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THE CHALLENGES OF INTEGRATION OF SYRIAN REFUGEES AND
ASYLUM SEEKERS IN COLOGNE

M.A. Thesis

by

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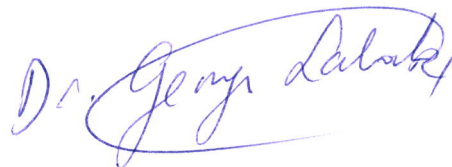


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Abstract

A current survey by UNHCR counted 65 million refugees worldwide. Many of them are seeking security and improved economical chances in industrial countries. The overwhelming numbers took most of the European countries and governments by surprise. Despite international moral and humanitarian obligation, refugee welcome culture and integration policies are nonetheless facing many challenges when confronted with the day to day reality.

Refugees and asylum seekers from Syria make up the largest group of arrivals in Germany both in 2015 and 2016. Learning the language, one of the most important factors of a successful integration process, helps newcomers to be prepared for the daily life challenges that come with the process. However, difficulties in learning the language, among other factors, make refugees and asylum seekers from Syria less likely to achieve successful integration in Germany. In order to put this claim to the test, this work will be looking at the following indicators of integration: language acquisition, entry into the labor market, housing, interaction with locals in addition to feedback from Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Cologne on the integration process, successes, challenges and aspirations.

Using the ego-ecological psycho-contextual analysis developed by Prof. Marisa Zavalloni this work uses the above-mentioned indicators as guiding pillars to a survey pertaining to the measurement of integration success of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria in Cologne. A lot of factors can influence the process of integration. Some very influential factors that could sometimes be overlooked might make all the difference. Even if refugees and asylum seekers from Syria find themselves in the best environment for integration, a successful integration process might still be almost impossible if they do not genuinely have a true desire and will to integrate. On the other hand, even if refugees and asylum seekers from Syria have the strong will to integrate, their successful integration would still depend on the readiness of the host community to welcome and accept them.

Introduction

In 2015, over one million unauthorized refugees and migrants entered the EU borders by land and by sea resulting in what is currently known as ‘ the European refugee crisis ‘. The overwhelming numbers took most of the European countries and governments by surprise. This triggered a huge debate regarding how best to deal with this influx. While some countries, such as Hungary, resulted to closing their borders others like Germany decided to let the refugees in.

A current survey by UNHCR counted 65 million refugees worldwide.¹ Many of them are seeking security and improved economical chances in industrial countries. Another significant portion of refugees and asylum seekers are simply escaping an almost certain death. Although in theory and according to international law and UN conventions helping those refugees is perceived as a moral and humanitarian obligation, refugee welcome culture and integration policies are nonetheless facing many challenges when confronted with the day to day reality. Integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the Europe is already a very controversial political topic. This is especially true today in the context of the rise in hard right wing anti-immigration populism in the European political sphere as several elections in Europe have shown.

Even though right wing populists did not exactly win in any of the elections, the results have raised a lot of concerns as the popularity of these movements appears to be growing nonetheless; this was evident in the case of the French presidential elections in addition to parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, Germany and Austria. Integration in itself seems to be a double edged sword in Europe. On the one hand, there is popular concern that a failed

integration of refugees and asylum seekers in the industrial countries will create social tensions endangering societal acceptance of refugees. If integration however is successful, even more will come, and most likely not return to their countries of origin.

Another more far right concern is that the flooding of Europe with refugees and asylum seekers could ultimately endanger European culture and the core values that the EU was built upon. Some of the most voiced concerns in this context revolve about questions of the general position towards immigration, how to best manage refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants who are already there?

How to best integrate refugees and asylum seekers? What to do with those of them who are unable to integrate? Is it acceptable to send them back to their more or less safe countries and not breach human rights' and international law? Are they really in need of asylum or are they simply pursuing better economic opportunities? The background for these concerns seems to be that individual EU countries and the EU in general is torn between human rights concerns and considerations on the one hand and European security imperatives and the safety of EU citizens and the Western culture and way of life on the other.

Recently it appears that the refugee crisis is putting even more pressure on the EU. Some countries like Germany struggle to preserve a positive attitude and a welcoming culture towards the refugees and asylum seekers; despite the ever growing socioeconomic, cultural and political concerns. Other European countries are more rigid and prioritize the security-related concerns in addition to the cultural, financial and social impact and repercussions of the refugee crisis over the humanitarian consideration of the biggest refugee crisis in Europe after WWII.

¹ United Nations. "Figures at a Glance." UNHCR, www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html.

For Germany, the decision of making this welcome culture a nation-wide attitude is driven mainly by two factors. Based in an ethical and human rights-based approach that is at the same time rooted in international law and standards, and as a signatory of the United Nation Convention related to the status of refugees, Germany is, in theory, bound to accept all refugees and asylum seekers. An asylum seeker is defined in the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as “ someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”²

In addition to the above, Germany’s own demography and its ageing population is expected to exert pressure on the German economy in the mid to long term projections and a high demand on labor force in the labor market has to somehow be balanced with foreign labor force. Receiving rounds of guest workers mainly from Turkey post WWII is something that the German are very familiar with. But the concern nowadays is that Germany may have “added hundreds of thousands of new dependents on the state, most with few job skills and no language preparation.”³

From the general, the paper then moves on to take a closer look at the regional EU policies on the above-mentioned topics. This will be followed by a critical comparative assessment of the compatibility between the International level and the regional. This paper aims to as much as possible search for and try to provide a bit of context on the topic both from the perspective of the host community and from the perspective of the ‘newcomers’.

For the other EU member states that are not so pro- refugee welcome culture and especially European countries such as Greece, Italy and Hungary this approach makes very little sense

² 1951 Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees

³ Dougherty, Michael Brendan. "On Migration, Europe Is Admitting the Truth to Itself." *National Review*. N.p., 27 June 2017. Web. 01 July 2017.

when one considers their own realities. One good reason might be that a large number of their own unemployment rates.⁴ The discrepancy between the theoretical, legal and humanitarian obligations and the reality on the ground is another interesting aspect to look at.

The reasoning is as follows: EU laws, international humanitarian law and United Nations conventions all suggest that refugees and asylum seekers have to be taken in and offered protection of their right to life and a decent living. Not only that, but also the protection of the freedom of opinion in addition to the political and religious freedoms need to be preserved and safeguarded especially for the people whom their or their families' right to life might be jeopardized in their countries of origin. This entails that, in theory, EU human rights make it mandatory for EU member states to uphold these ideals and make sure they not only apply to EU citizens since such ideals are presumed to be universal and inalienable.

However, in a context of the rise of religious extremism and its possible implications; such as terrorist organizations and threats to safety and security, and with the more or less uncontrollable flow of refugees and asylum seekers from basically all over the third world and developing countries and especially countries in the middle east and north Africa, the fear is that in the middle of all of this chaos, terrorists would also attempt to enter the EU countries disguised as refugees in order to destabilize the region following extremist agendas. In addition to the above, perhaps the lesson of the century is that in the presence of this culture of fear of the other, it is somehow easier to compromise on certain values such as: human rights', social justice and tolerance.

Ironically it is exactly the promotion of the culture of "fear of the other" mixed usually with some form of ethnic-based or religious based racism that is the foundation of extremist ideology; be it religious extremism or right wing populist extremism. Both value this

⁴ Ibid.

environment as a base from which they could spread and market their ideas especially when it comes to recruiting members.

As a natural consequence of the flow of refugees and asylum seekers on the one hand and the socioeconomic, cultural and security-related concerns on the other came the rise of a reactionary movement driven by a lot of fear and some justifiable security and economic concerns which ultimately led to the rise of right wing populism not only in Europe but also in the US and Australia. The vicious cycle appears to be as follows:

Extremists hide among the refugees and asylum seekers and make them look like a threat. Right wing populists deal with all the refugees and asylum seekers as if they were all members of ISIS or other extremist organizations. The latter causes a lot of tension resulting in many aggressive incidents between some members of the host community on one side and the refugees and asylum seekers on the other. These attacks and hostilities then feed back into the extremist rhetoric of “Islam and Muslims are being targeted and persecuted in the West” which in turn also serves the extremist rhetoric by providing material that help recruit more “lost souls” not only from the refugee and asylum seekers’ pool but also from Muslims and Muslim converts in the West.

After having briefly described the context, it is important to mention the huge influence of all of these variables on migration, asylum and integration of refugees and asylum seekers in EU member states. This influence varies among EU member states depending on the pre-existing differences in politics and policy approaches between them.

Numbers

According to Eurostat, over 350000 Syrian nationals fleeing their war torn country, between 150000 and 200,000 Afghans and over 100,000 Iraqis constituted the biggest chunk in 2015 in addition to others from Kosovo, Albania, Pakistan, Eritrea, Nigeria, Iran and Ukraine.

