her mother to leave him when Maud was only a few months old. The two of them moved to Lima where she will grow up. Her mother started to work as a nanny for a wealthy family, where Maud has always been welcomed. She described her childhood as humble but also happy. During the following years her mother married another man and had two other sons. In order to support her mother who had to work straight after the birth of her brothers, Maud had to take care of them and of the household during the morning and go to school in the afternoon:

"I loved to go to school. I was a quick learner. It was a moment of light-heartedness where I could focus on myself and on the apprenticeship. I loved my brothers and taking care of my family, but considering that I was a child of 10-11-12 years I had too many responsibilities. It was really demanding" (Interview 2).

Because of the high cost of the university and the desire to support her mother economically, Maud decided to attend a professional school that allowed her to become secretary and to start work immediately at the age of 18. She became general secretary in a bank in Lima where worked for over seven years:

“Being a young and single working woman in a milieu dominated by men wasn’t easy. I felt the pressure of their stares. Many colleagues and superiors often told me, if you want to work here and progress you have to have sex with someone. Sexual favours would allow me to upgrade. But I refused all over again. I worked during the day and went to extra training in the evening in order to be able to learn alone and progress without having the need to go under their requests” (Interview 2).

Beginning in the nineties after having interrupted her engagement to her fiancé she decided to take a break and leave Lima. She got to do a temporary Visa to visit for two weeks her uncle who has been working, without a permit, in Geneva. Unexpectedly, she met a French man who was working with the uncle in the restoration sector; they fell in love. They got married and after the marriage she got the French residency, which allowed her to stay legally in Switzerland. She worked as a nanny and randomly she accepted other small jobs as house cleaner, caretaker of elderly people. At the end of the nineties she discovered that her mother was suffering and decided with her husband and her newborn daughter to move back to Peru. She took back her job as secretary and administrator, this time in a hotel. Even if she felt happy to be in Peru she found some difficulties to reintegrate socially and to adapt herself after having been in Switzerland; she was often considered as a profiteer and opportunist who gained money in Switzerland in order to be wealthy in Peru. In 2016 she decided to go back to Switzerland. Her daughter who meanwhile was 17 years old was undisciplined, was drinking a lot and started to go out in a dangerous and promiscuous neighbourhood. She forced her daughter to move with her to Geneva and to attend the university in a nearby city in French, while her husband stayed in Peru. Since her arrival Maud has been struggling to find a stable economical and professional situation. Considering her first period in Switzerland in the nineties she claimed:

“Today it is much harder to find work at once. During my first stay I found a job straight away. I felt safer as well. But now the demographic reality has changed. There are too many people, too many requests. My age represents as well an obstacle. I am forced to work informally and not declare because any employer is ready to offer a contract” (Interview 2).

She encountered important difficulties even to find jobs in the informal market, because of the high concurrence. Swiss employers in the restoration, cleaning and service sector can take advantage of extremely low-cost labour forces; according to Maud there are at the moment Bolivian women who are ready to work for extremely low remunerations and indirectly causing a general lowering of the salary conditions of the informal labour market. Maud would never accept such conditions where the remuneration wouldn’t allow her to survive.

Nevertheless, thanks to her previous volunteering jobs in a gathering centre for elderly people, she became close to their guests; elderly people have been offering her jobs as caregiver and domestic helper. She loves her job and the contact with them. However, working for the elderly implies an emotional and economical precarity as well, since the work depends on their fragile physical state.

Reflecting on the working conditions of women in Switzerland, she considers that women have more advantages than men: they are able to find more easy jobs in the informal labour market respectively in the sectors of service, cleaning and restoration. Moreover, women are more resilient and able to cope with situations of insecurity. In general, if you are a migrant you have to be able to cope with strong emotions such as nostalgia, uncertainty about your own present and future. Friends and their own partner as well as some social associations can be central in this coping process.

Interview 3 - Omar

Male, 36 years old (not certain), Kurd from Turkey

Omar (Interview 3) is a 36-year-old man from Turkey, he is Kurd and found political asylum in Switzerland in 2014. He grew up in a little rural Kurdish village in the south of Turkey. He was one of three children; his father and her mother are farmers. In his village there wasn't any primary school, and as the other children, he has been home-schooled. As he turned 18 he started the university in mechanical engineering in the neighbouring city. Since he was a child he has been passionate in design and mathematics, a passion that pushed him to choose this professional path. Only as he was at the university he started to reflect about what it means to be Kurd:

"In my family, being Kurds wasn't a big matter, we weren't religious and we didn't have existential discussions about the Kurdish identity. It was at the university that it changed: everyone starts to ask you "who are you?", and you have to decide which ethnical or religious group you want to belong to. I began to reflect on my identity, to do some research on politics and history. I opened their eyes on what was happening around me, to the Kurdish people in Turkey" (Interview 3).

During his first years of university he launched with some university colleagues a leftist democratic association that supported the Kurdish people and was politically engaged against the government's oppression. As a member of the association he supported the spreading of information, he organised and attended manifestations, gatherings, etc. During a manifestation for the rights of Kurdish people, he was arrested alongside one hundred other students and imprisoned for three months. He was released provisory: he had to wait for the final decision of the criminal court, which had first to go through the other cases. Meanwhile, he could pursue his professional career. He graduated, he moved to Istanbul and started to work as a mechanical engineer in the sector of construction and energy, for an important enterprise of luxurious real estates. He quickly became one of the project leaders and a well-respected engineer. After one year of working and waiting he discovered that the court condemned his best friend, a journalist, and him for five years of prison: "I've never done anything illegal. But then at this point I realised that the government was the one who was illegal" (Interview 3). A few days after they quickly left the country, going first to Greece, where they spent three months in a refugee camp. Because of the economic crisis in Greece, they decided to continue their path and ask for political asylum in Switzerland, where his sister and his aunt were living. In Switzerland he moved to a small village after having been assigned to a canton in the French part.

It was difficult to adapt to the new 'rural' and isolated reality, so different from the dynamic life of Istanbul. It felt difficult to be a migrant, considering it as a decline. My own feeling of self-confidence is challenged because of the difficulties to communicate. According to Omar the language represented indeed an important obstacle and cause of frustration. He had to wait one year to get the asylum, a year in which he could neither work nor attend advanced French courses; the language courses were full and he had to learn it on his own. He tried to attend an official French school in the city in the neighbourhood; he asked for economic support to the social fund. They considered however his level of language sufficient to start to work and refused to support him economically. He decided to use all his spare money to attend the school, even it meant not to have money to eat:

"In order to survive you need a certain level of the language. Everything starts with the language. I know that I won't ever have again the position that I had in Turkey; however, if I want to find work in a related sector I need a higher level of French, which I could achieve only through a school" (Interview 3).

Beside the difficulties related to the language, he had to struggle to find a job position in his specific sector of specialisation - renewable energy and construction - which in Switzerland is

rather narrow. Even if its degree and qualification have been fully recognised, he couldn't find any jobs as a mechanical engineer. There is a great concurrence already among swiss people and as a migrant you are the last on the line, considering that the employers will always privilege a swiss scholarship:

"In Turkey we have great schools, good working conditions. It is a modern state, even more modern than Switzerland (..) But here migrants are represented as little qualified, with a primary or secondary degree. Only because of little knowledge of the local language, a racist preconception, there is the misconception that foreigners are not skilled enough" (Interview 3).

To find a solution to this obstacle, he started a master study in engineering, which unfortunately he wasn't able to completely finish because of its difficulty - the language represented again one of the causes of this failure.

Through a friend he goes to know a no-profit association that addresses the shortage of talent in the IT-industry by offering training programs to refugees and migrants with related skills and could become coders. Al. decided to attend the training. Even if the work of the coder is really different to what he learnt., it could give him at least the opportunity to use some of his skills. Thanks to the training he could have access to the mentioned network and get an internship position as a coder, a position that he is still covering.

During these last years he had to find a balance between his "roles' ", as migrant struggling for a new professional way, as a husband and a father - his fiancée joined him from Turkey, they married and had a child- and as a Kurdish political activist. As he arrived in Switzerland, during the first year he joined a Kurdish association, not looking for help but to work as a volunteer. He started to support them in their actions but since the association was located quite far away from his village, his volunteer activities were limited by geographical constraints. By becoming a migrant in a foreign country, he had to put beside his political engagement, and focus on himself:

"Capitalism is not something easy to solve. We live in an individualistic world where everyone thinks to themselves. Which is sad but true. I come from a rich culture, where relations among people are strong. Thanks to this relation we could fight against the power and the oppression, but here I had to adapt to this system in order to survive, I become in some moments an individualist person as well. On the other hand, I still think that everyone has a social responsibility and has to dedicate some of their own time to a social cause" (Interview 3).

He plans to intensify his political activism. He hopes that he will soon be able to contribute to the cause by using his new acquired knowledge and IT skills, by creating for instance new electronic information platforms. It was challenging to accept to give up his career and his position but he learnt to accept because he knows that giving up this life for a political cause is much more important than money and social status.

Interview 4 - Nathan

Male, 30 years old, from Nigeria

Nathan, 30-years-old, grew up in a poor neighbourhood in a big city in Nigeria. He is the youngest of five children. He has always had different random jobs as a cook and as school keeper. He has often lost his job which brought the family to live on the street for longer periods. Her mother started to sell items and run a take away stand on the street to economically support the family. Nathan has never been passionate about school; he preferred spending his time on the street singing and dancing, his dream was to become an artist. His parents often had to be hard and sometimes used harsh manners to keep him out of trouble. The street was a dangerous place and attending school and education could be the only way to avoid it. As he was a teenager, his older brother decided under the insistence of

the family to go to Italy. With its departure their conditions started to get a little better; his brother was able to send enough money to allow them to have a little house to live in. In order to support his family as well, as Nathan turned 18, he decided to join his brother with a fake passport. In Italy, where he was living with his brother's new family, he became a street seller. At first, he decided to sell items and clothing going door-to-door. He could experience racism for the first-time racism; he felt as black slave for white people. To avoid this relation of submission, that furthermore didn't bring any money, he started to sell drugs. After one year of working on the street, he was arrested and condemned to one and half year of prison and "everything changed":

"Prison depends on you. It's like life but in a smaller place. You have to choose who you want to be: a fighter, a slaver, anonymous, diplomatic... It depends on you. I chose not to be a victim and I fought hard to find my position. I don't want to go back but I miss the prison, the people who I met, the situation in which I decided who I wanted to be. I started to meet people and discover their stories. In prison I started thinking. I asked myself what brought me here? I looked around me and I saw black people, Arabic people, a few Italian from the margins. And I saw a pattern. I started to see races. I started to see myself. I understood what kind of artist I wanted to be. I started to change my way of writing and my plans. At first my choices and my purpose were always related to money. But there my work and my thoughts became political" (Interview 4).

Reflecting on the story of colonialism, on the power relations among white and black people, he understands the meaning of structural violence and racism. He also realised that he had and has the right to look for a better life in Europe after all what Europe has done to African countries. When he came out of prison he continued to deal drugs but he didn't feel right anymore; it was considered a sign of submission as well. He also started to feel uncomfortable in a country where he only could see discrimination and marginalisation. Parallely, he refused to go back to Nigeria, because even the worst life conditions in Europe will always be better than life conditions in Nigeria. He decided to leave Italy and go to Denmark where many migrants often went to find better conditions. As he asked for asylum, the Danish government sent him back to Italy because of the Dublin convention. He was however certain that he didn't want to stay in Italy anymore and decided to leave to the nearest country: Switzerland. At the Swiss Italian borders, he asked for political asylum, even if he was conscious that he didn't have any rights. He was sent to the French part of Switzerland. He refused to stay in the accommodation centre offered by the canton; he preferred to appropriate himself of the new space on his own. He became homeless, by living for almost one year in a toilet near to the asylum shelter and in a forest near to the city. To survive, he started to accept little jobs in the supermarket, as well as street vendors in the informal market. Parallely, he started to volunteer in a community centre with children and young adults. The language represented a difficulty that he quickly overcame thanks to his open personality and his capacity to communicate easily with everyone. He started going out in cultural and artistic gathering centres, in bars and quickly became accustomed to the alternative scene of the city. He joined an alternative collective who was well known for squatting houses and abandoned centres. He got involved in political leftist movements and became active as a politically engaged artist in the different underground milieus, respectively in the musical, cinematic, literary and artistic milieu. Thanks to his activity as an artist he was able to become well known and he got an internship proposal by several cultural institutes. Thanks to the internship and the possibility of formation he was able to get a temporary residence permit. His purpose is to continue to be an artist and a political activist; his work, even if is not recognised as such, have to be an action of protest against the discrimination of black people. The consciousness that he gathered since his time in the prison allowed him to be patient and to accept that to follow his projects and ambitions takes time. Having small part-time jobs allows him to have money for everyday life, but not a work in the typical labour market will allow him to feel at home or feel "integrated" (a concept that he despises). The social network that he created supported instead his feeling of belonging to the new reality.

Interview 5 - Daner

Male, 33 years old, Kurd from Syria

Daner is 33-years-old and he is Kurdish. Since his family lived in a not recognised region in Syria, he is officially stateless. He has ten sisters and brothers. He grew up in a family with a strong political consciousness: questions relative to the Kurdish identity, discrimination and power abuse of the government have been extremely present in his childhood and education. He attended the local primary and secondary schools. Education for his family was important, they always dreamt that he would have a brighter future. However, since Daner and his family were stateless, he knew that he couldn't attend any university in Syria. For this reason, he decided to interrupt the school as he was 13 years old and began to help his father who was running a cotton plantation in the region. After several years, as the enterprises started to lose too much money, he decided to leave and go to Damascus where he started to work as a plumber and a builder for a big private enterprise that renovates hotels in different countries as Lebanon and Turkey. Parallely to his work life, he participated to secret's meetings of a Kurdish militant group. As a spy denounced his activism to the government, he became a wanted man and afterwards a fugitive. He knew that if he was caught by the government he would have been killed or imprisoned forever. He was able to be hidden by a previous client who started to exploit it. He had to do the same work as before, a plumber and a builder, for free, in exchange for a place where to live, hidden by the government. After a few years, he decided to escape illegally, he went first to Lebanon then to Turkey where he spent all the money to pay a people smuggler. He took a boat to Italy, where he was able to take a train to Switzerland. He knew from the very departure that he wanted to ask for asylum in Switzerland because of its democratic policy. He arrived in the Italian part of Switzerland in 2014 as he was 24 years old.

In Switzerland he started a long and complicated "integration process". For almost one year he had a permit of not recognised asylum seeker. He lived for six months in a pension with other asylum seekers, afterwards he moved to a private accommodation. During this period, he didn't have the right to attend any language courses, that are offered only to admitted asylum seekers and refugees. He started to learn on his own in order to learn the basic knowledge of the Italian language. From the very beginning the priority was to learn the language, he considered it as the first step of an integration in the new country - without the language you can't communicate, you can't understand, you don't have any control on what is going on around you. The first obstacle that he encountered was, however, not the apprenticeship of the language per se, but the administrative system. The language was a challenge that he could master with the study and potentially with the external support of a teacher. The real problem lies in the barriers imposed by the integration office. Daner identified two turning points with opposite values, a positive and a negative one: "I met two people in the very beginning that somehow had a strong impact on me. One was positive, the other was negative, I would say that the negative one ruined my life..." (Interview 5). During his first year in Switzerland, he didn't have any documents and the office was convinced that he was a minor and consequently he didn't have the right to work. On the other hand he couldn't attend any language courses because he didn't have any recognised permit. As he finally had the document that proves that he was almost 25 years old, he was defined as too old to attend any formations or training. He had to find work on his own. He describes their unwillingness to help and believe him in this first phase of the asylum process as the principal cause of all problems that he encountered in the following years. On the other hand, as he randomly got to know about the occupational programs for not recognised asylum seekers, he was able to start to work as a gardener assistant for 6 months. The meeting with his team leader on this project represented the positive turning point:

“Since my arrival in Switzerland I was afraid to speak Italian. To push me to talk the team leader started to call me on the phone, he noticed that I was more confident to talk without having a person in front of me. We started to have long phone chats, which brought me finally to start to talk with him and the co-workers [...] I gained confidence and I got to learn the language by practising it” (Interview 5).

As he got the F permit he had to interrupt the occupation program that was designed only for the ones with a N permit. In this second phase of ‘integration’, the language became an obstacle that he wasn’t able to master anymore. Employers didn’t want to hire him because his language level was too low. Parallely, the language courses that he could attend were too basic. Moreover, he couldn’t find a job as a plumber or a gardener since he hadn’t a Swiss diploma. His social assistant and the employees of the professional orientation office expressed racist preconceptions as well. They stated that the level in Switzerland was too high for someone who learnt the profession in Syria, a less developed country. He finally became an intern and afterwards an employee in a Kebab restaurant. Unfortunately, his employers decided to resign his contract before the conclusion of one year since he wanted to hire him informally in order to spend less social contributions, an offer that Daner refused. This case of abuse and lack of power made him realise that he would never have the support needed. He eventually met a member of an association who decided to help him to overcome at least partly the difficult situation. The association decided to help him first financially and secondly by finding him an internship position. He became close to some members of the association who provided him with personal and continuous support. Reflecting about obstacles and the support that he started to get by the association, he claims that he noticed only now what he missed the most at the beginning, beside the language courses and an administrative support from the side of the integration office, was an introduction to the local culture: “Without an inside look on the culture, it is not possible to relate to the new host country, to make friends and eventually to find a job. Learning how to behave in the workplace, how to work, how to relate to the other colleagues and their own superior are essential to feel confident and to pursue a professional path” (Interview 5). He is currently in his first year of training to become a horticulturist. He is conscious that his F permit and the concurrence with Italian labour forces, who are extremely cheaper for the employers, will always represent important obstacles. He is not really hopeful about his future: “I don’t know if I will ever find the work of my dreams. If I saw the end of my road, I would never want to come to its end... But at the same time I have to be persevering, it is the only thing that's left” (Interview 5).

