

Labor Market Integration of Newly arrived Refugees in Norway

Preliminary findings

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Title of my PhD-project:

“Newly arrived refugees` migration experiences: a qualitative study of the role civil society plays as a mediator between individuals and the Norwegian labor market”

- Part of larger research project called MAVI.
- Examine the experience and roles of multiple stakeholders in the process of labor market integration: municipal agencies, civil society, asylum seekers & refugees

<https://www.maviproject.no/more-about-mavi>

Research questions

- How do individual and structural factors influence newly arrived refugees` aspirations and actual participation in the labor market?
- What role do civil society actors play in the aspirations of newly arrived refugees to participate in the labor market?

The Norwegian context – refugee settlement



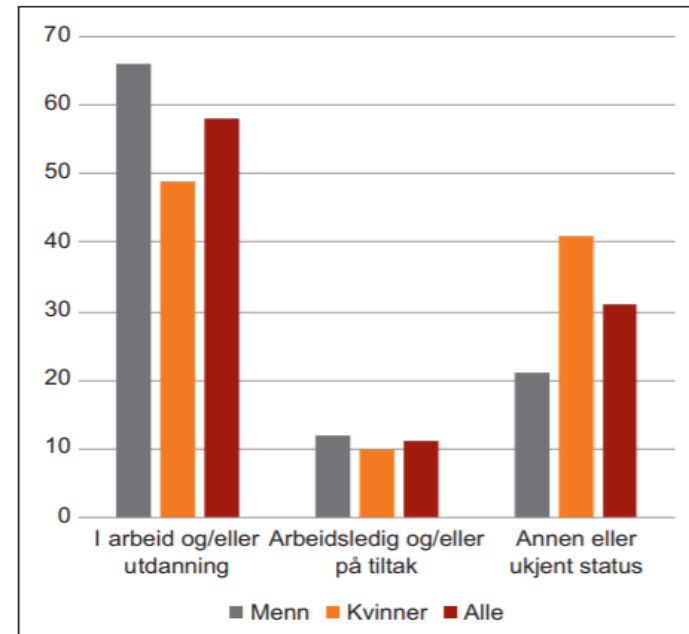
The Introduction program

- The Introduction Act (2003)
- Targeting newly arrived refugees and their family members age 18-55
- Aiming at strengthening refugees` qualifications to enter the labor market (language training, social studies, job training)
- Strong regional variations (in programme structure, content, and outcomes)

(Brochmann 2017; Djuve et. Al 2017; Djuve, Kavli, Sterri, & Bråten, 2017; Wong, 2020)
<https://www.imdi.no/kvalifisering/regelverk/introduksjonsprogrammet>

Target for outcomes in the introduction programme: 70 % of participants should be enrolled in higher education or in employment one year after finishing the introduction programme.

Numbers for Stavanger in 2016: 52%



Figur 4.7 Andel deltakere som gikk ut av introduksjonsprogrammet 2014. Status i 2015. Prosent

Kilde: Statistisk sentralbyrå

Research design



Qualitative
longitudinal
approach

Semi-structured
individual interviews

Participant
observation

Longitudinal
aspect: re-
interviewing
respondents one
year after the
initial interview

Fieldwork



- 1st phase of fieldwork: May 2020 –
- 13 individual interviews – 9 with refugees, 4 with representatives from civil society organizations
- Participant observation over a period of 6 months, with two different organizations

Sample



Two groups of respondents: **newly arrived refugees** and **representatives from civil society organizations**

Newly arrived refugees (9)

- 5 men, 4 women
- From Syria, Somalia, Turkey and Congo
- Variation in age and educational level

Representatives from civil society organizations (4):

- Employees in the organizations

Preliminary findings – experienced barriers



Main reason for the experienced barriers, seem to be a sense of **outsidedness**

Labor market aspirations in a downward spiral?

«I thought it would be easier to get a job in Norway. And now there have been fewer jobs and it is more difficult to get a job. (...) I am used to working from a young age so I had hopes and expectations that it will be easy to get a job. But the job part is disappointing, and I'm still looking for it.»

Amiira, Somalia

“ I was very motivated and was happy. I had a goal I was going to reach. But now I have not got a job and I have lost motivation. And what I think is: "You never get a job. You never get a job." I do not have that motivation, I have lost motivation, I have lost hope when it comes to work. I do not think even if I apply (...),I have no expectations that I will get the job at all ”.

Maryamo, Somalia

Experienced barriers

Language

- Language expressed as key element for entering the labor market
- Yet, language is also experienced as one of the greatest barriers

Aligns with findings from several other studies (Joyce, 2019; Djuve et.al 2017,)



Experienced barriers

Religious discrimination/racism

Female, Muslim respondents invariably pointed out experiences of discrimination because of religion/religious appearance

“They say in Norway, that here everyone can dress the way they want to. But then they also have to accept that I choose to dress like this”

Maryamo, Somalia



Experienced barriers



The time after the introduction program

«I was home. Did nothing special. Visited others but that was it. I have not done anything else.»

Amiira, Somalia

«The problem is not with intro [the introduction program], but after intro. When they are transferred to NAV; they...hit the wall.»

Bashar, Syria

«She [NAV] did not find any more work for me and since I finished intro, there was nothing more she could do. (...) So then I just stayed home and had more children.»

Maryamo, Somalia

«After intro, you lose the assistance or help you can get from intro. (...) when I finished intro, I feel completely lost. Can't find who can help me.»

Ayla, Syria

Consequenses of the idleness experienced after intro

- Slowly loosing the Norwegian they have learnt during their training – lack of Norwegian practice
- Isolation
- Little or no contact with the majority community



Next step - the role of civil society organizations

- Weak connection between NEET* refugees and public stakeholders after the introduction program
- Next step: possible role of civil society organization?
 - avoiding a reversed language process
 - creating and maintaining aspiration for work in a time of waiting
 - preventing isolation by connecting refugees and the majority population

*NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training)

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