First time asylum applicants consists of around 442,000 filed asylum applications in Germany; indicating a rise of 269000 when compared to the previous year.⁵

“The German interior ministry said about 280,000 migrants applied for protection in 2016, less than a third of the 890,000 applications received in 2015.”

Syrians make up the largest group of arrivals both in 2015 and 2016. So what is their experience with the integration process in Germany and how this is working out for them or not and if not, why? This is important to examine especially from the perspective of the Syrian refugees and asylum seekers themselves.

Although this is not really an unprecedented phenomenon, fleeing for one’s life, and seeking to save the lives of one’s family members at any cost has never manifested itself in the intensity of this recent refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War. Moreover, the political implications on the EU as a regional organization, as a promoter of human rights and as a safe union for its citizens and residents seem to be at stake.

Integration

Learning the language, one of the most important factors, helps newcomers to be prepared for the daily life challenges that come with the process of integration. What is it like for refugees

⁵ Asylum statistics. (2016, April 20). Retrieved January 06, 2017, from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

and asylum seekers from Syria to learn German? How is this forwarding their integration in the German society? Because talking about integration and actually experiencing it are two completely different things it was necessary to get the perspective of the refugees and asylum seekers themselves.

Syria is going since 2011 through a ferocious and very complicated civil war. Experiencing firsthand how challenging the integration process can be, it was necessary to examine how this integration reality looks like for Syrian refugees in Germany. If integration is not exactly easy, even for someone who has planned and prepared ahead of time, how is it like for another person who has had to flee for their life?

This paper intends to test the claim that: Difficulties in learning the language, among other factors, make refugees and asylum seekers from Syria less likely to achieve successful integration in Germany.

Literature Review

It appears that the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers in Europe is affected by factors that are “internal” to these communities as well as other factors that are out of control for these groups and communities which will be called “external” factors. “Internal” factors in the sense that individuals’ and groups’ personal subjective experiences such as hard realities of persecution, oppression, violence, traumas in addition to low levels of education and economic prospects and expertise in their countries of origin.

“External factors” are seen as certain imposed realities as soon as the decision of fleeing for their lives and the lives of their family members was taken and they had to throw themselves into the unknown for the sake of either protecting their lives or searching for a better one that provides the much wanted dignity and decent living. Another important sub-factor in the external factors is the integration policies of the respective host-community.

Difficulties in learning the language is a significant factor that hinders the integration process. It could have significant consequences on the other “pillars of integration” such as the access to the labor market in addition to the interaction with local authorities and the host community. This in turn make refugees and asylum seekers from Syria less likely to achieve a successful integration in Germany. This thesis will try, as much as possible, to take into consideration both types of factors and try to build a more holistic understanding of the reality of the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria in the city of Cologne in Germany.

The fear of persecution and/or violence, mentioned in the UNHCR’s definition of refugees, can be based on racial, religious, nationality-related, political opinion or adherence to a

particular social group.⁶ This definition is of course grounded in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees.⁷

Moreover, even though the terms refugee and asylum seeker are often used interchangeably in today's political discourse, it is necessary to clarify that there is a clear distinction between the two. According to the UNHCR's definition, a refugee is a person whose application for "sanctuary" has been submitted, processed and accepted and as a result, the refugee status has been obtained. Whereas an asylum seeker is someone who has applied for "sanctuary" with the receiving country's relevant authorities who have not yet processed that application and therefore the status of refugee has yet to be instilled on the applicant.⁸

Additionally, article 2(d) of the EU Qualification Directive (recast) defines the term 'refugee' as follows: '[...] a third-country national who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a particular social group, is outside the country of nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or a stateless person, who, being outside of the country of former habitual residence for the same reasons as mentioned above, is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it, and to whom Article 12 does not apply'.⁹

In Germany, an asylum seeker is " someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion."¹⁰ The

⁶ Refugee Facts. "What is a Refugee?", UNHCR, <http://www.unrefugees.org/what-is-a-refugee/>

⁷ 1951 Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees

⁸ <http://www.unhcr.org/asylum-seekers.html>

⁹ Becker, Hilikka . Proc. of The European Legal System Regulating Asylum and Immigration: Instruments and Case-Law, Greece- TRALIM Seminar – Athens, 8th/9th December 2016, Athens. Web.

¹⁰ 1951 Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees

Cambridge Dictionary defines integration as ‘‘ the process of becoming part of a group of people’’ and to integrate as ‘‘to mix with and join society or a group of people, often changing to suit their way of life, habits, and customs’’.¹¹

Whereas the first definition of integration remains relatively vague, the second one strikes the reader as if it is a process in which the ‘‘outsider community’’ is the one who’s expected to do all the work and fulfill all the requirements in order to successfully integrate in the receiving community. However, this is not necessarily true since the UNHCR’s definition of integration presents the process as being a multi layered ‘‘complex and gradual’’ process which requires mutual efforts from both its parties; a two way street in the sense that the arriving individual as well as the receiving society are required to share the burden and the responsibility to make it work.¹²

In addition to the above-mentioned UNHCR definition, integration is a multilayered process in the sense that it is constituted from legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.¹³ The International Organization for Migration defines integration as ‘‘the process of mutual adaptation between host society and migrant’’.¹⁴

‘‘Incorporation is a more general concept referring to ‘‘the broader processes by which new groups establish relationships with host societies’’.¹⁵ ‘‘Although each host country to some extent reinvents its own history of nation building, the common concept of integration [...]

¹¹ "Integration Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Integration Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. Cambridge University Press, n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/integration>>.

¹² "Local Integration." UNHCR. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.unhcr.org/local-integration-49c3646c101.html>>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ "Migrant Integration." International Organization for Migration. Department of Migration Management, 15 Apr. 2015. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.iom.int/migrant-integration>>.

¹⁵ (Bean and Stevens 2003: 95)

implies the selective extension to non-nationals of legal, social, cultural and political rights and opportunities that were once the exclusive entitlements of nationals.”¹⁶

The Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA) commissioned a study in 2000 that aims at developing a set of indicators to measure the success of the settlement process of migrants and refugees in Australia.¹⁷ The indicators were to be developed based on data from the first longitudinal survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA1).¹⁸

Literature on how to measure

According to the DIMA, the definition of successful settlement of immigrants is primarily linked to achieving ‘active economic and social participation in Australian society as self-reliant and valued members’.¹⁹ In other words this mainly implies that in order to be perceived as having achieved successful settlement migrants have to be able to enter the labor market in addition to building bridges with the local communities by socially interacting with locals, speaking their language in addition to learning and respecting their culture and values.

According to this approach, the indicators needed to measure the process of integration include: English language proficiency, participation in education by immigrant youth, Australian citizenship, labor force participation, income, home ownership, and physical and mental health status.

The 1997-1998 BMS (Brussels Minorities Survey) data is concerned mainly with immigrant and host attitudes towards ethnic relations, identity, language, culture and politics. In

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Khoo and McDonald 2001

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ DIMA 2000:9

addition, a cross-national extension of the BMS involves the same minorities, comparative design and thematic questions in the city of Rotterdam.²⁰

This being said, according to Phalet & Swyngedouw, combined cross-ethnic and cross-national comparisons are needed to arrive at a balanced understanding of related selection, treatment and adaptation processes, which explain more or less equal and open ethnic relations between immigrants and natives.²¹

Also in this particular example, socio economic, educational, occupational attainment, residential segregation and perceived discrimination in addition to economic activity and unemployment appear to be the most important indicators to examine when evaluating the integration process of immigrants in general and refugees and asylum seekers more specifically.

Moreover, Welfare economist Amartya Sen included the importance of well-being and human functioning or having the ability to function to the set of indicators used to measure the success of the integration process.²² This particular factor of “well-being“, and perhaps more specifically the mental and psychological well-being of refugees and asylum seekers has a very important effect on the integration effort of each individual and hence on the overall success of the integration process.

A refugee or an asylum seeker subjected to a traumatizing experience or having witnessed acts of physical and or emotional violence and abuse would most probably have more learning difficulties learning the language for instance.

²⁰ KAREN , and MARC. “Measuring immigrant integration: the case of Belgium .” *Studi Emigrazione / Migration Studies*, XL, n. 152, 2003, pp. 773 –803., www.academia.edu/20518225/Measuring_immigrant_integration_the_case_of_Belgium.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Amartya Sen (1982:334)

Even in cases where the person has not suffered such traumas, it would be enough that the individual has somehow made it to a safe country while members of the family are still stuck in the war-torn country for the refugee or asylum seeker to have difficulties concentrating on learning a new language and being self-motivated to integrate in a new society. A Canadian study suggests looking at immigrant settlement outcomes in terms of multiple spheres of social life: linguistic, economic, occupational, social and cultural adaptation in addition to physical and mental health.²³

Moreover, Laurence Lester has written a PhD thesis at Flinders University on measuring and modeling labor market success and successful settlement of immigrants using data from first Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA1) and the second Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia (LSIA2)²⁴. His model is based on four indicators selected from LSIA data: satisfaction with life in Australia, mental health, decision to immigrate was right, and would encourage others to migrate to Australia.