Interview 6 – Mohamed

Male, 48 years old, from Syria

Mohamed is a 48-year-old man from Syria, who escaped from her origin country in 2013. He grew up in a humble household in Homs in a Muslim Sunni family. He attended the primary school before starting to work at a very young age. For almost twenty years he worked as a hairdresser. He married his cousin with whom he had a child, who is now 18-years-old. His life completely changed as the Syrian conflict escalated in 2012. The daily life conditions became quickly unbearable, the neighbourhood in which they lived was constantly bombarded as well as the saloon where he was working. The family of Mohamed has always been against the Assad government, some brothers and cousins were active members of some extremist rebellion’s group. As some of the family’s members started to disappear and after Mohamed has been threatened with death several times, he decided to leave the country with his family and the family of one of his brothers. They were able to escape to Libya, where they stayed for one year. During this period many Syrian migrants opened food stands and shops where Mohamed was able to find some random work. However, the situation was insecure and unstable, the tension of the conflict in Syria was reaching the neighbours countries and hatred towards Sunni Syrian was increasing. They decided to spend all their remaining spare money to pay a people smuggler in order to leave Libya at the end of 2013. Since it was winter, they

had to wait in a cabin in the desert for three months, until the sea was again navigable. Finally, at the beginning of 2014 they were able to take a boat that transported illegally Syrian migrants to Italy. At the beginning, their plan was to reach northern countries such as Germany and Sweden, two countries that were well known to have a more accessible asylum law. Nevertheless, the family of Mohamed's brother didn't have any money left to undertake another journey, and they decided to stay together and travel to Switzerland, the nearest country reachable with the train. In Switzerland they got a provisory permit as asylum seekers and were brought to a pension where they lived for some months. Later this year, they got the support of a new no-profit association that was created the same year to support Syrian refugees. The association helped them to find an accommodation in a private apartment, first in a small village in the countryside and afterwards in a village near to the city. Living in the countryside was described as a second prison, since they didn't have the means to meet people, to get to the shops or to look for some occupation. Moving near to the city and to a village accessible with public transport has been an important improvement in their life. Six months later Mohamed was able to find a job as a hairdresser in the same village, where he has worked for four years, until the moment in which the owner, his employer, had to close the saloon. He is currently unemployed and looking for a job.

The association played a central role in the first period of their arrival in the swiss italian village. They supported the family in administrative tasks, offered interactive language courses, which at the beginning weren't offered by the state because they were asylum seekers with an N permit. They helped them in administrative matters as well as to find for him a place where he could work. Considering that he didn't know the new surroundings, he had little knowledge of the language and considering that he has an Arabic name – he would never have found so quickly a job without the support and the network of some members of the association. The open attitude of the new employer, who became friend with him, was a precious help as well, since it allowed him to get to know the new milieu in a positive and encouraging environment:

“Working in a saloon in the same village where I was living and meeting people every day helped me greatly. I could learn the language by practicing it, getting to know the people, and making myself known overcoming the first cultural barrier. I am a Muslim man after all, in a village that, especially a few years ago, didn't have almost any people from other countries (...) The work didn't allow me to become economically independent. But still, by working, I could keep myself occupied. Staying at home, watching all day on television what was happening in Syria, made me feel useless. I would become crazy” (Interview 5).

The nostalgia for home, the distance to friends and relatives who stayed in Syria or Libya, the deep anger against the government of Assad were and still are very present in everyday life; work was the only way to escape or at least to cope with this suffering. Beside the suffering related to the conflict, that represented a challenge in everyday life, he underlines that the system – the asylum law – and the government represent the biggest obstacles that he had to cope with. Still now, after five years of their arrival, they have been classified as only provisory accepted asylum seekers. The permit F is the biggest barrier for a professional integration:

“After the closure of the saloon I had to start to look for new jobs. But with a F permit it is impossible. There is no employer who wants to hire me. Some don't know if they can hire someone who is only provisory admitted, some think that you won't stay, for others it is enough to read on the CV an Arabic name to find a reason not to hire you. Being Muslim and being a man from Syria doesn't help to find a job. And the cantonal office that should be there to help you is the worst”.

Alongside the unwillingness of the office to help him, another obstacle is represented by the political reality of the labour market in the Italian part of Switzerland. Contrary to others cantons in Switzerland, Ticino (the canton at the border with Italy) didn't accept the renovation of the law that stipulates that the employers have to prioritize swiss people as well as refugees and

recognised asylum seekers present on the territory; neither the population accepted a new law that imposes a minimum salary, which would have stopped the employers to hire cheaper labour forces represented by Italian employees. Consequently, all low qualified jobs, as hairdressers, are occupied by a majority of underpaid Italian employees who work in Switzerland but still live in Italy. This concurrence will never allow a person like Mohamed to find a job, he is not attractive enough. His age doesn't help either; with 48 years and with some physical issues he won't be able to find a job in another sector nor to start a new formation. The missing recognition as a political refugee as well as the realisation that employers will always prioritize low cost labour forces, put him in a state of hopelessness:

"The decision was taken randomly, since Mohamed's brother who had the exact same background and story, got the permanent residence permit as a political refugee. The permit is "a new prison", representing an obstacle in many different ways. It underlines that even if you are culturally or socially integrated, you don't really belong to the new country" (Interview 6)

Interview 7 - Subi

Male, 18 years old, male, son of Mohamed (Interview 6), from Syria

Subi is the son of Mohamed (Interview 6), he is 18-years-old and originally from Syria, he arrived in Switzerland in 2014 as he was 12-years-old. He grew up in Homs in a Sunni Muslim family, his mother was a stay-at-home mother, while his father was a hairdresser. He describes his childhood as happy and peaceful, before the Syrian conflict started to escalate at the end of 2011. The neighbourhood was constantly bombarded and it wasn't safe anymore to go to school nor to go out on the street. His family was an opposer of the government and quickly a target of the army. As some family's members started to disappear and his father was threatened with death, the family decided to leave Syria and go to Libya where some cousins of the father were living. They stayed in Derna for almost one year, even if the situation, after the death of Gheddafi, was unstable and anarchic as well. Subi, who was eleven years old, started to work in a cafeteria at the university of the city. The hatred against Syrians was increasing among Libyan people and Subi was often a target of racist behaviours and comments. As it became clear that the situation was becoming too unstable to stay, the family of Subi decided to leave again and go to Tripoli where they could pay a people smuggler to go to Europe. Because of the difficulty to navigate the sea in winter, the people smugglers took all their money and forced them to stay for three months in a cabin in the desert. Finally, they were able to take a little boat along with 70 other people; after a sea journey that took 24 hours, they arrived alive in Italy. It was 2014 as they reached the Italian part of Switzerland, where they asked for political asylum. For more than one year they were not recognised asylum seekers with an N permit; since 2016 they are provisory accepted asylum seekers with a F permit (provisory admitted refugees). He describes his first period in Switzerland as traumatic; in fact, they were placed by authority in a private pension in the mountains, where they were forced by the owner, who was clearly racist, to stay locked in their own room for the majority of the time. A non-profit association who supported Syrian refugees, helped them finally to find an own apartment. A member of the association who never stopped to support the family on a daily basis, has always been a central support. As he moved to his new house, he was immediately sent to the local school with his cousin. He describes the first time in the school as bizarre because he couldn't understand the language and the culture of the other students, and even less the contents of the lectures. Little by little he was however able to find his way. Thanks to a strong support system assured by an external pedagogical guide and the members of the association, and thanks to some leisure activities outside the school (sports etc.), he overcame the barriers represented by the language and the different culture and he felt quickly socially included. After the school, under the encouragement of his teacher and parents, he attended the professional school of commerce. He was able to finish with success the two years of training, even though he had to struggle with the technical language.

The continuous challenges encountered in writing letters etc as well the unwillingness to pass his time in front of a desk, pushed him to change path. He decided to become an electrician, a manual job he loved. In the research of an internship, the association was a key actor, since they found him thanks to their network an intern position:

"I sent plenty of applications to find an employer who was ready to take me as an intern. For months I looked without success. There is for sure a great concurrence among young people, but I think, as many said, that an Arabic name on the applications and my provisory permit will always represent an obstacle. On this matter, the problem is related to how you look for a job and how the employers consider the applications; employers in general get the cv and a motivation letter, they don't meet you. In this case it is normal that on paper I won't ever be prioritized. There is a lot of passive racism in the labour market, especially towards Muslim men" (Interview 7).

Regarding racism, he claims that he learnt naturally to cope and handle with discrimination and racist attitudes by helping their parents. Because he had learnt the language quickly, he naturally took the function of translator among his parents and the others, for example with the members of the associations, social assistants, teachers and doctors. He could gain consciousness and knowledge about plenty of different domains. He learnt not only the language but also the administrative system, the laws and legislatives procedures and he could get used to the different attitudes of the people. Even if being present for his parents implied a sense of responsibility, it enforced him and rendered him more resilient. He is conscious that he is more flexible and resourceful than his parents, because of his age. He attended the school in Switzerland and his young age rendered him a faster learner. Subi realised how essential and helpful it was attending schools in Switzerland, since he got a sense of legitimation that sometimes his parents don't feel. Reflecting nowadays on his own experience in Switzerland, he realised that what it helped him the most in these years was a "testimony project" launched by the already mentioned association:

"With the association we started to go to school in school to share with the other young people our testimonies. We told our stories, how we left our country, our journey with the boat... and how we experienced our arrival in Switzerland. I see now how it helped me. I could free my heart and head, that was full of anger. At the beginning it was hard but after I learnt how to talk about everything. By talking I learnt how to cope with my emotions. I don't know where I would be today if I couldn't express myself in this way. I was listened to by the people and I could feel their solidarity, this helped as well" (Interview 7).

According to Subi, the sense of liberation helped him to cope emotionally with the traumas, an essential step to be able to deal with all challenges and all dimensions of the new life in Switzerland.

Interview 8 - Lucia

Female, 33 year old, from Colombia

Lucia comes from a peasant family from a lower middle-class area around Bogota. Her childhood and youth were characterized by a close-knit family life, with her parents and brother, but also by experiences that led her to a path where independence was very important. From the beginning of her studies in Political Science, Lucia knew that if she wanted to have the opportunity to travel and know the world, her only option was to study hard to get good grades and learn English in order to get a scholarship. Before the end of her bachelor's degree, Lucia found a position in a Human Rights NGO, then, after overcoming several obstacles, managed to go to the UK to do a Master's degree. As soon as she arrived, she came into contact with the Latin American students' association, which enabled her to integrate into a network that helped her in many ways, both practical and emotional. During her stay in the UK, Lucia met the man who would later become her husband, of Swiss and

English origin. Lucia describes this first migration as a very important step in her life. Despite the fact that it was very short, she discovered many things and got to know her husband there.

At the end of her Master's degree, she reluctantly returned to Colombia. Her companion joined her very quickly. She quickly found a job in a public institution active in her field. Her companion, who could not find his place in Colombia and for whom the working conditions were better in Switzerland, offered her the opportunity to undertake the doctorate in Europe that she had often considered in the past. The decision was not an easy one for Lucia, who was happy with her professional situation, but she finally decided to apply for PhDs in Switzerland and England. It was in England that she was finally taken and travelled regularly to Switzerland to visit her companion. During her thesis, he proposed to her, knowing that this would mean living in Switzerland. "If I want to have a family with him, it would mean staying in Switzerland for at least a few years. But I have the impression that I only now realize the consequences of this decision" is the reflection she made at that time. The marriage took place shortly before the end of Lucia's thesis and she moved out shortly afterwards. "Marriage was also quite a challenge, we had to face such difficult bureaucratic processes that we wondered if we still wanted to get married." After her arrival, Lucia started looking for work in international organizations. Although at first she was not very worried, the lack of answers led her to growing frustration. Meetings with other people made her understand that it could be much more difficult than she thought in this field and implemented several strategies to achieve her goal, seeking to develop her network or to volunteer in her field of activity for example. One of the biggest difficulties of this migration to Switzerland according to Lucia, is the lack of network and emotional support she has. She would have particularly liked to be able to share the concerns related to her migration, but also as a foreign wife of a Swiss with people who would have experienced the same thing.

Not yet having had the opportunity to find a job in her field of activity after a year and a half, Lucia started working as a temporary babysitter to be able to make a contribution to the house even if it was symbolic and to have an occupation. Lucia also explains that she was beginning to re-evaluate working in the field she originally imagined, and may be willing to reorient herself. She also explains to us that, in addition to the need to have a professional activity and to feel useful and regain a form of independence, the social pressure of motherhood also played an important role in the desire to find a job. "Now I think about day to day, because having made so many plans for the future that didn't come true, filled me with frustration, so I say no, let's just go day to day and look. I have my resolutions for the year, at least improve my French, publish an article, if I find some work, that's good. Accelerate a bit, because if I keep going at this speed I'm going to end up going crazy. I've been rethinking the future and seeing more day by day. For now, to calm down, see if I can fit in more, make more friends, stop running so much, to say, I need to do this and that [...] My idea of work has changed. I don't think about having something high, my goal is not to be a millionaire anymore. But living normally, visiting my country every year. Etc, I'm negotiating the idea of doing something else that doesn't need to be at the PhD level."

Interview 9 - Diana

Female, 40 years old, female, from Costa Rica

Diana, a 40-year-old woman, arrived in Switzerland in 2014 to join her Swiss companion. Diana grew up in a large family with parents who worked hard to provide educational opportunities for their children. She studied international relations and then started at the bottom of the ladder at the professional level and progressed to various project management positions in the field of international cooperation. At work she met her current husband, a Swiss colleague with whom she started a relationship for a few years. After the end of her partner's contract and given his willingness to return to his home country, he proposes to Diana to go and live in Switzerland. The plan for Diana was initially to do a master's degree and experience living with her lover. Diana was accepted at a university but the authorities

refused her a permit because she was already overeducated. The couple decides to move faster than expected to the marriage stage in order to be able to live together. During her studies in Switzerland, Diana explains that she put a lot of pressure on herself. She says she spent most of her time working hard rather than socializing and getting to know her host country. Diana explains the pressure she put on herself by the fact that she always tended to be a bit workaholic, but also by the fact that her husband, who is very demanding, often mentioned the high demands in Switzerland to her, and the message was reinforced when he corrected her university works for her. Generally speaking, the view that women had to do more to prove their abilities, and migrant women even more so, was also very much on her mind and played a decisive role in the ardour with which she worked during her studies. At the same time, the biological clock was also an important factor. Diana, who was 37-years-old, became pregnant and had her first miscarriage. She explains that she drowned her grief in her work. A long journey of struggle for procreation ensued.

With anxieties, periods of depression and questioning related to possible infertility and at the same time, an ever-increasing pressure to succeed in her studies, Diana explains that she had reached a point where she had difficulty concentrating, and felt that she had to work even harder to make up for this handicap related to her psychological state. The first break in this cycle came when she started seeing a fertility therapist, who helped her identify her problem. The pressure Diana had put on herself at work had had a significant impact on her hormones and reproductive health. "She helped me to understand things, to give them a name and to regain my self-confidence. Because I had lost confidence, for a matter that seemed very personal to me, I was losing confidence at the professional level". Subsequently, other elements helped Diana to break this vicious circle. The first big change was the end and success of her master's work for which she received the award for best work: "I was closing a stage in my life that had been very difficult. With a sense of pride because I not only managed to get a good grade, but I also got the prize for the best dissertation in sociology. It was for me a certain validation to say, yes, I have the skills and professional qualities to work in the Swiss labour market. It was very important for me." Secondly, the fact that, following a selection process, she was hired as a volunteer in a Swiss development cooperation organisation, in which she did work similar to the work she was doing in Costa Rica, was also very important and motivating. Feeling comfortable in a field and receiving positive feedback for her work helped her regain some confidence.

An event organized by an association, which Diana attended, was also one of the factors that helped her regain her confidence. The testimonies of qualified migrant women who told about their experiences of positive outcomes made her feel less alone with her problems and the words of one of the speakers at the event had a great impact on her state of mind: "One of the people said, it wasn't our fault. And I think that just that sentence, it's not your fault, what you're going through, put the structures of the market a little more in perspective, how it works and that frees you a little bit of the pressure that you can put on yourself and realize that you're not the only person going through this. That's when I decided to talk to representatives of the association to seek help. They evaluated my situation and told me, you have the skills, the education, you know how to present yourself in the job market, in interviews etc. You have all that. What you lack is a network. We need to develop your network to get access to the hidden job market. A few days ago they arranged a first meeting with me to develop this network". In the meantime Diana also got pregnant. She is now on the verge of giving birth to her much-awaited child and intends to continue her research, develop her network and succeed in reconciling motherhood and work, which was the subject of her master's thesis.

Interview 10 - Elias

Male, 40 years old, male, from Eritrea

Elias was raised by his grandmother in a country in conflict. Having studied law, he worked in his home country in a senior position at a young age. He decided to go to South Africa to study

and in this period the situation in his country became more complicated. From South Africa, Elias, in parallel with his doctoral studies, is engaged in denouncing the democratic situation in his country. The prospect of a safe return then disappears. After obtaining his PhD, Elias obtains his first of several fellowships or positions in universities. He will follow up with other mandates or fellowships in 6 European countries for several years. In 2012, Elias meets the woman who will later become his wife. She is from the same country as Elias and was studying in Switzerland, where she had been admitted as a refugee. After living their relationship at a distance for 2 years, they decide to live together and get married. Elias then began to look for an opportunity at a Swiss university and began what would be, a long administrative battle to get married and to obtain a residence permit, to which he was entitled under Swiss law. For 3 years, he had to overcome several administrative obstacles to obtain his permit. Elias feels that the doors are also closed to him at Swiss university institutions. In the meantime, he will have to travel back and forth between other European countries and Switzerland in order to carry out mandates for universities that are unable to find work in Switzerland. He will also obtain a fellowship in another city in Switzerland, which will give him the opportunity to have a source of income and a temporary permit. Administrative difficulties have had a great impact on Elias' integration process.

"You know, it even affected me to the extent of not committing myself for example to learn French. I am learning, but you know at some time, you just feel you are not welcome here. If you don't have that sense of belongingness, why should I learn the language. Off course at the end of the day it's me who are disadvantage, if you speak the language you are on a more competitive position. But if you are struggling with a deep sense of injustice that shakes your core, you know, it's very difficult, very tough." Today, Elias has decided to become self-employed, and to work as a consultant. He appreciates the autonomy this gives him and says that it gives him the freedom to continue his activism in the field of migration law. His journey has made him lose confidence in institutions and has led him towards this path of autonomy.

Interview 11 - Eddie

Female, 46 years old, from USA

Eddie is 42-years-old and comes from New York, USA. Eddie moved to Switzerland in 2011 to be with her husband who was working in Geneva (French citizen). Eddie completed a Degree in communication and worked for 12 years in the Fashion area as Fabric Director for international companies. She then decided to complete an interior design Degree, and worked for a few months in that domain before moving to Switzerland. She applied to many positions as soon as she arrived, without success. As she did not speak French, she went to a private French school and started classes. After a few months she decided to be a mother and had two kids (one in 2013 and the other in 2014) she continued looking for a job meanwhile. "After all that time, learning French was not really satisfying to me. I really wanted to work. ". Feeling un-useful, Eddie decided to start looking other kinds of positions, "just to do something, to improve my level of French and to integrate in society." She found a job as sales advisor in a shop in 2016, stayed there for almost one year, and quitted: "The challenge was not there for me and with the job and the kids; I did not have time to look for other jobs". On the support or services to labour market integration, Eddie tells that she subscribed once to unemployment services before having her first job in Switzerland without receiving indemnities. "I subscribed with the hope that I would receive advice or courses but it was not really useful". She subscribed to unemployment a second time, after her sales experience in Geneva. "I did not feel much support. My feeling is that maybe the system is overwhelmed. They have an amount of pressure but they don't have the tool to do it properly", "I have been told by my counsellor in the unemployment, that the only experience that counts is the experience in Switzerland. I have worked during 12 years with international companies in New-York, with international people and my experience didn't count". Unemployment services asked her to apply to jobs linked to her experience in sales and proposed her trainings to work as human resources assistant, what was for her far from her real experience and will. "I can do whatever you want,

but am I using my potential?" During this second unemployment period, Eddie found an internship with a woman that started her business in interior design. For the job she was doing and her experience, Eddie felt that she was working for free but she continued doing so during a few months as it has been the first opportunity she had had to approach her field of interior design and she was afraid of losing this opportunity. After almost one year, she started to be paid but with a very low salary, paid per hour and without real contract conditions. After having work for bad conditions, for an employer that from Eddie's view point was less qualified than her, she decided to start her own business. "I just felt that if I wanted to do what I wanted, the way was to become my own employer". On the support she received and what could be done, Eddie felt a lack of support from the municipality. "I feel I received more support from the guy from the Kebab round the corner than from the Ville de Genève. I think the municipality should be more open and embrace. I am not just here to take, I have many to give".

7.10 Annex III, Individual biographies

The Story of Nathan

Nathan is a 30 years old man from Nigeria, he is an artist and a political activist, who I had the chance to know during a human rights festival. Talking about art, political militancy and structural violence, he accepted to tell me the story of his life. In his narrative he placed some emphasis on the central epiphany of his path: how he gained political consciousness after his migration and how this allowed him to affirm himself as an individual. His new political identity and his understanding about structural racism had an impact on his personal life choices, on his 'integration process' and on his path as a political activist in Switzerland. The story of Nathan enlightens us how structural racism can affect the experience of migration and integration and how a political reading of the won experience can empower and give tools to cope with challenges as discrimination and inequality.

The story behind the narrative

Nathan grew up in a poor neighbourhood in a big city in South Nigeria. He is the youngest of five children. His father was the 'well-educated' of his family, he was the only one who attended the university. However, he has never had the chance to take advantage of his degree; he had different random jobs as a cook and as school keeper. He has often lost his job which brought the family to live on the street for longer periods. His mother started to sell items and run a takeaway stand on the street to economically support the family. Reflecting on his education, he noticed that his parents didn't really have time to teach him how to live, they put all their energy in finding a way to survive and provide for their children. Nathan would find how to live his life on his own. He has never been passionate about school; he preferred spending his time on the street singing and dancing; already as he was a child his dream was to become an artist. Because of his attitude and his stubborn personality, he grew up hearing his parents telling him that he wouldn't achieve anything in his life. His parents often had to be hard and sometimes used harsh manners to keep him out of trouble. The street was a dangerous place and attending school and education could be the only way to avoid it. Despite the poverty and the hard education, he describes the household filled with love. He has inherited the persevering and strong personality of his father as well as his love of life, even in the most difficult and hardest time.

First call and backsliding - attempts to change his life

As he was a teenager, his older brother decided under the insistence of the family to go to Italy, where their uncle was already living, in order to gain some money for the family. The migration of his brother represented a turning point for all his family and for him. Their

conditions started to get a little better; his brother was able to send enough money to allow them to have a little house to live in. Nevertheless, their illusion of Europe as an Eden was quickly broken by his stories; Nathan started to understand that being a Nigerian in Europe wasn't easy, he could also understand that his brother was working on the street dealing drugs to send money back home. Yet, in order to support his family, as he turned 18, Nathan left Nigeria with a fake passport provided by his brother, who meanwhile got married and had a child and was waiting for him in Italy. With the departure of his brother he could understand in fact that the best way to support his family was leaving and look for luck in Europe.

Second call and the ordeal – life change initiated

His arrival in Europe was a strange experience and strengthened the disillusion of Europe as an Eden; he started to realise that he had to learn the language to communicate with the people and that he had a completely different culture as the local population. Back in Nigeria he had the naïve thought that everyone could understand each other no matter how. The deception and the dissolution were even stronger than expected. As he left his home he was dreaming of becoming a street artist, which in Nigeria was often considered as a real vocation, and through his art gain enough money to grant to his family and to himself a life of comfort. However, being an artist is not a real 'job' or a respected vocation in Italy and he was overall simply 'a black kid from a poor African country'. He had to change his expectations and adapt to the new reality. In Italy, where he was living with his brother's new family, he became a street seller. At first, he decided to sell items and clothing going door-to-door. He could experience racism for the first-time; he felt as a 'black slave for white people'. After having experienced months of humiliation, he decided to stop. To avoid this relation of submission, that furthermore didn't bring any money, he started to sell drugs. The informal drug market put the drug dealer in a stronger position and in a different relation to their own customers. "Selling drugs is the only thing left. You don't have a choice when you don't have any document, and sometimes even if you have one [...] Selling drugs doesn't matter at the beginning. You spend all the energy to survive, to cope, not to be a victim".

Killing the dragon

After one year of working on the street, he was arrested and condemned to one and half year of prison. The imprisonment represented for him the most important turning point, where "everything changed": "Prison depends on you. It's like life but in a smaller place. You have to choose who you want to be: a fighter, a slaver, anonymous, diplomatic... It depends on you. I chose not to be a victim and I fought hard to find my position. I don't want to go back but I miss the prison, the people who I met, the situation in which I decided who I wanted to be. I started to meet people and discover their stories. In prison I started thinking. I asked myself what brought me here? I looked around me and I saw black people, Arabic people, a few Italian from the margins. And I saw a pattern. I started to see races. I started to see myself. I understood what kind of artist I wanted to be. I started to change my way of writing and my plans. At first my choices and my purpose were always related to money. But there my work and my thoughts became political". Reflecting on the story of colonialism, on the power relations among white and black people, he understands what it means structural violence and racism. This consciousness changed his attitude deeply. On one hand, he gained a feeling of legitimization. He felt for the first time since his arrival in Europe that he had the right to be there to look for a better life, considering what Europe has done to African countries and considering that globalization and the capitalism driven by the western countries caused poverty of other marginalized countries. On the other hand, he decided that he would never be part of the system, respectively he would never nourish the economy by becoming part of the formal labour market nor would he accept to endure passively racism which reproduced by the structure of daily life. Detention and the described changes of his view changed the course of his life.

Sacred marriage – a return of the pre-ordeal world – self-identity

As he came out of prison continuing dealing drugs didn't feel right anymore; he considered it as well a sign of submission. He also started to feel uncomfortable in a country where he only could see discrimination and marginalization. Parallely, he refused to go back to Nigeria, because even the worst life conditions in Europe will always be better than life conditions in Nigeria: "Everyone says that Europe is different as expected. But it's not important what you think. You go to Europe with a plan, not for vacation. You are not a traveller that can just go back. You have a family to support, you have your own project. You have responsibilities. And then you stay one year. You start to change. How can you go back? Every day that you spend away from home you build something that you cannot let behind. You meet people. Maybe you will meet a girlfriend. You find a job. Or maybe you start simply something that is important for you. You start to build a life. And home is lost, Nigeria is not your home anymore and nor is wherever you are in Europe". He decided to leave Italy and go to Denmark where many migrants often went to find better conditions. As he asked for asylum, the Danish government sent him back to Italy because of the Dublin convention. He was however certain that he didn't want to stay in Italy anymore and decided to leave to the nearest country: Switzerland. At the Swiss borders, he asked for political asylum, even if he was conscious that he didn't have any rights. He was sent to the French part of Switzerland. He refused to stay in the accommodation center offered by the canton; he preferred to appropriate himself of the new space on his own and again, avoid to become part of the system. He became homeless, by living for almost one year in a toilet near to the asylum shelter and in a forest near to the city: "I tried not to tell anyone about my situation as a homeless person. I didn't want any pity, I didn't want any help. I didn't want someone to make me feel like a victim. I wanted to take my time, step by step, this time knowing the pattern that I wanted to pursue" (Nathan). To survive, he started to accept little jobs in the supermarket, as well as street vendors in the informal market. Parallely, he started to volunteer in a community center with children and young adults. The language represented a difficulty that he quickly overcame thanks to his open personality and his capacity to communicate easily with everyone.

Regain of the lost kingdom – integration and home return

Things started to change again as he started to go out in cultural and artistic gathering centres and in bars. He became quickly accustomed to the alternative scene of the city. He joined an alternative collective who was well known for squatting houses and abandoned centres. It was the social network that he created that supported his feeling of belonging to the new reality. He got involved in political leftist movements and became active as a politically engaged artist in the different underground milieus, respectively in the musical, cinematic, literal and artistic milieu. Thanks to his activity as an artist he was able to become well known and he got an internship proposal by several cultural institutes. Thanks to this internship and the possibility of formation he was able to get a temporary residence permit. His purpose is to continue to be an artist and a political activist; his work, even if is not recognized as such, have to be an action of protest against the discrimination of migrants. The consciousness that he gathered since his time in the prison allowed him to be patient and to accept that to follow his projects and ambitions takes time.

The story of Subi

This is the story of a young boy who at the age of 10 had to leave with his family Syria, his home country, and embark on a long and difficult journey to Europe. In Switzerland he will learn to cope with his past, with new challenges as discrimination and to build a new sense of home and belonging. The support and the personal accompaniment of a small informal association will be essential in this process.

The central epiphany of the story of Subi, now 18-years-old, shows that to be able to build a new life and to start an integration process, it is necessary to face the emotional traumas and find a strategy to cope with the past. It enlightens us as well how the support of an association and its personal accompaniment can have an impact on this process. Moreover, the narrative of Subi about his parent's experience exposes how the reality of someone who migrates in young age can differ from the one lived by elderly migrants.

Subi grew up in Homs in a modest Sunni Muslim family. With nostalgia he describes his childhood as happy and peaceful. Even if the population has always felt a fear towards the corrupted government, Syria was a developed and peaceful country before the escalation of the conflict. His mother was a stay-at-home mother, while his father was a hairdresser. Even if he was an only child, he grew up close to his cousins and to the family of his uncles and aunts. Religion and the Sunni tradition had an important place in his family and his education; religion and family's customs articulated his everyday life as well as his future plans. As the tradition expected, he was supposed to attend the school until the age of 14 to start afterward to work. As a man his role was to support his family and become a well-respected member of his community. However, even if he grew up committed to his religion and family customs, he has never been pushed to be against other cultures and religions. Homs was well known to be a mixed and dynamic city where families of different religions and origins cohabited serenely. Everything started to change in 2011. The conflict between the government of Assad and the opposers started to escalate. The situation degraded quickly. His neighbourhood became a target of the bombarding and the attack of the government. Racism and mistrust between the different religious communities became increasingly a source of violence. At the time he was nine-year-old. He remembers how his school has been demolished by the bombs, how the saloon in which his father has always worked was razed to the ground. In a few months his neighbourhood was covered by debris. His all family was an opposer of the government and became quickly a direct target of the army. Some family's members started to disappear. His father, who at the time had stopped to work, was threatened with death. The life conditions became unbearable and a living nightmare.

In 2012, the family decided to leave Syria and go to Libya where some cousins of the father were living. They travelled to Damascus, from there they took a flight to Egypt and afterwards a bus to enter Libya. He vividly remembers the journey with the bus. It took 17 hours, it was expensive and they had to go through more than 20 customs before arriving at their destination, the city of Derna. The situation in the city wasn't one expected. After the death of Gheddafi the situation was unstable and anarchic. However, Subi's father was able to find a job in one of the many take-aways launched by other Syrian previously migrated to Libya. Subi, who meanwhile turned eleven, started to work in a cafeteria at the university of the city. It was a difficult time. The hatred against Syrian was increasing among Libyan people and Subi was often a target of racist behaviours and comments of the customers: "Libyan people thought that we were there to steal their job... and the situation back home was increasingly more violent. The people who came to the cafeteria where I was working were telling me over and over that I had to go back to my country to continue my war. It seemed that we (groups against the government) were the cause of the conflict and that Assad was the good guy. We were considered as a group of savage people." They stayed in Derna for one year before deciding to leave again.

As it became clear that the situation was becoming too unstable to stay, and the conflict of Syria was expanding, the family of Subi and the family of his uncle, who joined their journey from the very beginning, decided to leave. Europe seemed to be the only solution and destination, the conflict would have soon reached all other countries. They left Tripoli where they could pay a people smuggler to go to Europe. It was November 2013. Because of the difficulty to navigate the sea in winter, the people smugglers took all their money and forced them to stay for three months in a cabin in the desert with seventeen other people: "It was a prison. We almost didn't have water and only a little bit of food. I remember how one night a man wanted to light a petrol light, something went wrong and he and his son of 10 who was

beside him took fire, they died in front of us". After the accident, they were able to convince the smuggler to bring them to the boat. They took the boat along with 70 other people; after a sea journey that took 24 hours, they arrived alive in Italy. It was 2014 as they reached Switzerland, where they asked for political asylum.

First call and backsliding

For more than one year they were asylum seekers with an N permit; since 2016 they are temporarily admitted persons recognised as refugees with a F permit (provisory admitted refugees). He describes his first period in Switzerland as traumatic; in fact, they were placed by authority in a private pension in the mountains, where they were forced by the owner, who was clearly racist, to stay locked in their own room for the majority of the time. A turning point was the intervention of a small informal association who supported Syrian refugees. The association helped them to find an accommodation in a private apartment, first in a small village in the countryside and afterwards in a village near to the city. Living in the countryside was described as challenging, since they didn't have the means to meet people, to get to the shops or, for his father to find some occupation. Moving near to the city and to a village accessible with public transport has been an important improvement in their life. A few members of the association never stopped to support the family on a daily basis, by helping them in administrative tasks but also materially and morally. As Subi moved to his new house, he was immediately sent to the local school with his cousin, who was also located with his family in a neighbouring village. He describes the first time in the school as bizarre because he couldn't understand the language and the culture of the other students, and even less the contents of the lectures. Little by little he was however able to find his way.

Killing the dragon – overcoming barriers

Attending school was a turning point. Subi realised how essential and helpful it was attending schools in Switzerland, since he got a sense of legitimation that sometimes his parents still don't feel. Thanks to a strong support system assured by an external pedagogical guide and the members of the association, and thanks to some leisure activities outside the school (sports etc.), he overcame the barriers represented by the language and the different culture and he felt quickly socially included. Regarding racism, he claims that he learnt naturally to cope and handle with discrimination and racist attitudes by helping his parents. Because he had learnt the language quickly, he naturally took the function of translator among his parents and the others, for example with the members of the associations, social assistants, teachers and doctors. He could gain consciousness and knowledge about plenty of different domains. His young age rendered him a faster learner. He learnt not only the language but also the administrative system, the laws and legislative procedures and he could get used to the different attitudes of the people. Even if being present for his parents implied a sense of responsibility, it enforced him and rendered him more resilient. Again, he is conscious that he is more flexible and resourceful than his parents, because of his age.