The measurement of settlement success from such a perspective would be based on information about the individual's reasons for migration, migration goals and expectations and whether or not they have been met. From this perspective, immigrants' satisfaction with different aspects of their life in Australia may be considered good proxy measures of successful settlement. The findings of the Australian Survey Research Group (2010) study in relation to refugees' perception of settling well can be seen to be consistent with this perspective.²⁵

²³Neuwirth et al. 1989

²⁴ Lester 2008; 2009

²⁵ Ibid.

He considers labor market success as only one of several factors that contribute to immigrant settlement success since not all immigrants seek to enter the labor market.²⁶ Up until the 1960s in settler migration countries, immigrants were expected to assimilate to the host society. According to the assimilation framework that prevailed in the past, assimilation to the receiving society would be considered successful settlement and the question would be on how assimilation is measured.

Intermarriage was one of the indicators that sociologists and demographers used as a measure of assimilation. For many countries in Europe that are now facing the issues of immigration and ethnic minorities, the focus is on integration and there has been much discussion about the concept of integration and how to measure it.²⁷

Based on the above-mentioned criterion, the proposed framework for measuring successful integration has four dimensions: social participation, economic participation, economic well-being and physical well being. The indicators for this measurement tool are language proficiency, participation in education by immigrant youth, Australian citizenship, labor force participation, income, home ownership, and physical and mental health status.²⁸

A Council of Europe report on the measurement and indicators of integration proposed four key dimensions of integration – economic, social, cultural and political – with indicators that “highlight important areas of public activity where integration could be assessed (employment, education, etc.)” Council of Europe 1997.²⁹ Notions of successful settlement may also be different for different types of migrants. The value-expectancy model of

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Conceptual frameworks for measuring successful settlement of migrants (The concept of what constitutes successful settlement of immigrants)

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ager and Strang 2004: 3

migration decision-making. Fawcett suggests that migrants' expectations in relation to their migration decisions are likely to vary with type of migrant.³⁰

Refugees are likely to have different expectations from skilled migrants in relation to their migration decision and, consequently, their settlement outcomes. For individual migrants, settlement success is likely to be correlated with the achievement of their migration goals and pre-migration expectations.

As Lester points out, not all immigrants migrate with the intention to participate in the labor market. Other avenues of community participation should be included in a consideration of successful settlement.³¹

These include participation in any community or social activities that demonstrate linkages to local communities such as playing sports, attending community events and volunteering, and having contacts and friends in the community and are typical of the social connections referred to in the UK study on the indicators of integration.³² After having defined some key terms and looking at the conceptual framework related to measuring migrant integration, the next step will be about looking at refugees and asylum seekers from Syria who have arrived in Germany.

The aim is to try and look at this specific group of refugees and asylum seekers in order to identify the peculiarities related to the subject of migration and integration for this group. This is intended in order to attempt to assess the level of success or failure of the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria. The big and fast flow of immigrants

³⁰ De Jong and Fawcett 1981, Motivations for Migration: An Assessment and a Value-Expectancy Research Model

³¹ Lester 2008; 2009

³² Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 1997; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999; Richardson et al, 2004

seeking asylum or other kinds of protection in Germany did without a doubt affect the housing market in Germany.

One of the direct consequences of such a fast and significant increase in demand in the housing market is competition between locals and migrants be they refugees, asylum seekers or economic migrants from a variety of east European countries such as Romania, Bulgaria or wider MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Egypt in addition to other African countries such as Morocco, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Ghana, Nigeria and Guinea.

With the arrival of more than one million asylum-seekers in Germany in 2015, the challenge was about to get harder. While some of the migrants will leave and others may be turned away (such as North Africans, who rarely secure asylum), more than 60 per cent are currently securing permission to stay in Germany. As they find their feet, many will seek homes in big cities, because these have larger immigrant communities and better job prospects than smaller towns.³³

But the big cities, particularly Hamburg, Cologne, Frankfurt, Munich and Berlin, are also drawing young Germans escaping the provinces for a metropolitan life. Even as the country's ageing population of 80m has, as a whole, declined, the top five cities have grown 10 per cent since 2000, or 60,000 people annually, driving up rents.³⁴

Most refugees entering the housing market face major disadvantages, because they usually speak little if any German and know nothing of the complex rules governing rented accommodation, especially low-cost social housing. German local authorities have refrained from building special immigrant blocks to avoid ghettos and encourage integration. So

³³ "Asylum statistics." Asylum statistics - Statistics Explained, ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics.

refugees seeking social housing compete with locals, just as they do for commercial-rent open-market homes.

Few newly arrived migrants can fend for themselves. They rely instead on local officials and charities, such as Hamburg-based Wohnbrücke Koordinierungsstelle, which has helped more than 100 refugees, find homes. Wohnbrücke worker Alina Thiem says the charity assists those with good prospects of remaining in Germany who have started German language courses and so set “a basis for integration”.

According to Wohnbrücke worker Alina Thiem, authorities have had to put more effort into assisting refugees and this aside from volunteering and charities since “Integration is not only a cultural but a structural challenge”.³⁵

Under German law, most asylum seekers are distributed across the country and risk losing welfare benefits if they move. The government proposes extending this rule to include those actually granted asylum, limiting their movements for up to three years. Human rights groups have condemned this as “authoritarian”, but ministers argue it will help ease integration pressures, not least in housing.³⁶

The city of Cologne is in the West of Germany in the Northern Rhine Westphalia region (NRW). Following the surge in numbers of refugees late summer of 2015, some municipalities in Germany set up tent cities; others created temporary housing out of former army barracks, municipal gyms or even the abandoned shops left empty by bankrupt home-improvement chains Praktiker and Max Bahr.

³⁴ Stefan Wagstyl . “ Financial Times Young Germans and migrants compete for city housing.” Financial Times, 29 May 2016, www.ft.com/content/9e0a0356-1128-11e6-839f-2922947098f0.

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

It is important to say that the living conditions of the refugees and asylum seekers living in these facilities is more or less acceptable apart from the occasional incidents of Police arrests of terrorist suspects. Another type of incidents is related to the cultural differences between the staff running these homes and the refugees; this often leads to misunderstandings. Equally important is naturally among the refugees themselves; be it among refugees from Syria for instance or between one nationality/ethnicity and another. In addition to the aforementioned, privacy is also an issue in refugee housing facilities such as gym halls and camps. Some of the places are big empty halls that are divided into multiple rooms. This is often problematic for the residents especially for families and young people as the absence of a roof is invasive of their privacy. Students complain that they cannot study because of babies and children crying in one of the rooms next-door. Even though these offer perhaps temporary solutions, refugees need permanent homes. In Germany, the supply of housing was already running far behind demand in many areas even before the influx occurred.³⁷ According to Michael Voigtländer, a professor at the Cologne Institute of Economic Research, 248,000 new apartment units were under construction in 2015 — but total demand was 366,700 units. He estimates that average demand over the next four years could be as much as 380,000 apartments annually, based on a predicted influx of 500,000 refugees a year.³⁸

Cologne being a student city in Germany means that demand on small living units or shared apartments is very high; which is for example exactly where the demand on housing units from the refugees is one of the highest. This leads to an indirect competition between the young students of Cologne and the young asylum seekers whose applications for asylum had

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ Ibid

been accepted. First time asylum applicants consists of around 442,000 filed asylum applications in Germany; indicating a rise of 269000 when compared to the previous year.³⁹

Moreover, even though the terms refugee and asylum seeker are often used interchangeably in today's political discourse, it is necessary to clarify that there is a clear distinction between the two. According to the UNHCR's definition, a refugee is a person whose application for "sanctuary" has been submitted, processed and accepted and as a result, the refugee status has been obtained. Whereas an asylum seeker is someone who has applied for "sanctuary" with the receiving country's relevant authorities who have not yet processed that application and therefore the status of refugee has yet to be instilled on the applicant.⁴⁰

In Germany, Asylum seekers and thus politically persecuted people "are people who will be subjected to a serious human rights violation in the event of their return to their country of origin based on their race, nationality, political conviction basic religious decision or belonging to a particular social group (as a particular social group, a group based on the common feature of sexual orientation) without having an escape alternative within the country of origin or other protection from persecution."⁴¹