Sacred marriage – a return of the pre-ordeal world – self-identity

Reflecting nowadays on his own experience in Switzerland, he realised that what helped him the most in these years was a 'testimony project' launched by the already mentioned association: "With the association we started to go to school in school to share with the other young people our testimonies. We told our stories, how we left our country, our journey with the boat... and how we experienced our arrival in Switzerland. I see now how it helped me. I could free my heart and head, that was full of anger. At the beginning it was hard but after I learnt how to talk about everything. By talking I learnt how to cope with my emotions. I don't know where I would be today if I couldn't express myself in this way. I was listened to by the people and I could feel their solidarity, this helped as well" (Interview 7). Participation in this project was the most important turning point in his path. According to Subi, the sense of liberation that he felt helped him to cope emotionally with the traumas - which represented the most important obstacle for his well-being - an essential step to be able to deal with all

challenges and all dimensions of the new life in Switzerland. He wouldn't be there, self-confident, with a sense of belonging and home, if it wasn't for this project.

Regain of the lost kingdom – integration

After school, under the encouragement of his teacher and parents, he attended the professional school of commerce. He was able to finish with success the two years of training, even though he had to struggle with the technical language. The continuous challenges encountered in writing letters etc as well the unwillingness to pass his time in front of a desk, pushed him to change path. He decided to become an electrician, a manual job he loved. In the research of an internship, the association was a key actor, since they found him thanks to their network an intern position: "I sent plenty of applications to find an employer who was ready to take me as an intern. For months I looked without success. There is for sure a great concurrence among young people, but I think, as many said, that an Arabic name on the applications and my provisory permit will always represent an obstacle. On this matter, the problem is related to how you look for a job and how the employers consider the applications; employers in general get the cv and a motivation letter, they don't meet you. In this case it is normal that on paper I won't ever be prioritized. There is a lot of passive racism in the labour market, especially towards Muslim men". Again, he underlines that he learnt to deal with this. He felt to belong to his new life and home, even if he is often confronted with people and politics that would prefer to deny him this sense of belonging. Being able to talk about his past, his story and not let people tell him if he has or not the right to be in Switzerland represents for Subi an important achievement.

Home return – Overall wellbeing

He is currently in his second year of internship as an electrician. He loves his job and has a good relationship with his superior. He really hopes that after the conclusion of the three years of internship he will be able to find a long-term contract. His feeling about the future is thought ambivalent. On one side he is optimist, on the other hand he is realistic. He knows that, independently from his origin, there is a difficult occupational situation. There is not only a concurrence among young people but also and especially with cross-border workers. They will represent the main obstacle since they represent a cheaper labour force which in general is prioritised by employers as well as by the customers. The local reality of the labour market and the politics will have an important impact on his path, one way or the other. He will try however not to worry too much about his future, as he said, he is young and resourceful, he will be able to face the challenges of his future.

The story of Diana

The vicious circle of prejudice and self-confidence

The central epiphany of our story taught Diana the importance of balance between the different sides of life. Diana learned that she was up to the task and that hard work to meet the high demands of herself and those around her could have a detrimental effect on her health and be a great obstacle to achieving her professional goal.

The story behind the narrative:

After leaving her country and a successful career to follow the man she loves to Switzerland, Diana finds herself in a situation where the external and internal prejudices of a demanding Switzerland make her lose confidence in herself. The relentless work she will do to compensate for what she imagines to be a difference in her level of ability will lead her into a vicious circle in which the woman's incapacity as a professional will have an impact on her reproductive health. And reproductive health problems will continue to impact on her

confidence as a professional until they create a psychological trauma that she will have to identify and learn to cope with.

Pre-dualistic life (background)

Diana, 40-year-old, grew up in Costa Rica in a family of four children of whom she is the eldest. From her childhood she remembers the sacrifices her parents made, living at a distance from each other for work, in order to earn enough to provide the best possible education for their children. She also remembers the important role that her mother and two grandmothers played as role models of strong women who gave the best of themselves both at work and at home and who set, in her words, 'the bar high enough'.

Diana's career path after completing her studies in international relations in her home country has not been easy. Diana explains that she had to start as an assistant and change jobs several times before finding a path that suited her. She then worked her way up and became a project manager in an international cooperation agency. It was in this agency that she met the man who would later become her husband, who was of Swiss origin. At the end of her companion's term of office, Diana decides to end the relationship, not seeing a future for it and not being ready to live a love at a distance. Love being stronger than reason, her partner convinced her to come to Switzerland to do the master's degree she had once planned to do abroad. With the idea of taking a first step towards cohabitation, Diana applied to three different universities. She was rejected at two of them and accepted at the last one. Hoping to obtain a permit from the university, the authorities refuse on the pretext that she already has a sufficient level of education. Marriage was the solution to counter this problem. "We advanced the marriage stage, but I was always afraid that they would think we were getting married just for the papers, especially since they had already refused me the student permit". The refusals from the universities and the authorities led to Diana's first relationship with Swiss institutions being described as hostile. Moreover, when she arrived in 2014, the political campaign for the initiative against mass immigration set the framework for a society in which foreigners were not welcome. The image of a country full of obstacles for women also became fixed and convinced her that as a woman and as a migrant, she had to work harder to make a place for herself in Switzerland.

First call and backsliding - attempts to change her life

During her studies in Switzerland, Diana explains that she put a lot of pressure on herself. She says she spent most of her time working hard rather than socializing and getting to know her host country. Diana explains the pressure she put on herself by the fact that she always tended to be a bit workaholic, but also by the fact that her husband, who is very demanding, often mentioned that people in Switzerland were highly demanding, and the message was reinforced when he corrected her university work for her. As mentioned, generally speaking, the view that women had to do more to prove their abilities, and migrant women even more so, was also very much on her mind and played a decisive role in the ardour with which she worked during her studies.

During those stressful and demanding times of studies, Diana, who was 37-years-old, happily became pregnant but had a miscarriage. She explains that she drowned her grief in her work. A long journey of struggle for procreation ensued. With anxieties, periods of depression and questioning related to possible infertility and at the same time, an ever-increasing pressure to succeed in her studies, Diana explains that she had reached a point where she had difficulty concentrating, and felt that she had to work even harder to make up for this handicap related to her psychological state. The first break in this cycle came when she started seeing a fertility therapist, who helped her identify her problem. The pressure Diana had put on herself at work had had a significant impact on her hormones and reproductive health. "She helped me to understand things, to give them a name and to regain my self-confidence. Because I had lost confidence, for a matter that seemed very personal to me, I was losing confidence at the professional level". Subsequently, other elements helped Diana to break this vicious circle.

Second call and the ordeal – life change initiated

Diana feels that having identified her problem, helps her to become more aware and to better analyse what she is going through and to look for ways to face her problems.

In this period, Diana, who has to reorient the subject of her Master's thesis in sociology and motivated by the idea of learning more about her fears, decides to change to the theme of reconciling work and family life among women. Allowing her to get more familiar with other paths and experiences, this fieldwork has helped Diana to alleviate her fears.

Killing the dragon – overcoming barriers

The first big change for Diana was the end and success of her master's work for which she received the award for best work: "I was closing a stage in my life that had been very difficult. With a sense of pride because I not only managed to get a good grade, but I also got the prize for the best dissertation in sociology. It was for me a certain validation to say, yes, I have the skills and professional qualities to work in the Swiss labour market. It was very important for me."

Regain of the lost kingdom – integration

With her Swiss diploma in her pocket, Diana takes the time to take care of herself and her social life. She meets new people and applies for different positions.. "I gave myself the luxury of looking for positions that interested me and that I felt were in line with my skills. I could afford not to have to look for a job to eat. Unfortunately, I didn't have any positive results. It was a bit frustrating since it lasted almost 5 months. I think I needed feedback, to see what I was doing wrong." In the meantime, Diana decides to apply for a job as a volunteer in an organisation active in international cooperation. The fact that she was hired following a selection process to achieve work similar to the work she was doing in Costa Rica, was very important and motivating. Feeling comfortable in a field and receiving positive feedback for her work helped her regain some confidence.

The path to home return – Overall wellbeing

An event organized by an association, which Diana attended, was also one of the factors that helped her regain her confidence. The testimonies of qualified migrant women who told about their experiences of positive outcomes made her feel less alone with her problems and the words of one of the speakers at the event had a great impact on her state of mind: "One of the people said, it wasn't our fault. And I think that just that sentence, it's not your fault, what you're going through, put the structures of the market a little more in perspective, how it works and that frees you a little bit of the pressure that you can put on yourself and realize that you're not the only person going through this. That's when I decided to talk to representatives of the association to seek help. They evaluated my situation and told me, you have the skills, the education, you know how to present yourself in the job market, in interviews etc. You have all that. What you lack is a network. We need to develop your network to get access to the hidden job market. A few days ago they arranged a first meeting with me to develop this network". In the meantime Diana also got pregnant. She is now on the verge of giving birth to her much-awaited child and intends to continue her research, develop her network and succeed in reconciling motherhood and work.

General epiphany

Diana's story shows us how the vision of Switzerland as a country in which gender inequality is rife, which is closed to migrants and in which the level of demand is very high, can have an impact on people's self-confidence, and subsequently on their integration process. In Diana's case, the response to the lack of confidence at the professional level led her to work tirelessly and neglect other aspects of her personal life. The effects of this lack of attention to other areas of her life (attention to her mental state, socialisation, health) in turn had a negative impact on Diana's professional performance, leading her into a vicious circle in which she had to work even harder to compensate. Several steps helped Diana to break out of this vicious

circle. The first was the help of the therapist, who helped her to identify her problem. The second was the recognition of her abilities, brought about by the awarding of a prize for her studies. The prize for her dissertation meant the recognition and validation of these skills to enter the Swiss job market. The third step was the opportunity she had to feel useful and successful at the professional level, through the volunteer work she started doing. In this case, the pleasure she felt, the impression of finding a place in society but also the recognition brought by the positive feedback from professionals in Switzerland boosted her self-confidence. The final step, starting with her contact with the association for qualified migrant women, helped her on the one hand to feel less guilty and less alone with her problems, but also to identify, with the support of experts, what she was missing to achieve her goals. In her case, it was the network.

7.11 Annex IV, Ethnodrama

The Dinner

CAST

Barbara, married to Marco, is the hostess of tonight's dinner. She works in the human resources department of a Geneva bank. Barbara and Marco have two children.

Marco, Barbara's husband, is an executive in a large watchmaking company. Marco's grandparents were Italian and came to Switzerland as seasonal workers.

Daniel, a long-time friend of Marco, is also his superior in the watch company. Daniel is married to Silvia.

Silvia, married to Daniel, works as an accountant in a family business.

Christian, sales manager in a multinational company, is a childhood friend of Marco and plays tennis regularly with him and Daniel. Christian is married to Diana whom he met on one of his many business trips to Brazil. He and Diana have three children together.

Diana, of Brazilian origin, is a stay-at-home mother. She arrived in Switzerland seven years ago after marrying Christian. Diana is a housewife and mother of three children.

Marina is the nanny of Barbara and Marco's children. She is of Russian origin, married to a Swiss man for 4 years and has been living in Switzerland for two years.

The entire play takes place behind closed doors (in camera/ huis clos) in a large room divided into a living room and dining room carefully decorated in the Scandinavian style of the 70s. Barbara and Marco Rossi are expecting two couples of friends for dinner in their spacious house on the left bank of Geneva overlooking the lake.

ACT 1

Scene 1

The table is elegantly set for six people, glasses and bottles on the living room bar await the guests. Barbara places the last aperitifs on the table, looking around to make sure everything is ready and perfect. Marco goes down the stairs.

MARCO. Don't worry, everything's perfect. Everything's going to be fine.

BARBARA. That's what you say, but it's nothing compared to the amazing cooked meals Diana serves us when she and Christian invite us for dinner. Everything's always perfect at

their place. Clean, tidy despite their three children... Even when the youngest was only a few months old she managed to find the time to make us 9-hour cooked lamb and every detail, even the bread is always homemade.

MARCO. Same old talk ... she doesn't work, contrary to you. Stop comparing yourself to her and stop blaming yourself. It used to be about the ready-made jars of baby-food you gave your kids when she found time to make all homemade baby food, now dinner...

The entrance bell is ringing. Marco and Barbara rush to the door that can be seen at the end of a corridor. We hear enthusiastic voices of greetings.

BARBARA. Wow! Right on time, and all together!

DANIEL. Loyal to Swiss punctuality! [chuckles]

You hear people kissing each other and asking each other how it's going.

MARCO. Let me take your coats and then you can go into the living room.

Scene 2

SILVIA, DANIEL, DIANA, CHRISTIAN and two children enter, followed by BARBARA and MARCO. At the same time two other children go down the stairs followed by MARINA.

BARBARA [speaking to MARINA]. Ah Marina! This is Lea and Teo, the children of our friends Diana and Christian. I think you can play a little bit more and then you can make them eat in the kitchen, everything is ready, for you too. [Speaking to the four children] Kids, go play with Marina and be nice.

The children run off to another room, MARINA follows them. Everyone else in the room sits down except Marco who serves the glasses.

DANIEL. [Sitting comfortably with arms and legs apart and pulling a cigar out of his pocket.] Did you see the results of yesterday's vote? This initiative of the SVP, which they call "against mass immigration"; rather say against "economic growth" yes! If we can no longer even easily hire qualified people from Europe, how are we going to get out of it?!

MARCO. [Giving Daniel his glass of pure malt] It's true, they forget that we have a shortage of qualified personnel in Switzerland in certain sectors, or they don't care about it! By the way, on that subject, Daniel, we need to discuss about the two people we need to recruit. Did Clara pass on the information to you?

BARBARA. Honey, we said no work tonight.

MARCO. Yes, we'll talk about it tomorrow morning at the office. Let's talk about something else. So I heard your son Benjamin's enrolled in art school? That's great!

SILVIA. Yes, we discussed it quite a bit between us, Daniel didn't agree too much at first but in the end we all agreed. The important thing is to do what you enjoy. Everybody has the right to choose, and if he likes what he does, he is sure to succeed!

DIANA. Well, wow, I can't imagine the day when our kids go off to college. Luckily, right now, we have diapers to worry about, day care or school. I love this period, but I'm really glad there's a nanny here tonight so I can relax a little bit and talk and drink wine in peace. [Chuckles]

SILVIA. Speaking of nannies, that babysitter sounds great. Where's she from?

BARBARA. Yeah, she's great. A neighbor recommended her to me. She's Russian and married to a Swiss. She arrived only three years ago but she speaks English perfectly well and does quite well in French.

SILVIA. Ah, here's one who made a good marriage and found a way to come to Switzerland.

BARBARA and DIANA look at SILVIA with an astonished look.

BARBARA. Oh, you know, apparently she did some studying in Paris and she's traveled a lot before that. Far from being silly, she's very cultured and we have very interesting discussions sometimes now that I think about it. It seems to me that she told me she was an engineer in her country but we haven't discussed it much anymore. The advantage is that she's great at helping Arthur with his math homework, he needs it...

SILVIA. [looking surprised and incredulous] Then why isn't she working as an engineer? That's strange... maybe she didn't finish her studies...

BARBARA. Yes, she did, because she told me she worked for several years after graduation. But I don't know in what exactly...

DANIEL. [checking his phone for messages from his mistress, the other hand holding the cigar] Well... if she hasn't been able to find a job here it's because she doesn't have a good record... she might not be very good... Well, now she's working, that is good.

DIANA . Yeah, but she could be putting her skills to good use. That's a shame. And what makes you think she's not good?

MARCO. What Daniel probably means is that... the level of education in other countries is not always the same as here, they don't work in the same way... Swiss quality and precision is well known...

DIANA [Looking angry] Or maybe no one gave her a chance...

CHRISTIAN. [Whispers softly in DIANA's ear] Honey, it's okay, calm down...

DIANA. You know, it's not easy to come from another country and find work here. I know what I'm talking about. Even though I had a PhD in environmental sciences and had great jobs in Brazil, I saw very few prospects for myself here.

CHRISTIAN. [The redness on his face showing his embarrassment] But you, darling, you didn't look long. You would have found it if you'd wanted to. And then you decided to stay home with the kids, which is fine too...

DIANA. [Completely out of her mind, explodes] Not long??! For two years I've been searching, sending applications! Have you already forgotten? But you don't know what it feels like to send hundreds of applications and not even a negative answer. You don't know what it's like to have worked for years, invested so much energy in a career that, when you get here, you are told that your skills are not even good enough to do secretarial work! Yes, because after looking for a job that matched my level of skills, I ended up looking for anything... but even so, I wasn't good enough!... You Daniel [turning to DANIEL], you complain about the results of the votes, which I also regret, but did you try to give a chance to all these people who live here and who have potential? Or are the migrants from outside Europe not good enough for you?

In facing the dispute that breaks out, Daniel whispers so that only Marco can hear him:

DANIEL. *[whispering and smiling]* These women, always hysterical and out of control. You see why I don't want us to elevate Caty to the chief of operations position?

Marco laughs discreetly.

Barbara, who manages however to hear Daniel's commentary, looks surprised and angry when she sees Marco laughing.

CHRISTIAN. Honey, come on, you would have found it at some point, but in the end it's good too, you could stay with the kids. Come on; calm down honey, you made that choice too...

DIANA. That choice?! Oh, yeah, I've made some choices! All the choices that made me give up on my professional dreams... Like when we agreed to move here after your wedding proposal even that I had my dream job and a promotion offer. Or when we got the kids and I

had to take care of them, when I finally was meeting people and felt I finally had some direction to take in my job search.

CHRISTIAN. But I never asked you to stay home. Besides, it's not my fault that the nurseries didn't give us priority because one of the parents didn't work...

DIANA. It's not your fault, no, but you didn't do anything. You just stood there... you kept letting me do everything at home, 24 hours a day. Whether you went to work or not, I was the one who had to take care of everything, wake up at night and be fresh in the morning to face the day with the kids and the house. And I didn't say anything! I felt guilty because you had your work, your concerns and above all, because I felt useless, unable to bring a few pennies into our home. I felt that my power of decision was diminishing, and with it, my self-confidence. A self-confidence that was already on the floor before the children... When you arrive here you are lost. Yes, you have your husband's friends, but they are your husband's friends. We don't know how to handle this, where to go. Yes, you all wanted to help me, but you didn't understand that not everything was obvious to me. And then, other people... People telling you it's not easy, even impossible. That I have to look in other fields because if I don't have experience in Switzerland in this field, everything that comes from other countries doesn't count. Even if you have a PhD, you start to feel alone, stupid, useless... you feel like a fool...

DIANA [Less angry, tears in her eyes voice now trembling] You meet women, like the nanny... smart and with multiple degrees, reduced to cleaning people's toilets. You ask yourself questions... You tell yourself that you're ready to do any job as long as you can feel useful, active, find a place in this society... And then you think about your parents, who are still in the country, who keep asking you for news. You remember that they sacrificed everything to allow you to study and that they would be devastated at the idea of you being forced to do housework or do a job that is not well recognized. You feel that you can't tell them how desperate we are, you feel ashamed. Impossible there, misunderstood here... alone... Ahh and then everyone start asking you..." And the baby, when is it due?" The desire of a baby is there, but you didn't imagine it like that...

MARINA enters the room.

MARINA. Mrs. Barbara, the oven has just rung, I think the meat is ready.

Everyone seems confused, speechless.

BARBARA. [queasy] Thanks Marina, I'll be right there. [Speaking to guests] How about you guys go to the table?

BARBARA approaches DIANA and takes her tenderly in her arms before disappearing into the kitchen.

ACT 2 (to be completed)

8 United Kingdom

Francesca Caló & Simone Baglioni

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We would like to express our appreciation to the people we interviewed and decided to share with us their stories.

8.1 Introduction

This report provides a detailed analysis of the needs of migrants and refugees/asylum seekers, their perceptions of the host societies and what they consider to be barriers and enablers to potential avenues for integration. We begin by providing a brief overview of the national context, focusing upon specific critical issues that were raised during the three years of research. We then briefly outline the methodology and provide an overview of the interviews conducted and newspapers articles collected. The report then investigates through the analysis of the data stemming from our biographical interviews, how migrants, refugees and asylum seekers perceive their integration into the labour market and what have been individual barriers and enablers in obstructing and enabling it. We then conclude by exploring the adequacy of labour market integration policies, comparing and contrasting the official knowledge of policies collected through documentary analysis and stakeholders interviews with third country nationals experiences on the ground.

8.2 Background information on the national context: country specific critical issues

In the course of our research on the UK, immigration policies were widely considered the most critical issue at the macro level for the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market by a range of stakeholders, including devolved government, local authorities, third sector organisations and social partners. Immigration policies have been described as very restrictive, bureaucratic and expensive both for migrants and employers (Anderson, 2010). They focus upon attracting primarily high-skilled migrants, thus reducing the accessibility to the UK labour market for those who do not have highly specialised skills or are not filling high earning positions (Bloch et al., 2015). Immigration policies have also been often criticised for their misalignment with the UK labour market needs and their restrictions for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Bloch et al., 2015). The UK ban on working for asylum seekers has been identified as the most significant example of the UK restrictive migration and labour market policies. Stakeholders pointed to how the work ban experienced by asylum seekers had a long-term negative impact on the lives of people. They often struggle to find employment once they have refugee status due for example to their diminished self-confidence, the gap that has emerged in their CVs during the asylum application process, and the loss or deterioration of their skills (Mulvey, 2018). It was often perceived that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers need to press pause on their career ambitions in order to eventually acquire the status of 'indefinite leave to remain' that would enable them to gain full

access to the job market. Alongside such restrictive context, more positive disposition towards the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into the labour market was identified in the integration strategies elaborated by devolved authorities, such as the case for Scotland, and the employability services mostly provided by third sector organisations. However, due to the lack of funding attached to these initiatives and the low number of organisations which provide formal employability services or skills development services, they were often described as fragmented and residual and thus falling short in terms of their accessibility (for more information WP3 and WP4 UK Report). The refugee resettlement scheme was also pointed to be a favourable policy that supports the integration of refugees in the labour market, focusing upon personalised services for facilitating integration (Martin et al., 2016). However, some challenges were also highlighted: for example, it fosters the development of two categories of refugees, one (the resettled refugees) that ensures a greater level of support at the detriment of the other (all other refugees). Moreover, it involves the condition that refugees must live in specific dispersal scheme areas that can often be at some distance from their community and their families.

At the meso level, barriers often reported by stakeholders during the SIRIUS research were discrimination, the lack of skills and qualification recognition, fragmentation of services such as English classes and employability courses. According to the stakeholders we interviewed across the three years project, equality in accessing all employment pathways has been pinpointed as particularly challenging. The lower levels of participation of minority groups in specific vocational pathways was a result of discrimination and prejudice. Consequently, this unequal access to good quality employment has impacted upon a range of other inequalities such as the higher rates of poverty experienced by minority ethnic groups (Bloch et al., 2015). Trade Unions and NGOs reinforced the recognition of disadvantage and discrimination of minority ethnic groups in the workplace, affirming that migrants today are “*still experiencing discrimination in recruitment, pay, career progression, disciplinary and redundancies*” (Unison, Prejudice Advertisement). Employers were also characterised as often being apprehensive about employing migrants and refugees in case they were to accidentally hire someone without the right to work (Bloch et al., 2015). Anti-discrimination policies and to some extent anti-exploitation policies, although described as potential enablers, were identified as not having the necessary teeth to enforce their supposed purpose of protecting migrants, refugees and asylum seekers and the lack of investment in these policies seriously restricts their potential impact. Formal qualifications and existing skills were highlighted as often not recognised in the UK. Employers’ perceptions about the validity of overseas qualifications were also pointed as a factor which affects access to employment for migrants. In addition to that, the fragmented and scarce provision of English for Speakers of Other languages courses was highlighted, particularly by the Westminster Government. On the same issue, policy implementers underlined how the reduced funding derived from the UK Government have effectively limited the opportunities for migrants to access language courses. Employability programmes were also identified as potential enablers of integration in the UK labour market. However, these services were often provided from a wide variety of organisations but due to the lack of funding, they were often described as fragmented and thus they fell short in terms of their accessibility to the broader population (Mayblin and James, 2018). Moreover, they were identified as not taking into consideration the specific needs of different groups within the categories of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and thus failing to meet the specific and diverse needs of these groups which were instrumental had their integration into the UK labour market to be successful.

At the micro level, a lack of knowledge of the UK labour market alongside a lack of understanding of UK employment rights were often described as increasing the barriers for migrants into employment. Another micro level barrier to employability outcomes identified by the UK Government was the cultural attitudes of the migrants. Gender bias was specifically highlighted as a cause for concern, with an emphasis placed on how the gendered differences in the role played in the household affected the employment of women as well as how religious and cultural values impacted on people decisions regarding their employment. Policy

implementers instead pointed the stress of being in a new country and the fears about being victimised for being newcomers as another barrier for integration into employment.

The vulnerability-agency nexus most probably represents the main contrast between policy implementers (including third sector organisations and social partners) on one side and policy makers at UK level on the other. As above explained, policy implementers at the local level and third sector organisations identify the main barriers of integration into the labour market through the prism of how policies and services are implemented and funded, and in doing so point to policy makers as being primarily responsible, directly or indirectly, for obstructing labour market integration. They often also try to identify the barriers encompassing people with different paths of migration, focusing specifically on the most vulnerable categories such as asylum seekers or refugees. Completely different discourses are instead promoted by the UK Government which in its documents often emphasises the negative effects of migration and the importance of controlling the numbers as well as the characteristics of people arriving in the UK (for more information WP3 Report). Policy makers mainly conceptualise barriers in the integration in the labour market through the prism of the responsibilities of migrants such as having a low level of English language skills, a scarce knowledge of the UK job market and a limited understanding of the UK culture. Thus, in their suggested remedies, they mainly advocate the improvement of existing services (such as job centres but also language courses) to address the micro-level barrier which mainly depends upon the agency of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Moreover, the more generalised reference to “migrants” is the most frequently cited category in policy makers documents (see WP3 UK report for more information). Discourses often envelop newcomers that have very different migration pathways and characteristics, into the same category. The diverse ethnic minorities who are arriving in the UK, as well as the distinctions between economic migrants, asylum seekers and refugees are often lost and instead are discussed within the same terms of reference.

Our analysis of the UK context presents a very challenging environment for the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into the UK labour market. Existing immigration policies focus upon attracting only high-skilled migrants, thus reducing the accessibility to the UK labour market for those who do not have highly specialised skills or are filling high earning roles. The ban on working for asylum seekers and the difficulties experienced by undocumented migrants also fit within the same rationale as exemplified by the resettlement programme which specifically selects people who can have been granted refugee status. Other policies (encompassing employment and education) do not take into consideration the specific needs of different groups within the categories of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, and thus fail to meet the specific and diverse needs that these groups need to have met if their integration into the UK labour market is to be successful. The main contrast among stakeholders lay in the vulnerability-agency nexus. However, scarce attention has been given to the stories of migrants in disentangling their role and agency in shaping their life. It is then important to explore their agency through the voice and life of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

8.3 Methods

A total of 11 biographical interviews involving migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were conducted. Annex I provides an overview of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers involved while Annex II highlights a summary of the interviews we conducted. People involved present very different paths of migration, including economic migrants which have moved to the UK to study or working, refugees who have obtained their status through the asylum process, refugees who have been resettled through one of the resettlement programmes and as well one asylum seeker who is still waiting for the refugee status. More than half of the biographical interviews involved women in working age (between 25 and 40 years old), while the other half involved men between 30 and 40 years old. Almost all the people interviewed have achieved

or are achieving in the UK or their own country a high level of education (tertiary level). A wide range of nationality was covered including Commonwealth, African and Asian countries.

Different recruitment strategies were used. Majority of respondents were recruited through the network of the main researcher and word of mouth/snowballing. Civil society organisations helped to identify potential interviewers and create a connection between them and the researcher. Participation in events organised by migrants communities, faith organisations and third sector organisations was also helpful to recruit participants and inform part of the research. In addition to that, the main researcher volunteered in a non profit organisation supporting mainly migrants and refugees for more than one year. Her role as a researcher was disclosed. The stories collected - due to the sensitiveness of the issues disclosed - inform mainly the ethnodrama piece and are not reported in the qualitative findings.

Majority of the interviews were recorded and transcribed 'intelligent verbatim'. When it was not possible to record, extensive notes were collected by the researcher and reorganised in a document after the interview. The confidentiality and anonymity of each of our interviewees were protected throughout the interview process. In doing so, pseudonyms are used in detailing the stories quotes presented in this report. All the details that can disclose the identity of the interviewees are not reported. Ethical approval was requested and obtained from the SIRIUS Ethics board and the ethical committee of the Glasgow School for Business and Society at Glasgow Caledonian University. Sensitive data were kept password protected within the laptop of the researcher. The data that participants request not to disclose in connection to their story were not used or used only in the ethnodrama. After the interview transcription, the data were then imported into the computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software QSR Nvivo and in depth analysis following biographical interviews approach was undertaken. Turning points and epiphanies were selected and organised across themes, as reported below. The ethnodrama piece is built upon the epiphanies identified, the stories collected during the volunteering period and the newspapers articles, as below described.

Recruiting informants, the necessity to safeguard the health of the researcher and the interviewee and impossibilities to collect personal data through online instruments were some of the challenges faced due to the Covid-19 outbreak. Another approach to identify stories of migrants and refugees and collect meaningful data was used. Articles of newspapers - in their online version - (mainly BBC and the Guardian) were collected and analysed to explore the stories of migrants and refugees who worked as key workers during the fight against Covid-19. Articles published during the UK Lockdown (from 23 March to 18 May 2020) were collected and screened and the ones which analysed more in depth the lives and most of the time also the death of the key workers were selected. The stories were analysed in depth to inform the ethnodrama as well as part of our biographical stories. A narrative which then mixes primary data and secondary data is presented in Annex 3 and 4.

8.4 Individual barriers and enablers: analysis of interview data

Four different themes were identified across our respondents: resilience, trauma/vulnerability, skills acquisition and entrance in the labour market. Each of them related to major epiphanies and turning points which are below explored. Piece of the stories of Susan, John, Jack, Maria, Anita, Danielle, Artur, Sofia and Valerie are reported to explain the different themes. Annex 1, 2 and 3 provide more information about their migration path and their stories.

8.4.1 Resilience: a potential propellant for inclusion

"Ithaka gave you the marvellous journey.
Without her you wouldn't have set out.
She has nothing left to give you now.
And if you find her poor, Ithaka won't have fooled you.
Wise as you will have become, so full of experience,

you'll have understood by then what these Ithakas mean".

C. P. Cavafy – Ithaka

Resilience and migration come together beautifully in the poem of Cavafy which details in the last verses the agency of resilience. Agency has been defined as "one's capacity to shape one's life and exploit opportunities or indeed open up new possibilities for one's self and their family" (Triandafyllidou, 2019, p.8). Resilience is one type of agency which migrants can use to change their own situation or rework their own circumstances (Triandafyllidou, 2019). In the integration in the job market as detailed by Bernstein (2016), it could mean for example to work multiple jobs or switching between jobs on a regular basis. In the poem of Cavafy, it means using the experience acquired to rework one's circumstances.

Resilience was one of the main enablers to become integrated into the labour market across all our stories. All the people interviewed had aspirations, motivations and expectations and for all of them these were the propellant to find a way to access the labour market. However, as explored below, resilience was conceptualised in different ways and consequently was used differently by each informant. In some of our stories, resilience meant to accept an underqualified job or a job that was aligned to the stereotype of the country of origin. Susan, a graduate student of 30 years old, was working in the banking system in her own country before moving to the UK. She had a high social status in her own country, a permanent job in a high skilled sector and a good salary. When she moved to the UK to undertake a funded PhD, she decided to continue to work (the hours allowed by her visa) to support every month her family back at home. The only easily and quickly accessible job that she could find was a position in a call centre. She described the experience of working there as a "*real experience of work*". Although the job was not difficult because the process was defined and clear, she "*felt as an immigrant*" and for this she "*had to lower her level, to lower her ego*" and accept a job for which she was undoubtedly overqualified. Resilience was a pivotal mechanism to cope with the acceptance of an underskilled job and to motivate her to find a way to access a job market aligned to her skills. The experience in the call centre gave her the motivation to continue her study and reinforce her aspiration to work in academia, helping her to achieve a (precarious) position in a university. A similar conceptualisation of resilience but different outcomes instead were identified for Valerie, young woman, who moved to the UK to follow her husband due to some undefined problems at home. She studied "*education and support assistant, hoping to find a job in that field*" because working with children was her highest aspiration. However, she could not find a job as educator. She applied several times to several jobs, including jobs for which she was overqualified, but she was never called neither for an interview. She identified English language and legal status (not being a British citizen) as the main problem behind the refusal of being shortlisted. She was - in a way - forced to accept the only job available: working in a beauty studio (providing waxing and other beauty treatments department) for a retailer company. She identified the job as related to the stereotyped idea of her culture. "*I am working in something that is seen as related to our culture, so mostly middle east people from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, are working in beauty company*". In her acceptance of a job that however reinforced a stereotyped idea of migrants laid her resilience. She needed to work to support her husband and kids, and she accepted that what she was offered was only employment in some specific sectors due to a stigmatised understanding of capacities and competences. To be able to contribute to her family income she accepted to take that employment even if in that sector there was "*no plan of future development nor career*".

In some of the stories, resilience meant accepting personal limits and come to terms with one's possibilities. Maria is a young woman living in London with her husband and a baby. She flew her country with her family when she was an adolescent, she had job experiences, studied and married in the UK. She moved from the north of the country to London to follow her husband work commitment, and in the capital city she had the chance to explore the job market competition. She described her life in London as very stressful, in particular because she applied to several jobs without any positive results. Seeing "*some people going to a couple of interviews and getting a job*" while she was struggling so much made herself questioning her

skills and qualifications. She started to realise that Human Resource managers were expecting the candidates *“to do something extraordinary...they expected people to be perfect”*. She detailed that doing marathons, being involved in charities, climbing mountains and travel all around with a blog were typical activities that competitor job seekers were doing and promoted during the job interviews. She often compared herself with other candidates who came from migrant families, but she often found that *“they were born in the system”* and thanks to this, they understood how to manage this harsh competition. She realised that job seekers competitors were usually *“very talkative, skilful and very wise in terms of vocabulary”* but especially they knew *“actors, television programmes and football”*, topics that were appreciated because allowed them to *“interact quicker and better with colleagues”*. For all of these reasons, it was easier for them to find a job. Understanding why she was not selected during job interviews was a turning point in her life. Her resilience laid in her acceptance of not being able to do the same *“extraordinary activities”* as the other candidates because *“not everybody has the time to do this, is fit to do this or have the skills to do this”*. Thus, she decided to put in stand by her job seeking, focusing upon taking care of her family.