Asylum seekers or "Asylsuchender" is in fact a person fitting the description provided above who has also applied for asylum or refugee status. When this person receives a positive decision regarding his or her refugee status application this person is then considered as a recognized refugee or "anerkannter Flüchtling". Recognized asylum seekers, who have

³⁹ Asylum statistics. (2016, April 20). Retrieved January 06, 2017, from http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Asylum_statistics

⁴⁰ Asylum-Seekers. UNHCR, <http://www.unhcr.org/asylum-seekers.html>

⁴¹ Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. "Asylberechtigung." BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - Asylberechtigung. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2017.

received a positive response from the Federal Office for migrants and refugees, can in principle work as full-time employees and also pursue a self-employed activity.⁴²

In the asylum procedure, the Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (English: Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) (BAMF) decides on four types of protection: asylum, refugee protection, subsidiary protection and the ban on deportation. Depending on the degree of protection, these persons receive a residence permit for one to three years, with the possibility of extension or transition to a permanent stay.⁴³ Moreover, subsidiary protection applies if neither refugee protection nor the right to asylum can be granted and there is serious danger in the country of origin. Persons who have valid reasons for their being threatened with serious damage in their country of origin and who are unable to avail themselves of the protection of their country of origin or who do not wish to take advantage of the threat are entitled to a subsidiary protection. Serious damage can come from both state and non-state actors.

Serious damage is considered as: “The imposition or execution of the death penalty, torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; or a serious individual threat to the life or integrity of a civilian as a result of arbitrary violence within an international or domestic armed conflict.”⁴⁴

When comparing the German local refugee and asylum laws with the EU regional relevant laws and the international human rights and international laws it clearly shows that they are very much one and the same. Theoretically, this should be the case for all other EU member states since the EU has a Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and more

⁴² Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. "FAQ: Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt für geflüchtete Menschen." BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - FAQ: Zugang zum Arbeitsmarkt für geflüchtete Menschen. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2017.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge. "Subsidiärer Schutz." BAMF - Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - Subsidiärer Schutz. N.p., n.d. Web. 06 May 2017.

specifically because of article 78 in this treaty which states that the union should develop a common policy on asylum in addition to subsidiary and temporary protection.⁴⁵

Moreover, the treaty emphasizes on “offering appropriate status to any third-country national requiring international protection and ensuring compliance with the principle of non-refoulement.”⁴⁶ Also, the treaty states clearly that the policy it is addressing should be in accordance with the 1951 Geneva Convention and the 1967 Protocol relating to the status of refugees.”⁴⁷

The measures for a common European asylum system, considered in the article 78(2) of the Treaty on the functioning of the European Union comprise:

- Uniform status of asylum for nationals of third countries, valid throughout the Union;

This is unfortunately not the case in reality on the ground as many differences have been observed between different EU members with regard to national policies related to asylum status.

In addition to the above, the treaty highlights the following interesting points:

- Uniform status of subsidiary protection for nationals of third countries that, without obtaining European asylum, are in need of international protection;

- A common system of temporary protection for displaced persons in the event of a massive inflow; to a certain extent this common system was there and was tested thoroughly during this refugee crisis in Europe.

⁴⁵ Becker, Hilka . Proc. of The European Legal System Regulating Asylum and Immigration: Instruments and Case-Law, Greece- TRALIM Seminar – Athens, 8th/9th December 2016, Athens. Web.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

- Common procedures for the granting and withdrawing of uniform asylum or subsidiary protection status; it is safe to say that this is theoretically the case but when it comes to practice the procedures may vary significantly among some EU member states; here the example of Germany and Hungary once again.

- Standards concerning the conditions for the reception of applicants for asylum or subsidiary protection;

- Partnership and cooperation with third countries for the purpose of managing inflows of people applying for asylum or subsidiary or temporary protection.⁴⁸ This partnership and cooperation with third countries could be observed in the case of agreements between the German government and Turkey in one example and another agreement between the German government and the Iraqi government in addition to an agreement with the Tunisian government. These two examples highlight EU member state cooperation with a non-EU member state for the purpose of managing inflows (case of Turkey) as well as managing returns to the country of origin (case of Iraq). In addition to the above, Article 6 Treaty on the European Union (TEU) not only makes the EU Charter binding on Member States as part of the primary law of the EU but also pushes the EU to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and protects the fundamental rights, as guaranteed by the [ECHR].⁴⁹

Article 18 Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (EU Charter) states that "[t]he right to asylum shall be guaranteed with due respect for the rules of the [Refugee Convention] in accordance with the [TEU] and the [TFEU] [...]".⁵⁰ This being said, it is important to

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

mention that the EU Charter is binding not only for the EU institutions but also for the EU Member States when they are implementing EU law (Art. 51(1)).⁵¹

Moreover, according to article 2(h) of the ‘Qualification Directive’ the application for international protection is defined as: “[A] request made by a third-country national or a stateless person for protection from a Member State, who can be understood to seek refugee status or subsidiary protection status, and who does not explicitly request another kind of protection, outside the scope of this Directive, that can be applied for separately.”⁵²

As far as immigration is concerned, the EU’s article 79(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that:

“The Union shall develop a common immigration policy aimed at ensuring, at all stages, the efficient management of migration flows, fair treatment of third-country nationals residing legally in Member States, and the prevention of, and enhanced measures to combat, illegal immigration and trafficking in human beings”.⁵³

Also, article 79(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) states that: “(...), the European Parliament and the Council, (...), shall adopt measures in the following areas:

a) The conditions of entry and residence, and standards on the issue by member states of long-term visas and residence permits, including those for the purpose of family reunification;

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

- b) The definition of the rights of third-country nationals residing legally in a member state, including the conditions governing freedom of movement and of residence in other member states;
- c) Illegal immigration and unauthorized residence, including removal and repatriation of persons residing without authorization;
- d) Combating trafficking in persons, in particular women and children.

Therefore, under EU law, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights provides for the right to asylum in Article 18 and the prohibition of refoulement in Article 19. Article 78 of the TFEU provides for the creation of a Common European Asylum System which must respect states' obligations under the 1951 Geneva Convention. This being said, it is then interesting to look at the arrival of asylum seekers; because although Article 18 of the Charter guarantees the right to asylum, EU law does not provide for ways to facilitate the arrival of asylum seekers. This entails that persons who wish to seek asylum in the EU are primarily nationals of countries requiring a visa to enter the EU. Since these individuals often do not qualify for an ordinary visa, this probably means that they would have to cross the border in an irregular manner.

Under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), no corresponding provision exists governing the asylum seekers' status during the processing of their claims for protection. It will therefore be necessary to consider whether under domestic law asylum seekers are allowed to remain in the territory while their claims are processed. Article 5 (1) (f) of the ECHR permits the detention of asylum seekers to prevent them from effecting "an unauthorized entry" into the territory of a state. According to the ECtHR, an entry remains 'unauthorized' until it has been formally authorized by the national authorities. Example: The ECtHR held in *Saadi v. the United Kingdom*⁵⁰ that an entry remained

unauthorized until it had been formally authorized by the national authorities. In that case, the Court found that there had been no violation of Article 5 (1) where an asylum seeker had been lawfully detained for seven days in suitable conditions while his asylum application was being processed.⁵⁴

This being said, the Cambridge Dictionary defines integration as “ the process of becoming part of a group of people”⁵⁵ and to integrate as “ to mix with and join society or a group of people, often changing to suit their way of life, habits, and customs”.⁵⁶ Whereas the first definition of integration remains relatively vague, the second one strikes the reader as if it is a process in which the “outsider community” is the one who’s expected to do all the work and fulfill all the requirements in order to successfully integrate in the receiving community. However, this is not necessarily true since the UNHCR’s definition of integration presents the process as being a multilayered “complex and gradual” process which requires mutual efforts from both its parties; a two way street in the sense that the arriving individual as well as the receiving society are required to share the burden and the responsibility to make it work.⁵⁷

In addition to the above-mentioned UNHCR definition, integration is a multilayered process in the sense that it is constituted from legal, economic and socio-cultural dimensions.⁵⁸ Also,

⁵⁴ European Union. European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration . Luxembourg : Publications Office of the European Union, 2014. Print.

⁵⁵ "Integration Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Integration Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. Cambridge University Press, n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/integration>>.

⁵⁶ "Integrate Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary." Integrate Meaning in the Cambridge English Dictionary. Cambridge University Press, n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/integrate>>.

⁵⁷ "Local Integration." UNHCR. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.unhcr.org/local-integration-49c3646c101.html>>.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

the International Organization for Migration defines integration as ‘‘ the process of mutual adaptation between host society and migrant’’.⁵⁹

For this thesis, integration is to be considered as two-way process in which individuals or groups of people from one foreign country have to become part of the legal, cultural and socio-economic fabric of the host community on the one hand. On the other hand and in turn, the host community has to absorb the newcomer(s) in a way that, within the limits of the possible, preserves social justice and the cultural heritage and values system of both entities.