In other stories, instead, resilience was the mechanism that helped our interviewees to achieve results that completely changed the course of their life. Danielle is a young woman who moved from a war zone to the UK for studying. She decided to apply for asylum and stay in the UK at the end of her graduate programme. In order to be able to obtain the funds for studying in the UK, she had to face challenging travels and experiences. She had to undertake a language test in a neighbouring country to the one she used to live which was usually difficult to access from her country of settlement. Second, she had to visit the country of her nationality, a country she had never seen before, which was experiencing a significant difficult economic and social situation. She believes that it is the resilience she deployed while passing through these experiences that helped her to obtain the funds. She used them as an example of her motivation to pursue her studies: *“that was one of the things I used in the interview, they asked why I thought I should get the scholarship, yes because I come to [the country of my nationality overcoming various difficult situations also in terms of personal security] for the first time, and my parents have not been in there in many years”*. Thus her resilience changed her life, allowing her to obtain the funds and pursue her ambitions.

8.4.2 Trauma and Vulnerability: solitude and precarious temporality

Resilience was also, for some of the informants, a key mechanism to overcome vulnerability and trauma that often came alongside the migration path. Vulnerability and trauma mainly represented barriers in the integration in the labour market, but when they were overcome, they were transformed in resilience which instead helped the integration.

One of the main vulnerabilities outlined by our informants was solitude. Loneliness in facing a completely different system was often expressed by our informants as one of the vulnerabilities they had to go through. Artur, for example, a 30 years old man who came to the UK to undertake a PhD, identified the feeling of solitude that he faced in his migration experience as an epiphany. He perceived that his migration path was not *“a smooth transition”* and that the only information available to him was that he had *“14 days to go to the post office to get [his] biometric”*. For the first time he was living outside his country and he was *“expecting something more”*. He expected that *“there would be a person to help [him] to integrate in a new space”* while instead he had to figure out completely alone the new context, from exploring how to register to the GP up to understand the legal implications of his student visa. The *“shock of the integration process”* instilled in him a sense of temporality. He felt that he was *“integrated enough to function”* while he was living in the country but because he was only a student with an *“expiration date”* on his visa *“there was no need for further integration”*. At the time of the interview, he did not know how this feeling would affect his life because he was still trying to understand it, but he was sure that it could represent a key barrier in exploring possible job opportunities and the opportunity to stay in the UK.

The feeling of precarious temporality was also described as a key element affecting the willingness of integration, and at the same time, it raised questions if living in the UK was the right choice for many of our respondents. Temporality was perceived as a vulnerability. For example, Anita, a 25 years old woman who moved to the UK for studying, described her several experiences at the UK border as almost traumatising: *“They make you feel that you are just a guest, they investigate you, you are a guest, they always ask a lot of questions, like are you going back home to get a job? Sometimes when you finish the border there is another desk with other people, you see looking at me. They will pick me out of the crowd, is it racist? Is it because I am not white? What is this about? They try to make it friendly but it is not, they stop you and they ask what are you plans for the future, they really make clear that I am not welcomed to stay as long as I want”*. The feeling of precariousness was also aligned to her (temporary) migration status and the process of renewing her visa several times. Each time she had to start from scratch and sometimes even go back to her own country and apply from there. She felt that she would *“always be a temporary person, on the edge, without a home, not welcomed”*. This feeling made her questioned her choice of living in the UK and although she loved the community where she lives and *“considers it as home”*, she is questioning if she sees her life in a country where she does not feel welcomed.

The sense of precariousness that Anita and Artur described was often overcome only when the indefinite leave to remain or British citizenship was acquired. Only in that case, the job opportunities available to British and European Union citizens became accessible also for third country nationals. For example, Sofia a 25 years old woman who moved to the UK to join her brother and to study in college, described her acquisition of British citizenship (after ten years of living in the UK) as a fundamental turning point. Up to that moment she was limited to go abroad due to the restriction of the number of days she could stay outside the country. In addition to that the types of jobs and organisations she could apply for were very limited and she had often to accept underqualified jobs or to pay for her study to continue to live in the country. She detailed that thanks to the acquisition of the citizenship she could enjoy *“different experiences without having any restriction”* but more than ever she *“could look like everyone else”* when competing for a job and have everyone else’s opportunities. She always felt *“a second order citizen”* which could not have the same rights and opportunities. Sofia was able to build up resilience from her ten years as migrant, and as soon as she became a British citizen, she started to take advantage of all the opportunities she found, starting, for example, to work in a position matching her qualifications and travelling all around Europe with her partner and friends.

However, not all the stories are similar to Sofia’s one. In some cases, the trauma of being treated differently from local people was so interiorised that it became almost acceptable by the migrant self. Discrimination turned out to be the normality. For example, for Valerie, who supported the idea that it *“made sense”* that if she competed with somebody from the UK, she would not get the job. Her willingness to find a job aligned to her qualifications and ambitions decreased and she decided to work for a beauty studio of a big retailer, a sector which was willing to integrate migrants or that she considered aligned with her background. Discrimination then became not only a contextual barrier but a personal one, deeply affecting her integration in the UK job market.

8.4.3 Acquiring system accepted skills: language, education and work experiences

Acquiring skills and education in the UK or a similar contextual system were also identified as fundamental to have the opportunity to be integrated into the job market. Learning English, undertake a qualification from the UK system and build up a curriculum aligned to the UK context were often identified as turning points. Danielle described learning English since the early age a critical turning point which had affected part of her life. Her father suggested to focus on math and English, pushing her to learn the language at the best of her possibility. Her level of English was then high enough to pass a test for obtaining funds to undertake a

programme at a prestigious university. The importance of learning the language was also highlighted by Julie, an asylum seeker who moved to the UK without previous English knowledge. She suggested that at the beginning integration was difficult because she did not speak a good level of English. She explained that *“If you don’t speak good English you can’t integrate. When you understand people, you have good communication, after that, everything becomes easy. You can then go to different organisations and you can volunteer”*. Learning English in the community first and in college after gave her enough confidence to begin to think about undertaking a master, and reinforced several times the idea that *“you need confidence [to integrate]. If you are not confident, you can’t go out and face people”*.

Acquiring qualifications that are recognised by the UK system was also described as fundamental to access the UK labour market. Some of our respondents highlighted that their qualifications from back home were not suitable to find a job in the UK. Only migrants with British qualifications abroad suggested the possibility of finding a job without undertaking further education in the UK. Almost all of our respondents had to build up a curriculum which included both UK education qualifications and working experiences. John, for example, although he had a qualification from his home country, he *“realised that [his] qualification back home was not suitable to find a job in the UK”*. He obtained a bachelor degree and he was willing to obtain a Master, that *“hopefully will help [him] to find a job”* because he was not happy to work part time in a job that did not suit his qualification. He described his decision to undertake an education path to obtain a job in his field of interest as a *“hard way”*. Most of the friends of his age *“are working in security or some of them join the restaurants”*. They joined what he called *“a margin labour market”* because they usually have commitments and they need to send money back home. However, he hoped that his decision would be the best one in the longer term. Jack, a refugee who arrived with a resettlement programme described himself to be in a similar situation. However, he also started to be doubtful about the possibility to find a qualified job even with a UK qualification. When he arrived in the UK, he found a job by himself, asking a restaurant if they needed somebody to work and he worked there in the kitchen for a while. However, it was not enough for him and he wanted to have the opportunity to go back to the same quality of life he had before flying to the UK. He described as very challenging to work in a completely different field but he soon realised that he *“didn’t have qualifications, certificate or language level to find the same job”* he had before flying away. He did not have *“a proper CV”* and he had just *“to make [it] step by step”*. While he was working part time, he started back from *“very basic level”*, from college and English language. He suggested that he could not recognise his previous qualification because his country *“has a different education system and they [referring to British people] don’t believe in that”*. When he arrived in the UK he was 32 years old, and it took 5 years to learn English, undertake college courses, University courses. He will graduate at 41 years old and he is often questioning himself if any company would hire him because of his age or it would be better to develop his own business.

8.4.4 Entrance in the Job Market: volunteering, networking and discrimination or lack of knowledge

Being included for the first time in the UK Job market was an epiphany for several of our respondents. Mechanisms and events that helped or obstructed this inclusion were often identified as turning points. Two main interrelated factors were pointed by our interviewees as enabling their access to the job market: volunteering and widening their personal network. While two mechanisms were identified as obstructing factors, affecting negatively the possibility of becoming integrated: employers’ lack of knowledge of migration and employment laws and impossibility to access specific jobs.

As reported in previous workpackages (see for example WP4) volunteering schemes were often being highlighted by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as one of the most important activities related to labour market integration. CSOs were often pointed as providing a space where people with different pathways of migration can widen their social networks

and obtain some form of work experience, experience that was perceived as being of particular importance to potential employers. For Danielle, for example, volunteering was identified as a turning point two times in her migration path. First, when she was still living outside the UK, volunteering helped her to obtain the funds to undertake her study. The experience she acquired was considered as an invaluable asset by her funders and one of the elements that made her CV competitive. Then, she continued to volunteer in the UK, during her postgraduate courses. At the end of her study programme, one company which was partner of one of the projects she was volunteering with, came across her skills and CV. The company decided to offer her an internship, first, and a job placement, after. She is now working in a position aligned to her qualifications and skills and enjoys her job. She recognised that without the volunteering experience, it would have been much more difficult to find a job and most probably she would still struggle to obtain one. For Tom as well, a young refugee who moved to the UK to join his brother, volunteering was a key mechanism to have the opportunity to become involved in the labour market. He was active as a volunteer in different organisations since he arrived in the UK. During his volunteering time, he received a leaflet which explained that there was a shortage of men taking up posts in childcare and education. He was then involved in a course in the same non profit organisation for which he was volunteering that offered a pathway to childcare. He then got a placement opportunity and the possibility to progress to a college course. Thanks to his volunteering experience, he understood what his ambitions for the future were and how to fulfil them.

Volunteering is clearly interrelated with widening the personal network of contacts, and having a network is a condition *sine qua non* to find a job in the UK: as Danielle explained, accessing the UK job market *“is not just finding the link and applying for jobs. It is all about network connection and experience in the UK. So it is not easy to create personal connection if you are not here since you are born here”*. In some culture such as Anita’s one, *“speak out and ask support”* is often not encouraged, so it becomes even more difficult to build up that network. In the life of Anita, the support of some of her contacts *“just happened”*. At the end of her study, she felt that she did not get enough experience outside her home country, she still wanted to improve her skills, *“learn a new path, be a better person, independent women who can find the independent life”*. She had to start looking for something that could help to extend her visa. She could have undertaken another course *“but there was a financial struggle”*. She declared that she was lucky because people involved in her study got to know her situation and they decided to offer her the opportunity to undertake a paid internship. Widening her network was fundamental to get to know what she wanted to do in her life to have the chance to do it.

Difficulties to access the labour market were also epiphanies in the life of some of our informants. Maria, for example, described the employers’ lack of knowledge of migration and employment laws as very stressful and detrimental for her willingness to continue to work. She pointed out that for example many companies do not know that the Home Office takes time to process visa and she described a specific event with a non profit organisation which affected deeply her willingness to look for a job. While she was working through a private agency placement in a big third sector organisation, in a job she considered below her qualifications and skills, but *“better than nothing”*, she was also waiting for the renewal of her visa (a spouse visa). While her passport was with the Home Office, she received a call from the organisation asking for her visa, then the organisation called the Home Office which was not able to provide the information needed. As a consequence, the organisation for which she was working told her to stay home because according to them she did not have any visa. This episode made Maria very upset, she thought that nobody should have had the right to talk to her like that because she was only following the government procedure. *“Not every company knows visa policies, they don’t know that the Home Office takes time to process [visa requests], I had to explain to many people that this is the condition I am working with”*. However, for Maria, most of the time it became difficult if not impossible to be selected for a job.

Difficulties in accessing the labour market often affect the ambitions of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. John, a refugee who moved to Glasgow with his wife and children, had always desired to work in the criminal justice field. For fulfilling his ambition, he decided to start to study again, although he was already middle age and with a family to pay for. At the end of his undergraduate degree, he decided to apply as a prison officer. However, he was never invited for an interview: *"I applied 5/6 times just for prison officer...and I have more qualification and they didn't invite me for the interview. And I phoned them why you are not calling me for an interview I am very qualified for this job just chasing you...and a lady told me because for this job you have to have a full citizenship. I am entitled to work in this country I have a paper...no... you have to be a full citizen..."*. The disappointment he experienced from being refused several times and not only in his sector of interest but also in other sectors affected deeply his motivation and ambition for the future. He, in fact, decided not to apply for any permanent job, while instead to develop his own business. He became convinced that people like him *"should make their own job"*, whether it means to create a social enterprise, run a kitchen or providing new services and products. Only in this way, according to John, it would be possible for a refugee to be integrated in the labour market.

Thanks to our fieldwork, it was possible to identify what barriers and enablers of integration in the UK labour market, were perceived as turning point and epiphany by migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. Three different factors were pointed by our interviewees as essential conditions to enable their access to the job market: resilience, volunteering and social capital. Three additional variables were pointed as important, but not critical, mechanisms to access integration into labour market: Learning English, undertake a qualification from the UK system and build up a curriculum aligned to the UK context. Finally, three variables were identified as obstructing factors, affecting negatively the possibility of becoming integrated: employers' lack of knowledge of migration and employment laws, impossibility to access specific jobs and the trauma and vulnerability. In the next paragraph, we are going to compare these variables with the one identified by the stakeholders and outlined in the background section.

8.5 Critical analysis of adequacy of LMI: Comparative analysis

In this section, we explore the adequacy of labour market integration policies, comparing and contrasting the official knowledge of policies collected through documentary analysis and stakeholders interviews with third country nationals experiences on the ground. If we compare the findings of previous workpackages with the results of biographical interviews, it is possible to identify several similarities but as well as some differences between the two. First, we compare to what extent stakeholders' awareness of LMI barriers and enablers are different from those of the MRAs. Second, we analyse what should be changed in stakeholders actions to address specific needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers.

8.5.1 Comparative analysis between stakeholders and MRAs awareness of labour market integration barriers and enablers

At the macro level, immigration policies were widely considered the most critical issue for the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the labour market by a range of stakeholders, including devolved government, local authorities, third sector organisations and social partners. Immigration policies were described as very restrictive, bureaucratic and expensive both for migrants and employers. However, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers interviewed during this research phase rarely focused upon the process of obtaining documents as a turning point of their life. Only becoming a British citizen was pointed as an epiphany which helped to access many more opportunities. Only in that case, in fact, the job usually only available to British and European Union citizens became accessible also for third country nationals. Concerning migration policies, our respondents mainly focused upon the precariousness and the precarious temporality which often derive from having a visa with an

expiration date. This precariousness was perceived as a vulnerability, raising questions if living in the UK was the right choice and at the same time affecting the willingness as long as the possibilities of long term integration. They perceived to be integrated only to be able to 'function' in the period of time established by their specific visa. The sense of precariousness and temporality was often overcome when the indefinite leave to remain or, even better, British citizenship was acquired.

At the meso level, stakeholders focused upon a wide range of policies and programmes such as English courses and employability services, as potential enablers/barriers in the integration of migrants and refugees. They also focused upon discrimination and employers' lack of knowledge on migrants' rights as a relatively significant barrier. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers instead mainly reported discrimination and lack of employers knowledge of migration laws as one of the most salient issues in their experiences of the UK labour market. A discrimination bias towards non native English speakers and foreign names alongside a lack of information about migration laws were often highlighted as reasons behind job applications rejection and difficulties to access job interviews. Migrants and refugees often felt to be treated differently from British and European people and they often perceived they needed to be overqualified compared to them to have a chance to be selected for a job interview or a job position. Qualifications and experiences gained in the UK were perceived to be necessary conditions to be selected by employers. In fact, employers seem to often disregard experiences and education from other countries. They did not take the risk to change the pool of people they are used to select and hire somebody new and outside their conventional network of people. Discrimination often caused a mark in the life of migrants and refugees. The trauma of being treated differently from local people was so interiorised that it became almost acceptable by the migrant self, conditioning their motivations, ambitions and jobs they decided to accept. A marginal labour market, which only includes specific sector and mainly low paid jobs, was often identified as the only employment available to migrants, and refugees. While some of them had to accept jobs in that market because of their needs and commitments, moving on from those jobs then become almost impossible. They found themselves stuck forever in a marginal labour market.

At the micro level, lack of knowledge of the UK labour market, the difficulties of speaking English and lack of understanding of UK employment rights were often described by stakeholders as affecting the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. English proficiency and knowledge of UK labour market were also pointed as fundamental variables to access employability by our respondents. In particular English language was pointed as necessary also to achieve the needed confidence to deal with a different labour context. However, although these variables were identified as potential enablers by our respondents, they highlighted that they were not sufficient to guarantee access to the job market. Networking and developing social relations were pointed out as additional fundamental enablers to have the opportunity of being employed. Social capital, as bridging and bonding among communities, was seen most probably as the most critical enabler to access employability. Almost all of our respondents had to start from scratch to build their network, a network which did include third country nationals but also local people which could help to access employability. It took a lot of time and effort to do that. Volunteering was often marked as the primary mechanism for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers to develop personal connections outside their communities. Volunteering often represented a turning point in the life of our respondents because it generated the first access to UK work experiences and it helped to develop the network that it was fundamental to access the labour market. Finally, while stakeholders mainly focused upon trauma as a barrier to accessing integration, our respondents highlighted that the resilience generated by trauma acted as a propellant of integration, favouring positive labour outcomes. Therefore, although vulnerabilities and trauma were indeed barriers, the learning process that came out of addressing vulnerabilities and trauma helped to achieve a more favourable labour integration path.

8.5.2 Critical analysis of the adequacy of labour market integration: what should be changed in stakeholders' actions

Four different strategies and actions were foreseen by our respondents as possibly helpful to access the UK labour market: change the narrative behind migration and integration into labour market (macro level), work on employers knowledge of migration laws and employers discrimination, improve services that facilitate network development, support self-employment solutions (meso level) and better use the resilience of third country nationals (micro level). Each of them is discussed in turn.

At macro level, some of our respondents pointed to the importance of changing tone about migration and integration in the labour market. Migration *"is often perceived as a burden. Because we [referred to migrants] don't know anything about the context, we need help"* (Anita). The narrative is often sounding *"offensive, dehumanising and racist"* (Anita). Another tone should then be used, a tone which highlights the positive impact of migration and the needs and positive effects of including people from different background in the labour market. According to our respondents, more research which focuses on exploring the impact of third country nationals should also be developed, aiming at providing data that can support more positive policies and affect as well the general perception about migration.

At meso level, first, working on employers' knowledge about migration was highlighted by all our respondents. Employers should be *"convinced that migrants and refugees are good enough for the jobs they offer"* (Jack). Employers should give *"the opportunity to migrants to show how good they can be"* (Maria). More information should be available to them, to explore and understand how to recruit and select people with migration status. *"Human resource managers should know how to deal with visa and working permit, big companies usually do it, but not all companies know"* (Maria). Courses and information leaflet should be widely distributed and enforcing the attendance of human resource managers. Training should also be organised to make sure that staff are aware of different culture and that a more diverse workforce will have a positive effect such as helping employers in accessing a more diverse variety of markets. Information about how to evaluate and recognised skills and qualification from outside the UK should also be widely shared. Voluntary placements, work experience/shadowing and apprenticeships were also suggested as possible actions that employers could take to attract people from different backgrounds. Employers could also be incentivised to hire migrants and refugees and thus guidelines and processes *"on how to recruit a person from a refugee background, how to target and attract and how to make job positions more appealing to a refugee person"* (Danielle) should be a focus for development. In addition to that, the UK and Scottish government should call for action to monitor companies' workforce composition. Employers should be forced to publish data about their workforce and be *"accountable for equality"* (Danielle). Second, social capital of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers should be favoured and supported. Services which could help to widen the social network of people should be promoted. Volunteering experiences, for example, could be offered to all third country nationals arriving in the country while specific events should be organised to promote informal relations with the local community. Third sector organisations could play an essential role in this. They should work on decreasing the barriers that often people have to get to know people of the local community. Third, policy makers and stakeholders should improve the possibility of migrants and refugees to become self-employed. Services which take into account cultural differences and migrants peculiarities should be promoted. However, being self employed should be a choice and not the results of discrimination and inaccessibility of the labour market.

At the micro level, some of our respondents pointed out that there should be more support available to understand the UK context before arriving. A welcoming kit was suggested to reduce the potential cultural shock third country nationals could experience when arriving for the first time in the UK. In addition to that, the resilience of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers should be more used by stakeholders. For example, the learning process of third country nationals could be used to help other migrants to integrate into the labour market.

Third sector organisations, as well as employers, could for example engage their volunteers or employees who have a migrant background to engage or attract new volunteers and staff who have had similar experiences. It could be useful to develop a virtuous circle which can on the one side continue to reinforce resilience and on the other support better labour outcomes for all third country nationals.

8.6 Conclusion

Our analysis of the experiences of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers confirms that the UK context presents a very challenging environment for the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into the UK labour market. Following our analysis, three main conclusions can be drawn.

First, three different focal points related to the labour market integration were raised as particularly important. Concerning migration policies and laws, our respondents mainly focused upon the precariousness and the precarious temporality which often derive from having a visa with an expiration date. They perceived to be integrated only to be able to 'function' in the period of time established by their specific visa. The sense of precariousness and temporality was often overcome when the indefinite leave to remain or, even better, British citizenship was acquired. Changing their migration status then often represented a turning point and an epiphany to access more job opportunities. At the meso level, one of the most salient issues reported was discrimination. Migrants and refugees often felt to be treated differently from British and European people and they often perceived they needed to be overqualified compared to them to have a chance to be selected for a job interview or a job position. Discrimination often caused a mark in the life of migrants and refugees. The trauma of being treated differently from local people was so interiorised that it became almost acceptable by the migrant self, conditioning their motivations, ambitions and jobs they decided to accept. From being then a barrier of the system, discrimination became an individual barrier, affecting the life of migrants and refugees forever. Social capital, as bridging and bonding among communities, was seen most probably as the most critical enabler to access employability. Almost all of our respondents had to start from scratch to build their network, a network which did include third country nationals but also local people which could help to access employability. It took a lot of time and effort to do that.

Second, several actions were foreseen by our respondents as possibly helpful to access the UK labour market. More research which focuses on exploring the impact of third country nationals should be developed, aiming at providing data that can support more positive policies and affect as well the general perception about migration. This will help to change the tone about migration which was often perceived as offensive, dehumanising and racist. More information should be available to employers to discourage discrimination. Courses should be organised to make sure that staff are aware of different culture, understand how to recruit and select people with migration status and how to evaluate and recognise skills and qualification from outside the UK. Governments should call for action to monitor companies' workforce composition. Social capital of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers should be favoured and supported. Services which could help to widen the social network of people should be promoted. Volunteering experiences, for example, could be offered to all third country nationals arriving in the country while specific events should be organised to promote informal relations with the local community. Policy makers and stakeholders should improve the possibility of migrants and refugees to become self-employed.

Third, rarely the role of vulnerability is analysed by stakeholders and the specific barriers that these individuals encounter as a consequence of their particular experiences are rarely recognised. In our research vulnerability and consequent resilience play a key central role in favouring or not the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers into labour market. Resilience generated by trauma acted as a propellant of integration, favouring positive labour

outcomes. Therefore, although vulnerabilities and trauma were indeed barriers, the learning process that came out of addressing vulnerabilities and trauma helped to achieve a more favourable labour integration path. The learning process behind these paths could be used to help other migrants to integrate into the labour market, creating a virtuous circle of increasing resilience and better labour outcomes.

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- <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/exodus-from-syria/>
- <https://beingthestory.org.uk/spokesperson-network/speaker/hassan-akkad>
- <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2020/apr/08/bafta-winning-film-maker-becomes-hospital-cleaner-hassan-akkad-hassan-akkad-who-moved-to-london-from-syria-in-2015-says-he-wants-help-nhs-staff-fighting-coronavirus>
- <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/syrian-refugee-uks-coronavirus-front-lines-200518112745062.html>
- <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/hassan-akkad-coronavirus-nhs-cleaner-east-london-syria-refugee-a9459591.html>
- <https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/film/we-will-be-on-the-front-line-says-syrian-filmmaker-and-former-dubai-resident-hassan-akkad-who-is-helping-clean-nhs-hospital-1.1006198>

Other Articles selected for informing ethnodrama

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/world/europe/coronavirus-doctors-immigrants.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global/video/2020/apr/15/you-clap-for-me-now-the-coronavirus-poem-on-racism-and-immigration-in-britain-video>

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/08/the-nhs-needs-them-uk-urged-to-join-countries-mobilising-migrant-medics>

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<https://thebareuk.home.blog/2020/05/11/ethnic-minorities-are-disproportionately-dying-in-the-pandemic-the-uk-home-office-must-take-some-blame/>

8.8 Annex I, Demographic information on MRAs

Pseudonym of Interviewee *	Date of interview	Age	Gender	Family Status	Country of origin	Migration year	Education (primary, secondary, tertiary)	Current occupation in host country	Occupation in country of origin	Languages the individual speaks
John	23/10/2018	Early 40s	M	Married with children	Sudan	2012	Tertiary	Student	Public Sector Official	English, Arabic
Valerie	27/10/2018	Mid 30s	F	Married with children	Iran	2009	Tertiary	Unemployed	n.a	English, Persian
Jack	27/10/2018	Early 40s	M	Single	Iran	2011	Tertiary	Student and Waiter	Civil Servant	English, Persian
Maria	01/11/2018	30s	F	Married with children	Pakistan	2002	Tertiary	Not Working	n.a	English, Pakistani
Danielle	29/10/2018 – 10/03/2020	30s	F	Married	Somalia	2008	Tertiary	Policy Officer	n.a.	English, Arabic

Susan	1/07/2019	30s	F	Married	Malaysia	2011	Tertiary	PhD Student	Banker	English, Malay
Sofia	1/07/2019	30s	F	Married	Turkey	2006	Tertiary	PhD Student	Secretary	English, Turkish
Julie	8/07/2019	30s	F	Married with children	Algeria	2015	Tertiary	Not Working	Customer Support	English, Arabic, French
Tom	18/07/2019	30s	M	Single	Iraq/Iran	n.a.	Tertiary	Not Working	n.a.	English, Farsi and Kurdish
Anita	1/04/2020	30S	F	Married	Egypt	2015	Tertiary	Student	Not Working	English and Arabic
Artur	27/03/2020	30S	M	Single	Jamaica	2017	Tertiary	Student	Banker	English

8.9 Annex II, Summaries of conducted interviews

Interview Pseudonym	1 Short description of the interview, half page (including 1-2 turning points and 1-2 quotations)	Date
John	<p>John moved to the UK seven years ago when he has asked for asylum. He obtained refugee status and afterwards he is applying for citizenship. He is undertaking his second Master's degree and working part-time. He had previously completed a college course and Master's degree as soon as he arrived in the UK. Afterwards he began to study again from the bachelor level. He explained that his qualifications are not recognised in the UK due to the language barrier. Networking and developing social capital are pinpointed as fundamental to finding a job. Turning point: After his Master's he is hoping to open his own business due to his disappointment in the lack of success he has had thus far when sending his CV (receiving no feedback).</p> <p>Turning Point: Realising his qualifications were not useful to find a job in the UK; difficulties to access the job market</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: he <i>"realised that [his] qualification back home was not suitable to find a job in the UK"</i>. He obtained a bachelor degree and he was willing to obtain a Master, that <i>"hopefully will help [him] to find a job"</i> because he was not happy to work part time in a job that did not suit his qualification. <i>"I applied 5/6 times just for prison officer...and I have more qualification and they didn't invite me for the interview. And I phoned them why you are not calling me for an interview I am very qualified for this job just chasing you...and a lady told me because for this job you have to have a full citizenship. I am entitled to work in this country I have a paper...no... you have to be a full citizen..."</i>.</p>	23.10.2018
Valerie	<p>Valerie moved to the UK with her husband more than ten years ago. She has studied education and childcare but has struggled to find a job matching her skills. Thus, through a friend she was able to find a job in a sector that usually is related to the stereotype idea of her cultural background. She emphasised the importance of social connections in finding a job and the difficulties in having her qualifications recognised. She justified the idea of being discriminated and therefore she accepted to work in a job that reinforces a prejudicial idea of migrants. Her acceptance of the situation laid her resilience.</p>	27.10.2018

	<p>Turning Points: Accepting discrimination bias and decide to work in a job sector aligned to a stereotyped idea of her cultural difference.</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: <i>"I am working in something that is seen as related to our culture, so mostly Middle East people from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, are working in beauty treatment".</i></p>	
Jack	<p>Jack moved to the UK as a refugee with a United Nations resettlement programme. After working in a restaurant for a period of time, he was willing to regain the same quality of life he had before arriving to the UK.</p> <p>Turning Point: He realised that he didn't have the qualifications to be able to do that. So he has returned to education and is at the moment studying, working and volunteering at the same time.</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: He described as very challenging to work in a completely different field but he soon realised that he <i>"didn't have qualifications, certificate or language level to find the same job"</i> he had before flying away. He did not have <i>"a proper CV"</i> and he had just <i>"to make [it] step by step"</i>.</p>	27.10.2018
Maria	<p>Maria moved to the UK with her family when she was a teenager and she attended school, undertook an apprenticeship and attended university. She discussed in depth the difficulties of accessing the labour market and the high competition among candidates. Networking and social contacts were important to find jobs in her experience. She also emphasised the importance of informing companies about immigration policy rules, so people can have the opportunity to access the labour market.</p> <p>Turning Point: Understanding why she was not selected during job interviews</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: Seeing <i>"some people going to a couple of interviews and getting a job"</i> while she was struggling so much made herself questioning her skills and qualifications. She started to realise that Human Resource managers were expecting the candidates <i>"to do</i></p>	1.11.2018

	<i>something extraordinary...they expected people to be perfect".</i>	
Danielle	<p>Danielle is a refugee and she moved to the UK to undertake her funded graduate programme. She explained that learning English since the young age, her resilience and undertaking volunteering programs have all helped her to study first and find a job after. She is now working in a job aligned to her skills, qualifications and one that she enjoys.</p> <p>Turning point: volunteering for different organisations gave her contacts and confidence; learning English since she was a child gave her the level of language required to live in the UK; resilience helped her to find funds for her study</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: She used resilience as an example of her motivation to pursue her study: <i>"that was one of the things I used in the interview, they ask why I think I should get the scholarship, yes because I come to [the country of my nationality] for the first time, and my parents have not been in there in many years"</i>.</p> <p>As Danielle explained, accessing the UK job market <i>"is not just finding the link and applying for jobs. It is all about network connection and experience in the UK. So it is not easy to create personal connection if you are not here since you are born here"</i>.</p>	29/10/2018 – 10/03/2020
Susan	<p>Susan is an academic who moved in the UK 8 years ago to undertake her PhD. She highlighted that she had to lower her job expectations when she arrived in the UK. Network is very important to find a job and social class is also an important variable. She also pinpointed that since she gained a more permanent visa (spouse visa), a lot more opportunities became available.</p> <p>Turning point: Working in a call centre; obtain a spouse visa</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: The only easily and quickly accessible job that she could find was a position in a call centre. She described the experience of working there as a <i>"real experience of work"</i>. Although the job was not difficult because the process was defined and clear, she <i>"felt as an immigrant"</i> and for this she <i>"had to lower her level, to lower her ego"</i> and accept a job for which she was undoubtedly overqualified.</p>	1.07.2019

Sofia	<p>Sofia is an academic who was used to be a PhD student and a temporary worker (two part time jobs). She moved in the UK 13 years ago to study and to join her brother. She has intensively volunteered for different organisations and she recognised that this has helped her to widen her contact networks and increase her working experience in the UK. She highlighted how many more opportunities opened up when she obtained the British citizenship</p> <p>Turning point: acquiring British citizenship</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: She detailed that thanks to the acquisition of the citizenship she could enjoy <i>“different experiences without having any restriction”</i> but more than ever she <i>“could look like everyone else”</i> when competing for a job and have everyone else opportunities.</p>	1.07.2019
Julie	<p>Julie is an asylum seeker arrived in the UK 4 years ago with her family. She is volunteering in different organisations and she would like in the future to work with NGOs which help people. She described the different services she used and she pinpointed that volunteering will be very good to find a job but also to increase confidence. She explained that English is the most important variable to find a job and to become integrated in the community. She is planning to do a master in the future.</p> <p>Turning point: Learning English</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: She explained that <i>“If you don’t speak good English you can’t integrate. When you understand people, you have good communication, after that, everything becomes easy. You can then go to different organisations and you can volunteer”</i>.</p>	8.09.2019
Tom	<p>Tom moved to the UK as a refugees and he is currently a student enrolled in a course of childcare. He was drawn to this course and to the potential employment after receiving a Scottish Government leaflet which explained that there was a shortage of men taking up posts in childcare and education and therefore he saw it as an opportunity. He is very active in different organisations and he volunteers. He is taking part in the ESOL classes in the community and he described them as a potential starting point.</p>	18.07.2019

	<p>Turning point: Volunteering</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: No quotes – interview was not recorded</p>	
Anita	<p>Anita is a PhD student who moved to the UK to undertake her postgraduate studies. Thanks to the widening of her social network, she was able to find an internship and to understand what she wanted to do in her life. She describes the UK as her community and her home. However, she feels the precarity of living in the UK due to her temporary visa. She often feels at the border that she is only a guest and this precarity makes her questioning if she would like to live in the country for long term.</p> <p>Turning point: widening her social network; temporality and precarity</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: <i>“They make you feel that you are just a guest, they investigate you, you are a guest, they always ask a lot of questions, like are you going back home to get a job? Sometimes when you finish the border there is another desk with other people, you see looking at me. They will pick me out of the crowd, is it racist? Is it because I am not white? What is this about? They try to make it friendly but it is not, they stop you and they ask what are you plan for the future, they really make clear that I am not welcomed to stay as long as you want”.</i></p>	1.04.2020
Artur	<p>Artur is a PhD student who moved to the UK to undertake his study. He highlighted how temporality and solitude are perceived as affecting his integration. He feels that there is a clock on his migration status and he is only integrated to function in the country.</p> <p>Turning point: feeling of solitude and temporality</p> <p>Quotes used in the text: from exploring how to register to the GP up to understand the legal implication of his student visa. The <i>“shock of the integration process”</i> instilled in him a sense of precarious temporality. He felt that he was <i>“integrated enough to function”</i> while he was living in the country but because he was only a student with an <i>“expiration date”</i> on his visa <i>“there was no need for further integration”</i>.</p>	27.03.2020

8.10 Annex III, Individual biographies

Author: Francesca Caló

The UK job market seems inaccessible for refugees that have been through the asylum system. They often depend on themselves and their business ideas to become integrated in the job market. This is what we can learn from the story of John.