This definition attempts to diverge from the theoretical realm of integration and to get more in touch with the reality on the ground. This is necessary because in the context of today’s refugee and migration crises in Europe, the political rhetoric mostly revolves around how to deal with the overwhelming numbers of refugees, asylum-seekers and illegal immigrants. The most important question is how to integrate such diverse and culturally different groups of people into European society without sacrificing the core political, cultural, social and economic values and ideals upon which this society has been built on.

There seems to be an undeniable discrepancy between the ideals and standards of international law and human rights and the reality of migration, asylum and integration on the ground. For instance, while the fundamental principles of non-discrimination, non-penalization and non-refoulement of refugees are non-negotiable in the 1951 Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees, the political and security reality in the world today make it almost impossible for governments to not favor ‘‘handpicking’’ who is welcome and who is not, who is allowed to stay and who is not.

Personal observation through working in this specific field in Germany suggest that integration of migrants and refugees into their host societies is primarily an individual effort

⁵⁹ "Migrant Integration." International Organization for Migration. 15 Apr. 2015. Web. 08 Feb. 2017.

and a decision to be part of this new culture and way of life in addition to opening up to learning about the history, values and political system. This being said, it also appears that the individual young migrants and refugees with at least basic level education in their country of origin have the biggest chance to achieve this integration due to many different and sometimes related reasons:

First, it is easier for this age group than for the parents or grandparents generation to acquire the language. This is most probably related to the fact that, at this age, it is more difficult to make the effort to learn. Whereas for the parents' generation it is more difficult for the following reasons:

This basically incorporates adults between the ages of 45 to 60. These are people who were born, grew up and lived their lives in the country of origin. They are people who already got married, had a social life, opened up businesses in their country of origin and raised families. They learned their mother tongue, values, traditions and they got used to the particular political culture of their country of origin. For this category who has already lived a life in a certain way for a longer time than their children; for them arriving in the host country means not losing their lives, it means surviving or not dying. However for the younger generation arriving in their new host country is not only a matter of surviving but also an opportunity for a new beginning in this host country.

They still have their lives to live and now they find themselves in a country where they could actually live their lives perhaps better than in their countries of origin. Moreover, this younger category is still more used to the experience of receiving an education. Apart from the stronger mental ability to learn compared to that of adults, this category can still relate to what it is like to wake up early in the morning, go to school in addition to the experience of attending classes itself.

The point in this context is clear: it seems to be easier for the younger to learn from scratch; be it in relation to language learning, getting to know a new culture and a different way of life or being open to new ideas and trends that they were not necessarily exposed to in their country of origin. It is much easier to them to learn anew than it is for their parents' generation to unlearn their whole life experience and start learning again from the beginning. This is especially true for the language learning aspect of integration.

These range from capacity building opportunities aiming at preparing the participants to enter the job market, to other free time activities that also forward the integration process. These include but are not exclusive to field trips to museums, state libraries and many other destinations which altogether constitute an important contribution to the integration process of migrants and refugees in Germany.

In addition to the above, assisting the applicants with their registration process as well as supporting, translating and facilitating communication between migrants and refugees on one side and schools' administration, social affairs institutions such as the Job Center, the Agentür für Arbeit (work agency) was also a very important opportunity.

It has allowed this research to secure an overview of the integration reality of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany by highlighting the main themes, challenges and opportunities. Moreover, the daily interaction with refugees and asylum seekers also meant that the information that was gathered could be examined as data for individual cases as well as for whole groups. Thus it was also very useful to look for trends and patterns that could be identified across a multitude of individual cases.

Moreover, one of the projects was an EU funded project aimed at offering activities and courses aimed at assisting the refugees and asylum seekers as well as immigrants; Europeans and "third country nationals", in achieving a successful integration in the German society

through learning the language. The project offered multiple German language courses of different levels depending on the need of the participants. Giving two basic level courses, A1 (divided into A1.1 and A1.2) provided the opportunity to thesis very closely with refugees and asylum seekers and migrants and observe their acquiring of the language in addition to most of the challenges and obstacles that might make this pillar of integration more or less challenging for some.

Moreover, the activities that the Culture Point- Köln project offered free-time activities aimed at making it possible for interested refugees and asylum seekers to participate in an activity of their choice. There were participants from different housing communities getting together for an activity that they shared interest for. The interest for activities related to sports was, as a general rule, one of the highest; whether through Football, Basketball or Ping Pong, the participants got the chance to get out of the home, familiarize themselves with the public transportation system in Cologne and get to know the city.

In addition to that and perhaps more importantly, the participants were given the chance to meet other refugees, migrants and asylum seekers as well as locals on the playing field. This was a breakthrough in fact in a context where some people can be so confused, traumatized, sometimes even depressed. Getting out of the homes, getting together with others, sharing an interest for activities in addition to expanding their social networks through interaction with other refugees and locals proved to be a highly important boost to the process of integration.

When one does not know neither places to go to, nor how to get there sometimes a person finds themselves willingly excluded from the society and stuck in the routine of the refugee home where they live despite the significant numbers of organizations and service providers who are trying to offer varied integration related opportunities and activities to this specific

target group. Such activities are in a way, like training aimed at strengthening some much needed skills for the different categories of migrants in Germany.

For instance, getting used to using the bus or the train and tram systems could be very challenging at first. However, it is also of significant importance when it comes to influencing the mobility of the migrants in Germany especially those living in the more or less country-side suburbs of Cologne. Also meeting other people and interacting with locals and finding oneself in a position where one has to at least try to speak the language acts like a catalyst to the learning abilities when it comes to learning a language.

In addition to that, the opportunity to meet other migrants also means that they can actually make some new friends from other homes or regions around Cologne and exchange experiences related to the bureaucracy, integrations, language learning.

Other cultural related activities such as visiting city museums and the central library in Cologne were aimed at another also very important dimension of integration. Visiting the City museum for example and learning about the history of the city and the not so new culture of tolerance and welcoming of foreigners and refugees is primarily related to the process of integration as it mainly focuses on the part related to values, culture and political culture.

Moreover, visits to the city's central library which is the biggest library in Cologne offering access to a wide range of services from books to music and films in addition to computer rooms with internet for studying and also rooms for musicians where they can practice offering even the opportunity to use library instruments in case the person does not have an instrument of their own.

Refugees and migrants who register get a free 3 months all inclusive access and then benefit from a significant discount for the already symbolic yearly rate. This helps a lot in the

process of integration as it provides very good learning spaces for students as well as others who are looking for things to do in their free time while waiting for residency permits for example or asylum-related decisions.

In Germany, the integration process of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers goes as follows:

Learning the language is the priority, the key to the success of every other step along the way to a successful integration. For non-EU migrants applying for a residency or a work permit, the requirement to obtain such permits is German language level A1 without which the application for residency would be rejected. For foreigners in general; be it EU or non-EU migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, pursuing level A2 and then B1 of German language learning is a must. Achieving level B1 of German language learning is in fact a requirement by the state authorities such as the BAMF (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge- Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) which along with the type of residency permit allows a foreigner to work in Germany.

This is simply because one needs at least this level of language proficiency in order to have basic working ability in addition to pursuing even the most simple day-to-day tasks such as shopping or following up with the relevant authorities on the asylum application for instance. Therefore, a typical integration course process would start with an alphabetization course for the foreigners who are not capable of reading and writing using the Latin alphabet. For those who are already familiar with the Latin alphabet, they would then start from level A1 then to A2 and then to B1.

Each of these levels is usually divided into two parts (for example A1.1 followed by A1.2) and so on and so forth until level B1 (B1.1 and B1.2) after which, a course participant will receive a certificate of German language. However, although it has already been established

that learning the language is an extremely important key to integration in general, learning the language is not everything. The relevant German authorities also give importance to the need for the foreigners aspiring to live or work in Germany to get familiar with the culture in the German society, the political system in Germany and naturally, the very defining history of Germany especially after the Second World War.

Thus, part of the integration process; usually after one has completed their language courses, is about what the BAMF calls “Orientierungskurs” or orientation course which in fact encompasses these three aforementioned subjects. At the end of this course, participants who have passed the test on these three subjects would obtain a “Leben in Deutschland Zertifikat” or a living in Germany certificate without which, the application for either a residency or a work permit would usually be rejected.

In the case of refugees, asylum seekers and unemployed migrants, having registered with the “Sozialamt” (Social affairs office), the Jobcenter or the “Agentür für Arbeit” (the labor agency), the participant or the language school applies for a “Zulassung” permit from the BAMF that allows the participant to attend integration courses while the city pays for them. Thus the financial capacity as a variable does not influence whether refugees, asylum seekers or migrants get the chance to attend integration courses.

In the following section there will be an examination of the observed factors that either positively or negatively influence the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria in Germany.

The Pillars of Integration

In the case of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, what can actually influence whether individuals can achieve a successful integration in Cologne are the following factors:

Learning the language

It has already been established how vital is learning the language to achieving a successful integration in a country like Germany. As it was mentioned earlier, learning German is the “golden key” to even having a chance in achieving a successful integration. However, this is still one of the most challenging subjects for the people who work in this field be it language teachers, social workers or public employees. The difficulties facing the majority of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria are many especially when it comes to learning the language.

First and foremost is the level of education of the individual in the country of origin. In this context, a general observation is that the higher the level of education of an individual the better the ability to grasp new and different concepts or grammatical nuances when learning the language. Unfortunately, a good number of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria have either a basic level education (primary school not completed) or have not completed secondary school.

Though asylum seekers must attend integration courses, German is an exceedingly difficult language to learn. When the German Federal Office for Migration conducted a large-scale survey of the recent refugees in late 2016, only 18 percent reported their command of the language was "good," while 47 percent confessed it was "bad."

The labor market

Aydan Ozoguz, the German commissioner for immigration, refugees and integration, has said June 27, 2017 that three-quarters of the refugees Germany took in recently will most probably still be unemployed in five years.⁶⁰ The job market situation is dismal: According to official data from August 2017, 497,000 refugees were registered as job-seekers with the country's job centers, and 196,000 of them -- 43,000 more than a year ago -- were currently unemployed.⁶¹

The rest of the refugees aren't even entitled to work because their applications were still pending or they were still in their initial three-month waiting period meant for integration courses, not work. While the average time it takes for an asylum applicant to get to an immigration decision has gone down -- about 40 percent get their papers within 10 months, compared with less than 20 percent in 2013 -- there is still a considerable application backlog of 129,000 at the end of July, according to the Federal Employment Office.⁶²

Germany, at nearly full employment, has a shortage of workers in a number of trades and professions -- from software engineers to hairdressers. The average vacancy for a plumber stays open for 156 days this year compared to 142 days in 2016. It takes 167 days to find an elder-care worker. So there's quite a bit of enthusiasm about the newcomers among German businesses.⁶³

"One of the most compelling challenges currently faced is the need to establish consistent procedures for recognizing qualifications and assessing skills that include informally and

⁶⁰ Dougherty, Michael Brendan. "On Migration, Europe Is Admitting the Truth to Itself." *National Review*. N.p., 27 June 2017. Web. 01 July 2017.

⁶¹ Bershidsky, Leonid. "One Million Refugees Came. Here's What Happened Next." Bloomberg.com, Bloomberg, 18 Sept. 2017, www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-09-18/one-million-refugees-came-here-s-what-happened-next.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid.

non-formally acquired skills," Jutta Altmueller wrote in a paper for the Bertelsmann Stiftung.⁶⁴ Language training is another major bottleneck. The quality of the free courses now offered to refugees is abysmal, and the official proficiency standards are not up to the requirements of real jobs. Unless these problems are fixed, and unless the German government gets up the courage to tell both the immigrants and their potential employers that there are no plans to reconsider their status once Middle Eastern and African conflicts end, Germany will miss a massive opportunity to draw an estimated 600,000 people into its shrinking workforce.⁶⁵

Having looked at the main topics and sub-topics of the integration of refugees and asylum seekers from Syrian in Germany, the next step is operationalization. In this section this thesis will investigate how to measure successful integration. It is safe to say that with regard to measuring integration the amount of literature is abundant. The difficulty lies in identifying, as demonstrated in the section above, one universally accepted definition of the concept of integration itself. As a logical result, the absence of one universally accepted definition of integration implies an abundance in methods aimed at the measuring a successful integration.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

Methodology

In this thesis the aim is to verify if the above-mentioned statement by looking both at migration and integration policies from a policy-related perspective as well as from the perspective of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. In light of the Refugee crisis in Europe this paper will then move to examine the theoretical framework in which integration can be studied. With this aim guiding the research, it was thought best to base the final analysis on the perspective of the respondents.

The methodology used for this study is an ego-ecological psycho-contextual analysis developed by Prof. Marisa Zavalloni. As mentioned in the methodology section above, the methodology is founded in the idea that whenever words or thoughts about the world are produced or received, something else is activated at the periphery of consciousness as background thinking.

By displaying and analyzing the content of the affective and representational elements that are activated as background thinking, an attempt to construct an approximate model of the individual “self” in transaction with his social ecology becomes possible. ⁶⁶ The specificity and originality of the ego-ecological approach mainly reside in the ability to identify for each individual and group the keywords used to make sense of, interpret and evaluate reality, and then see how these words are re-appropriated and reinterpreted by a person based on a history or a project.

In order to qualitatively analyze their answers to the survey’s questions, the methodology for the analysis starts from the premise that whenever words or thoughts about the world are

produced or received, something else is activated at the periphery of consciousness as background thinking. By displaying and analyzing the content of the affective and representational elements that are activated as background thinking, an attempt to construct an approximate model of the individual (self) in transaction with his social ecology would be possible.

One difficulty was finding a widely accepted definition of integration. This alone can already complicate the research let alone attempting to give an accurate and precise account of integration or attempting to provide a description of integration from the perspective of refugees and asylum seekers.

To address the integration of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers it is necessary to look for and identify certain trends that might be useful for developing theories. Moreover, studying specific cases of integration could also be as important since some individual cases, that might not necessarily resemble the whole group's, can nonetheless be significantly informative and insightful in order to really understand the reality of integration.

⁶⁶ Zavalloni, Marisa . "Identity And hyper-identities: The representational foundation of self and

Operationalization

It is necessary for this research to adopt one definition of integration which would attempt as much as possible to unify most of the aforementioned definitions.

For this thesis, integration is considered to be the process in which individuals or groups of people from one foreign country want to or have to become part of the cultural and socio-economic fabric of the host community which in turn has to absorb the newcomers in a way that preserves social justice and the cultural heritage and values system of both entities as much as possible.

After starting with the international level, moving to the regional level and studying the compatibility; or the lack of it, between the two levels, the paper then moves towards the local level. At the local level the focus will be on the migration and integration laws in Germany, compatibility with regional (EU) and international standards.

This paper will then study the case of the integration of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Cologne- Germany by looking at specific indicators of a healthy and successful integration process. These indicators are language acquisition, entry into the labor market, housing, interaction with locals in addition to feedback from Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Cologne on the integration process, successes, challenges and aspirations.

The information needed to cover these points is provided by an extensive literature review on the topic in addition to data gathered from a survey that was especially devised to support the paper. This will then be followed by an analysis of the findings section and the main insights

that could be obtained in order to move a little away from the theoretical and closer to the reality on the ground which could offer a better understanding of the topic at hand.

This being said, this paper will be dealing with identifying ways to measure successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers in their respective host societies in order to establish a benchmark which would allow us to better understand the case of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany and to evaluate the level of integration that they have achieved or the lack of it.

The main question is: Which indicators can be used to measure the integration of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Germany?

Case Studies

How can the process of integration be different for a refugee or an asylum seeker than someone else who has actually made a decision to travel, had time to prepare, learn the language and willingly made a calculated decision to leave their country of origin knowing where they are going as well as why and how?

The Ibrahim sisters

Haifaa, Mahdiya and Schireen respectively 30, 28 and 23 years old, arrived to Germany in 2015. The three came without husbands, fathers or brothers which is not very usual for the roughly 95,000 refugee women who arrived in Germany in 2015.

Haifaa sought a safe future for her children. Mahdiya says that remarks made by Chancellor Angela Merkel of Germany persuaded her to make the trek whereas Schireen decided to go along in the hope of continuing an education that had been stopped by the fighting. In the 17 months since they arrived in Weimar, the sisters have attended language classes and discovered the city together.

They and other refugee women spoke about an extra layer of challenges in adapting to German social customs such as how to organize play dates for their children for instance or even the idea of having platonic friendships with men which is in fact highly unusual in the more conservative Muslim society of their country of origin.

Moreover, another challenge could also be the level of tolerance of the German host community. This could be observed when it comes to the host community's general as well as individual positions on the Hijab. In the case of Haifaa this is for instance felt in the context of public transportation.

“When I get on the bus, I greet the driver in German, ‘Guten Morgen.’ He never greets me back, [...] He will greet the people before me or after me, never me.” She suspects that this might have something to do with her head scarf. Andrea, the Teatime organizer, said she thought that more of the refugees would stop covering their heads as they built new lives in Germany. But Haifaa said she felt “more Muslim now than I ever did at home.”