John #1

John arrived in the UK in 2012 with his wife and three kids. However, he had already lived in the UK in the past, but had made return to his home country, and then had to fly away from it due to safety reasons, and that is when he joined the UK again in 2012, this time with his family. The knowledge of the system he acquired in that period, and the historical connection of the UK with his home country affected the choice of the country (UK) he decided to request asylum to.

An extended period of sacrifice, waiting and patience

When he arrived in the UK, he soon realised that he had to “*start from zero*” because his previous education and work experiences were not recognised or suitable for the UK. He described that period as “*a long period of sacrifice, waiting and patience*”. At the beginning of his asylum journey, he and his family were helped by non profit organisations with their most urgent needs, such as housing and legal application for the refugee status. After the two years he spent to get to know the community where he was living and to address his legal case, he started to look for a job. However, he didn’t find that so much support was available from public and private bodies. The lack of support and the consequent feeling of being trapped in an unpleasant situation was the first turning point in his path. He felt constrained in an endless path of referrals, where the public sector was often pointing him to other places they had a partnership with once “*they were fed up*” with his case. A vicious cycle that did not help to access the job market was then developed. Thus, he decided to start his study path, as the only way to be able to fulfil his ambition.

Network, network, network

First, he started his college courses. He then was able to start a graduate programme through the recognition of his educational qualification. During this graduate programme, he was able to get his first work experience in the UK thanks to his ability to develop a wide network of contacts. Because of his willingness to help refugees, he established a link between his community and a non-profit organisation ready to support new beneficiaries. Thanks to him, a new partnership between two non-profit organisations was advanced. This led him very close to one of the organisations and they offered him a volunteer placement. The opportunity to have a placement through the widening of his networking represented an epiphany in his life. He understood how the UK job system worked. However, the placement was not in his field of interest and he decided to continue to study while doing at the same time the part-time job.

Why they don’t recruit me?

He decided to undertake an undergraduate programme in a field of his interest in which he hoped to find more job opportunities. When he finished his undergraduate course, he applied for several jobs. With three kids that wanted to be integrated into their community of friends, money was often not enough. He decided to also apply to jobs he perceived to be overqualified for. He was never shortlisted neither for an interview. Any of the companies contacted replied to his request of explanations. This represented his second turning point. His confidence was deeply affected by this experience and he often asked himself “*why people they don’t recruit me... is it because of my background? It is because I am a refugee?*”. He perceived that there was a sort of discrimination or marginal labour market in which only few jobs and in particular

low skilled ones were the only opportunities available to refugees. He often asked himself *"should I go to normal jobs as I say kitchen or security jobs or the easy stuff"* or should I continue to pursue my ambitions and aspirations? His resilience helped him to continue to pursue his ambition. He started a graduate programme in his field of interest.

Never again

At the moment of our interview, he was finalising his second Master and he was planning to try to work in his field of interest. He perceived that adapting to *"how the systems work"* was a key variable to access the labour market. He was planning to introduce himself as a voluntary placement. After getting experience, contacts and references he would try to apply to several jobs in his field. However, he didn't want to *"chasing people to recruit him"*. If rejection would be the result of his application, once again, he would develop his own job. Sometimes *"we need to open idea for people like me to make their own job"*. And sometimes this is the only solution in the UK if you are a refugee.

Hassan Akkad #2

Resilience helps to become integrated into the labour market and gives a voice to refugees in the policy arena. The story of Hassan is not based upon biographical interviews but based upon secondary data such as videos, newspapers articles and newspaper interviews. We chose Hassan because of his contribution to the fight of coronavirus as a hospital cleaner and his ability to campaign for refugees and migrants' rights.

From being a school teacher in Syria to becoming a film maker in England

Hassan is a young refugee from Syria arrived in the UK in 2015. He was a school teacher and a photographer before leaving his own country. He described the life in Syria as *"normal, quiet, peaceful, until it wasn't so any more"*. While he was protesting the Assad regime, he was incarcerated and tortured twice. When he got out, he was banned from working and lost his teaching job. Syria was not feeling *"as home anymore"* and he was terrified by the police force. He could not *"see peace anymore"* and he just wanted *"to go somewhere else and restart his life"*. He decided to leave his own country to travel to Europe. So he started to organise his journey. Reading the news and information on how to make the journey, he noticed, a lot of negative comments towards refugees and people flying wars and famine. *"The amount of hatred"* he read made him feel that he had a responsibility of communicating the difficulties of the journey. He needed *"to show the world how difficult it was to do it"*. He bought a GoPro, memory sticks and a power bank and he started his journey. He carried on filming across the entire route, when he was almost dying crossing the sea, when he had to cross the Hungarian border and when he lived in Calais. He kept on filming because it *"made him feel a lot better"*. He *"was no longer the refugee fleeing war, and going to England, he was the filmmaker"*. It gave him *"comfort"*, it helped him *"mentally, psychologically"*. It comforted him *"to stay stable and having that urge to carry on to get to where I want to get"*.

While he was in Calais close to the Eurostar station filming, by *"pure coincidence"*, he met a group of English people who offered him a cigarette. They thought he was a reporter and a filmmaker. They were the team behind a BBC2 documentary series about people filming their journeys. They offered him to become involved in the project and he accepted. He wanted *"to get the word out and there was no better platform than the BBC to show the people what it's like to do the journey"*. After almost three months of travel Hassad was able to access England and ask for asylum. His footage was included in a documentary series - Exodus: Our Journey to Europe.

From being a video maker to becoming a hospital cleaner during the Covid-19

Although there are not so many information available about the life of Hassan in the last five years since he arrived in London, secondary data suggest that he has worked in film and TV production alongside volunteering for a refugee advocacy organisation. According to

newspaper articles, he continued with his film and TV work in the UK until the virus brought production to a standstill. He was a researcher on the Exodus sequel and also appeared in it; he was a consultant on Rufus Jones's Syrian refugee-themed sitcom *Home*; and a producer on Steve Chatterton and Mark Arrigo's short film *Adnan*. As the virus started spreading in the UK, it became clear to him that *"life could not continue as normal"*. He decided to step away from his work as a filmmaker and finding a way to *"make a more direct contribution to his community"*. He felt that he wanted to support his neighbours and that if *"we come together in kindness and love, wherever we're from, whatever we look like, and no matter how much we make, we can fundamentally reshape this world"*. He applied to the NHS volunteering scheme, and for seasonal work in agricultural fields outside London, but didn't get a response. After that, he came across a call for cleaners for his local hospital and they called him after his application submission. On the 7th April he wrote on Twitter alongside his picture dressed up for the ward: *"Honoured to join an army of cleaners disinfecting Covid wards our local hospital after receiving training. London has been my home since leaving Syria, and the least I can do is making sure my neighbours and the amazing NHS staff are safe and sound. #StayHomeSaveLives"*. His tweet was seen, liked and retweeted by more than 100,000 people. After this, several newspaper articles and television programmes interviewed Hassan and reported his story. He decided to *"put the twitter out to send a message about opening borders and welcoming others and how, migrants and refugees ... actually do call the country that gave them refuge home, and they can look after it and they will be on the front line"*. From being a filmmaker, he became not only a cleaner in the front line but also a voice for migrants and refugees key workers.

From being a hospital cleaner during the Covid-19 to become a policy influencer

The popularity he achieved thanks to his social media, the newspapers articles and the interviews on the television channels, helped him to communicate to a wider range of public his message of solidarity, integration and working rights for migrants and refugees. On the 20th May, he published a twitter plead to the UK Government to extend the bereavement scheme for NHS workers to low-paid categories who were excluded in the first instance. The bereavement scheme grants indefinite leave to remain to relatives of foreign nationals NHS and social care staff who die from Covid-19. By the same evening his tweet had been liked or retweeted more than 100,000 times. The scheme was extended to cleaners, porters and social care workers thanks to the work of pressure from unions, politicians as well as everyone such as Hassad, who spoke out. Hassad decided to use his platform and increased popularity *"to open spaces for discussion on how we can create a more fair inclusive and kind society that recognises the contributions from all over the world make not just to the NHS, but to our country as a whole"*. He is giving voices to the stories and faces of migrants and refugees, hoping to change the discourses and the narratives he used to read before facing his long and peril journey.

8.11 Annex IV, Ethnodrama

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Act One – Scene One

Friday 1 May 2020 in the changing room outside an intensive care unit in a hospital close to Liverpool, a Doctor is looking at the mirror. He will soon dress up to start his shift. He is one of the doctors that is dealing with the Covid-19 patients, he is a refugee, and he is living in Liverpool with his wife and three kids. He doesn't hug them since the beginning of March, for their safety, he moved to a studio flat where he lives alone. He looks at himself at the mirror, he looks tired, the mask has left marks on his face and he has a 12 hours shift in front of him.

He hears hands clapping and he looks up at the television. The news is showing the celebration of the previous evening, millions of people clapping their hands to celebrate key workers and their contribution to save the nation from the pandemic. He switches the channel and watches the news announcing the coronavirus statistic for the day. He changes again and a group of people singing "You clap for me now" smiles from the television. While he hears the rhyme, he smiles too, maybe today is going to be a good day: You clap for me now, you cheer as I toil, bringing food to your family, bringing food from your soil, propping up your hospitals, not some foreigner invader, delivery driver, teacher, life saver. Don't say go home, don't say not here. (You clap for me now poem).

Act One- Scene Two

Nurse Angela: Good morning Dr Zaid, how are you?

Dr Zaid: Good morning Angela, ready to start...what about you?

Nurse Angela: always ready...a new patient is arriving in the unit. They have just picked him up from his flat. 55 years old, he struggles to breathe and he got his temperature for two weeks, his blood oxygenation is under 92%, clear symptoms of Covid-19. It doesn't look good.

Dr Zaid: Ok, let's dress up and start a new day.

(the team dresses up and waits for the new patient to arrive in the intensive care unit)

Act One – Scene Three

(The ambulance team brings the patient in. He is very weak and confused but he is still aware of the surroundings).

Dr Zaid: Good morning, I am Doctor Zaid and I am the consultant that will take care of your case. You are in good hands and you are... *(reading the medical records)* ...Mr Stephen Smith. *(The voice of his wife suddenly says, whispering in his ear: Don't you remember him? He froze. He immediately recognises that name. How could he forget? He was his neighbour fifteen years ago).*

Act Two – Scene One

Flashback: a much younger Dr Zaid and his pregnant wife are coming back from shopping. They are happy and excited because for the first time since they have arrived in the UK they rented a small but nice flat where to start to build a new life. They are in front of their door flat and suddenly its neighbour door opens.

Mr Smith: are you the new neighbour?

Dr Zaid: yes, we just moved here a couple of weeks ago. Nice to meet you. *(He is very happy to meet the new neighbour. In his country, it is very important to meet neighbours as a matter of courtesy).*

Mr Smith: *(speaking very slowly with the idea that Dr Zaid would struggle to understand):* ah...where do you come from? What do you do in life?

Dr Zaid: *(perplexed by the question):* we are from Syria but we moved to the UK almost one year ago. I am a Doctor, or better I was a Doctor in Syria. At the moment I am dealing with the process of getting my qualification recognised. What about you?

Mr Smith: *(ignoring the question and speaking with his wife):* another person who is going to steal our jobs while he is going to live on benefits. *(Mr Smith closed his door)*

Act Two – Scene Two

Back in the hospital: Dr Zaid is trying to cancel from his memories the unwelcoming words that Mr Smith told him several years ago. It was one of the few times he felt really unwelcome. Dr Zaid as a younger man is repairing the sink of his flat. He doesn't have all the instruments so he knocks the door to his neighbour to ask for help. No reply although there is somebody at

home. The sink continues to leak, louder and louder. But it is not the sink it is the IV of Mr Smith. Dr Zaid comes back to the reality, he is ready to treat the patient at the best of his capacity. He instructs his team to act fast and he is collecting all instruments to intubate Mr Smith to give him a chance to survive. But before he is starting the procedure, Mr Smith touches his arm and makes a sign that he wants to speak.

Mr Smith: I remember you. The Syrian Doctor...How did... (*Mr Smith can't finish his sentence because of his lack of breath but he looks around making clear that he is asking about Dr Zaid started to work in a hospital*).

Dr Zaid immediately follows Mr Smith look and understands that he wanted to ask how did he figure out to become a consultant in that hospital in the UK. He starts to smile. Other memories come back. Flashback: during a rainy day, Dr Zaid is entering an office.

Dr Zaid: Hello, good morning, how are you?

Officer: Hello, good morning, what can I do for you?

Dr Zaid: I am trying to understand how to recognise my qualification as a Doctor from Syria, could you please help me?

Officer: yes, of course, you should read this information online and come back after that.

Two days after reading the information online, he comes back to the office.

Dr Zaid: Hello, good morning, how are you?

Officer: Hello, good morning, what can I do for you?

Dr Zaid: I am trying to understand how to recognise my qualification as a Doctor from Syria. I came a couple of days ago and your colleagues gave me the information on how to do that. I read about this programme, which helps access training, language support and professional mentoring. How can I subscribe to that?

Officer: Yes, of course, you should contact this non profit organisation, they will give you all the information on how to subscribe to the course.

(another day, another office)

Dr Zaid: Hello, good morning, how are you?

Officer: Hello, good morning, what can I do for you?

Dr Zaid: I would like to recognise my qualification as a Doctor from Syria, can I subscribe to your programme?

Officer: yes of course, you are in the right place. We will help you to improve your language knowledge and meet the standards for professional registration.

Dr Zaid: it sounds great, many thanks, when can I start?

Officer: there is a language class in a community centre close to your flat. It runs every Friday from 11 to 12:30, you can go there, and in the meantime, we will put your name on the college waiting list. Here the address.

Dr Zaid: Many thanks, I will go there and wait for you to call me back.

Act Two – Scene Three

(Friday, in the community centre)

Dr Zaid: Hello good morning, I am here for the English class.

Officer: Hello good morning, yes of course, it is upstairs.

Dr Zaid: Thank you, have a nice day.

(Dr Zaid climbs the stairs and enters in a room full of students, he is welcomed by the teacher and he sits down in one of the groups)

Zeeshan Classmate: Hello, how are you? I am Zeeshan, nice to meet you.

Dr Zaid: Hello, I am Hassad, nice to meet you.

Zeeshan Classmate: wow, you have a great accent, where did you learn English?

Dr Zaid: thank you so much, my father always told me, since I was a kid, to study English, and I love the English language, I have always been used to read and watch English speaking movie. I have also studied English at the University.

Zeeshan Classmate: that's great, having a nice accent and speaking like native people is very important, particularly if you want to find a job.

Dr Zaid: I hope so, I am only starting now my process to recognise my qualification, hopefully it will not take long.

Zeeshan Classmate: I hope so for you. I am still waiting for my asylum request to be processed, so I am not allowed to work. I can only attend English classes which are helping me to increase my confidence. Volunteer is also very important and useful for me. It is good for my mental health and I got to know a lot of people and I practice the language. My friends that live here since a while always told me that network is fundamental to find a job.

Dr Zaid: I would love to volunteer. I used to volunteer in Syria during my free time, I was giving medical consultation in a community practice. Where do you volunteer?

Zeeshan Classmate: I volunteer here in the community centre, we organise a community lunch every Friday and a food bank to help people with some fresh food. Why don't you stay afterwards?

Dr Zaid: yes, it sounds great, I would love to help and get to know better the community where I live.

(Dr Zaid became one of the volunteers of the organisation. He helped every Friday to cook and serve food to a wide range of people. He always had a smile and a kind word for everybody).

Act Two – Scene Four

(After few months Dr Zaid is going to visit another office to undertake the English test to register as a Doctor)

Dr Zaid: Good morning, I am here to do my Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board test.

Officer: Good morning, please leave all your belongings and wait for being called.

Dr Zaid: many thanks

(Dr Zaid is a bit nervous, he needs to take an English test but it is a lot of years since he took his last exam. He can't fail, he is one step closer to become a Doctor again. Dr Zaid sits in front of a computer and undertakes his language test, legs and hands are trembling. His face is slightly wet)

Officer: many thanks for attending, we will send you the results as soon as possible.

Act Two – Scene Five

(After two months, Dr Zaid is ready to finalise his application as a refugee doctor for the General Medical Council. He visits the local library where there are computers available)

Dr Zaid: Good morning, do you have a computer available for me?

Officer: Good morning, yes of course, here the username and the password to surf the web. Your pc is number 6.

Dr Zaid: Many thanks

(Dr Zaid sits in front of a computer and apply for his licence, another step closer to be able to go back to work)

Act Two- Scene Six

(after few months, another office)

Dr Zaid: Good morning, I am Dr Zaid I am here for a job interview for the post as acute medicine consultant

Officer: Good morning Dr Zaid, if you could please wait in the lounge, you will be called as soon as possible. Would you like coffee or tea?

Dr Zaid: Many thanks, very appreciated but I am fine

Another Officer: Dr Zaid? Nice to meet you, I am Dr Thomas, if you could please follow me?

Dr Zaid: Nice to meet you too.

(Dr Zaid follows Dr Thomas)

Two years after: after English classes, volunteering, language test, registration to the council and several job applications, Dr Zaid entered again in a hospital as a doctor. The doors of the hospital opens. He goes inside and takes a deep breath. He smiles and He will never forget his feeling that morning. He also remembers his first patient. An old lady appears on the stage. She asked him why he was so happy and smiling. He replied that he would have been able to give back to the community that became home for him and his family.

Act Three – Scene One

Back in the hospital

Dr Zaid: Mr Smith, it was a long period of sacrifice, waiting and patience. I am here today happy to serve my community and the country that I now call home. Glad to serve you too.