This is very interesting because it highlights a one sided approach to integration as it has been mentioned in the section on the definition of integration. In some cases, the attitude of the host community or its understanding of integration is not perfectly in line with the UNHCR’s definition for instance. This means that the host community more or less perceives integration as if it is a process in which the ‘outsider community’ is the one who’s expected to do all the work and fulfill all the requirements in order to successfully integrate in the receiving community.

However, this is not necessarily true since the UNHCR’s definition of integration presents the process as being a multi layered “complex and gradual” process which requires mutual efforts from both its parties; a two way street in the sense that the arriving individual as well as the receiving society are required to share the burden and the responsibility to make it work.⁶⁷ This particular aspect often leads to a certain sense of frustration and perhaps also disillusionment on behalf of the refugees and asylum seekers. In turn this frustration could manifest itself in the typical reaction of holding on even more to what is perhaps less accepted as it is thought to be part of the original identity which the refugee and asylum seeker would usually like to preserve as much as possible.

⁶⁷ "Local Integration." UNHCR. N.p., n.d. Web. 08 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.unhcr.org/local-integration-49c3646c101.html>>.

In the case of Haifa for instance the reaction was as follows: “It doesn’t make sense: They keep telling us that this is a country where women are free to wear whatever they want,” Haifaa. She believes she feels more Muslim now than she ever did at home. Thus she could not really understand a person can’t wear something on their head.

Refugees and asylum seekers obviously have their ears full with the usual clichés about European values of freedom, individualism, democracy etc. and have some expectation with regard to personal and religious freedoms. When these expectations are contrasted with a less tolerant reality, that’s when the disillusionment usually kicks in. “We thought we were coming to a free country, and here is this guy telling us how we should be dressed,” Mahdiya.

This is totally understandable and acceptable. It seems very unrealistic to expect that someone who has left everything they’ve known their whole lives to adapt to a whole new reality overnight. Integration is a long process even when it is on a successful path.

This invites one to reflect on the cultural peculiarities and characteristics of individualistic societies versus those of more conservative or traditional societies where the close family as well social and neighborly bonds are stronger and more influential when it comes to the influence of social expectations in addition to peer pressure on the individual. Looking at this particular aspect provides significant insights on the sum and combination of factors that might affect the integration process of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Germany.

What is definitely intriguing is looking at the integration potential of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria who had to flee their conflict ridden country to save their lives. Perhaps more specifically the following questions: when refugees and asylum seekers from Syria decide to flee for their lives and the lives of their loved ones, do they also decide to let go of their culture, way of life, values, principles and traditions or do they hold on to those even more in order to save as much as possible of their origins and what they identify with?

If they do hold on to them, how does this affect the process of learning about the values, principles, way of life, culture, etc... of their host countries? Subsequently, how does this forward the integration the process or hinder it?

The main challenges to the integration of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria in Germany are numerous to say the least. In most cases they are related to levels of education, in addition to value-based differences or cultural-background-related challenges that come to the surface when a person finds him/her-self in a completely new environment where almost nothing is familiar. In such a new environment, just communicating with others and expressing one's thoughts and feelings might be challenging enough even for a citizen of another EU member-state in Germany.

This means that for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing the war in Syria; witnessing atrocities, loss of loved ones, loss of homes and businesses and livelihoods, possibly suffering traumas, is much more difficult and in some of the cases even almost impossible. Moreover, other completely unexpected challenges may arise, which at times, along with the lack of language skills, might eventually magnify the obstacles for refugees and asylum seekers in general and specifically those coming to Germany from Syria. A typical example for such a compound obstacle is for instance the notorious German bureaucracy which is most of the time a challenge even for locals.

In addition to the above, and with regard to the language learning experience and dimension of the integration process, the German government provides free language training to refugees. The government expects that those who attended school in their home country, as the Ibrahims did, will reach the intermediate level during 600 hours of instruction within six months. If they do not, they can apply for 300 extra hours of lessons. After that, they have to pay their own way.

In Weimar, Haifaa has turned down job offers to help a costume designer with sewing and to clean a cafe after hours. Although she might have valid reasons, turning down the jobs is itself a setback since it usually means a sustained dependence on state welfare while the desired result is increased independence and ultimately autonomy and self-reliance.

Another very important setback is the long waiting periods in some cases which can be very frustrating for the applicants; “We are not happy with just sitting around at home with nothing to do. Whenever there has been an offer of something to do, somewhere to go, we have gone out and taken part. We want to learn. But first we need the language.” Haifaa even though it is widely believed that the best way to learn the language is by taking a job it is also necessary to mention that it is very difficult to get a job in the first place if the person does not have at least a basic level of German language.

When the sisters set out for Germany in 2015, refugees were granted three-year visas and could bring immediate family members to join them. In 2016, amid rising anti-immigrant sentiment, that changed. Instead, the German government began handing out one-year “subsidiary protection” to those who officials decided did not meet the definition of a refugee under the Geneva Conventions, but still risked “serious harm” at home.

Also, the circumstances in which a person, a family or a group of people leave their country of origin in order to flee for their lives due to a violent conflict or due to any form or persecution are also very influential when it comes to the success or failure of the integration process. Someone who knew in advance that the family will be moving to Germany would definitely have more time to prepare everything. Submitting all applications and learning the language early on take time but is nonetheless very important as it opens the door and prepares the way for a good integration process.

For “legal migrants”, starting to learn the language even before travelling to Germany is a must. In fact, the German Language A1 level certificate is a pre-requisite for the visa application. Without it the application would be considered incomplete and the decision would most probably be a rejection.

However, even with all the preparations and the familiarity with some aspects of the culture as well as learning the language the integration process is not exactly an easy one and certainly not something that could be achieved overnight. Despite all of the advantages of someone who has had time to prepare the integration process is not easy and some difficulties that arise cannot be foreseen. How it must have been for a person who had to flee immediately while risking their own life in order to have a chance of saving it is indeed interesting to examine as it definitely impacts the process of integration.

Leaving everything a person once knew; one’s life, family, land, business, possessions, identification papers, personal belongings and fleeing overnight is never an easy things. People usually get attached both materialistically and emotionally to these things and abandoning one’s life, reality and what a person has known all their life is not an easy decision to make. Even when people have to make such a decision for the purpose of literally saving their life, they usually stay attached since they identify themselves with all these above-mentioned things.

How does this individual attachment to the previous, “normal” lives on one hand, and the sudden change of everything and the journey to the asylum destinations in Europe impact the will and the capability of asylum seekers and refugees in relation to the process of integration? It is definitely an important aspect to look at more closely in the literature on migration and integration.

This being said, when the refugees and asylum seekers find themselves in a totally new reality, a new way of life, new values, new culture, new language new history and traditions, new political system, being required to learn and absorb these new ideas and observe them when interacting among themselves in addition to with their host communities this can very well be overwhelming and challenging. Coupled with the refugees and asylum seekers personal experiences and physical, mental and psychological health this combination has significant impact on the will and the readiness of refugees and asylum seekers to commit and engage in the integration process.

Mental Health

One extremely important factor that could have a very significant impact on learning the language, among other things, is of course mental health issues. Whether or not an individual has been subjected to some kind of trauma; either before leaving the country of origin or during the long journey to Europe, can have a tremendous influence on the language learning ability. Individuals suffering from poor mental health as a result of trauma have usually a lot of difficulties concentrating in class.

Sometimes the psychological pressure is even doubled in the cases where individuals have not only suffered from traumas but maybe some of their family members or relatives are still in the country of origin. This is for instance the case for Asim from Afghanistan. He complains from severe headaches and insomnia and has difficulty concentrating in the preparatory class for refugees, always digressing. When Asim reads a sentence, by the time he is at the end of a sentence he would have already forgotten the beginning. He says his thoughts 'fly away' and that inside he's still in Afghanistan. Asim worries about his family

who is still in Afghanistan and obviously suffers from PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) since he says that he still relives many war scenes internally.⁶⁸

In addition to traumas and poor mental health, the big cultural and value-based differences could also be obstacles to integration. Refugees and asylum seekers are often faced with challenges that wouldn't even exist in their own countries. Sometimes these challenges are rooted in the differences in values systems, traditions, culture and even also religion. Even freedom is sometimes felt to be in excess like in the case of Ahmad for instance: "... in Germany you have freedom, extra freedom... sometimes too much freedom" Ahmad-Asylum seeker from Syria.

Human rights, gender equality and roles, parenting, western way of life and culture, political system and participation, in addition to openness and tolerance of sexual preferences are often new concepts which refugees and asylum seekers from Syria are not familiar with. Perhaps the most basic example is in relation to a certain culture of respect for the human being in general which, in case it existed before the war started, would definitely not exist during the war.

This very relevant especially since the three biggest countries of origins in Germany in general and in the region of North Rhine Westphalia (NRW) more specifically are Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. For refugees and asylum seekers from these countries, the whole concept of human rights and even day-to-day life in Germany could be completely unusual.

Someone escaping a vicious war where human life no longer has any worth or where even before the war human rights violations were very usual to say the least might have difficulties understanding that in Germany even animals have rights and are protected by the law. An individual who has grown up in a society where women and men were almost never

⁶⁸ Baumann, Birgit. "Flüchtlinge: "Man kann doch nicht immer nur traurig sein"." ZEIT ONLINE

perceived as equals; be it with regard to gender roles or in general in society or even before the law might have some difficulties adapting to the German society where gender equality is a non-negotiable premise.

Refugees and asylum seekers suddenly find themselves in a society where women actually built the country from the ground up after the second world war and where gender equality is one of the most important pillars of the German ‘‘Grundgesetz’’ or basic law, the constitution which represents the core of the German social values and way of life post-WWII.

‘‘Article 3 [Equality before the law] (1) All persons shall be equal before the law. (2) Men and women shall have equal rights. The state shall promote the actual implementation of equal rights for women and men and take steps to eliminate disadvantages that now exist. (3) No person shall be favored or disfavored because of sex, parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith, or religious or political opinions. No person shall be disfavored because of disability.’’⁶⁹

In addition to the above, and on another note, polygamy is illegal in Germany. This means that one has to have one wife/partner before the law. Now imagine how challenging it could be for a Muslim Syrian national with four wives to enter the country with all four spouses; usually what happens is that this man has to choose only one of the women to register as his wife before the law and the others as relatives or sisters.

Moreover, imagine how complex a situation it would be if someone is literally married to a minor; something that is also illegal in Germany but usually very normal and widely accepted in the above-mentioned countries of origin.

Nachrichten auf ZEIT ONLINE, 28 June 2017. Web. 02 July 2017.

⁶⁹ The Bonn constitution: basic law for the Federal Republic of Germany
Division of Publications, Office of Public Affairs - 1949

Moving on, one of the most important obstacles to the successful integration of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria. It is the obstacle of housing. Housing is very important to consider when studying integration. The reason why it is a very important indicator of integration is because it could mean the difference between interaction with the host community on a daily basis and living at the margin of the host community's society. The former means better chances of practicing the language meeting people and perhaps even making friends with the locals; which would in turn boost the integration process. The latter usually leads to the exact opposite. Refugees and asylum seekers living in sport halls and temporary housing units with other refugees and asylum seekers in relatively remote areas have lesser opportunities.

They would then most definitely have fewer chances to practice the language, meet people from the host community, learn the values and experience the local culture first hand. This barrier between the two communities is a major blow to the integration process. A lot can result from this segregation and since it is separating the refugees and asylum seekers from the locals it is feeding into the insecurities of each community. This usually leads refugees to frustration and disillusionment with regard to their new host country on the one hand and contributes to the already increasing fear of foreigners by the host community on the other.

The influx of large numbers of people into urban areas causes many problems. The provision of adequate housing is especially serious. Besides supplying necessary shelter, housing is important because it provides the residential base for the successful integration. Without a relatively secure and stable residence, it is difficult for new residents to participate fully in urban life.

These problems of housing and integration are especially critical for migrants because they generally come from low-income groups and therefore have fewer economic resources and

less political influence.⁷⁰ The creation of a balanced ethnic mix at the neighborhood level is a common objective of contemporary housing policies in many European countries. According to its proponents, these policies aim to stimulate social mobility and social integration, often within a wider attempt at urban regeneration. Germany is looking back at a long tradition of mixing strategies aimed at ethnic desegregation. Whereas other countries take a more subtle approach, targeting ethnic segregation indirectly by means of a social or housing mix, some German cities have tried to prevent ethnic concentrations by imposing moving- in bans or quotas on foreigners in certain quarters, restrictions that are still maintained under the recent anti-discrimination legislation.⁷¹

In 2007 the EU Commission had started a procedure against Germany because of the way the country had transposed the anti-discrimination directives into national law. The European officials drew particular attention to an exemption which had been added to the original draft of the German legislation under pressure from housing lobbyists in favor of ethnic mixing. In the case of housing, unequal treatment is permissible on all grounds if it serves to maintain the stable social relations of inhabitants and balanced patterns of settlement and economic, social and cultural relations.⁷²

It is believed that there are three trends in Germany's housing policy with regard to ethnic segregation. First of all, it is widely assumed that immigrants are withdrawing voluntarily into their own ethnic enclaves and 'parallel societies', an allegation which can be challenged for most immigrants. Secondly, scientific research on neighborhood effects is almost totally neglected. Finally, the ideal of social and ethnic mix is being defended with fervor, even

⁷⁰ Logan, Kathleen. "Migration, Housing, and Integration: The Urban Context of Guadalajara, Mexico." *Urban Anthropology*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1979, pp. 131–148. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/40552840.

⁷¹ Münch, Sybille. "'It's All in the Mix': Constructing Ethnic Segregation as a Social Problem in Germany." *Journal of Housing and the Built Environment*, vol. 24, no. 4, 2009, pp. 441–455. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41107482.

though many municipalities and housing associations are beginning to realize that it does not line up with the reality.⁷³ Though the influx of asylum seekers has subsided since 2015, when Merkel opened Germany's doors to refugees and about a million people came in, 149,880 asylum applications were filed in January through August 2017 -- more than in all of 2013 -- and the full-year figure will probably be higher than in 2014.

There are no reliable statistics on how the newcomers are housed; the latest available official data are from the end of 2015, and they show that 61 % of the asylum seekers lived in reception facilities or shared housing, not in normal one-family apartments. In May 2017, the weekly *Der Spiegel* tried to do its own count and found tens of thousands still living in initial reception facilities, such as container blocks, or in "emergency accommodations" such as the hangars of the former Tempelhof airport.⁷⁴ Compared to this, a shared housing crowded hostel is a big step up.

Integration of refugees places an immense challenge for Germany. German integration policy focuses on supporting those that most probably will stay in Germany for a long term, in order for these to receive a good education and find employment. However, companies, and vocational schools are still confronted with several obstacles, such as lack of contacts to refugees, correct estimation of their potential and their educational needs, legal uncertainties, or lack of support and information about reasonable design of qualification, language promotion, employment and suitable Fördermöglichkeiten.⁷⁵

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Bershidsky, Leonid . "One Million Refugees Came. Here's What Happened Next." *Bloomberg View*, 18 Sept. 2017, www.bloomberg.com/view/articles/2017-09-18/one-million-refugees-came-here-s-what-happened-next.

⁷⁵ "Integration von Flüchtlingen in Ausbildung und Arbeitsmarkt – Erfahrungen, Forschungsbedarf und Lösungsansätze." Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft Köln (IW), www.iwkoeln.de/veranstaltungen/beitrag/iw-und-bibb-im-dialog-integration-von-fluechtlingen-in-ausbildung-und-arbeitsmarkt-erfahrungen-forschungsbedarf-und-loesungsansaetze-298990.

In addition to the above, securing a seat in a good language school and eventually being able to access the labor market are perhaps two of the most influential factors that could affect the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria in Germany. It is definitely not easy to find both a place in a language school and a job in directly after arriving in Germany.

Moreover, joining the German labor market, in addition to learning the language, are extremely significant factors that can noticeably boost the success of a person's integration process in their new host societies. These two variables are like the back bones, the foundations of migrant, refugee and asylum seeker integration. Also, they complement each other in the sense that learning a language means much better chances of landing a job in Germany and at the same time, getting a job can act as a catalyst to the language learning process of immigrants.

Working in the field of integration has, without a doubt, a huge impact on this research. Daily contact with migrants and refugees including refugees and asylum seekers from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran and many other countries has highlighted the many challenges that they face on a daily basis. Also, it has provided a significant amount of cases and relevant data necessary to understand the reality on the ground.

Even though the focus in this thesis will be a case study of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers' integration success in the city of Cologne in Germany, it is also very important to look at other cases from other cities in order to try and identify some trends and patterns that would be necessary to shed more light on this topic and try to reach a better understanding of the reality of integration both for the migrant community as well as the host community.

The case of the Ibrahim Sisters for instance is a very informative and interesting on look at as it highlights some very important aspects of integration that are significantly insightful. Looking at this case in Weimar- a city close to Leipzig in Eastern Germany- is very

interesting as it sheds lights on some of the main challenges, concerns and difficulties. Also very interesting is the peculiarities of approaching these challenges once as an individual and another time as a member of a group of women (the three as three individuals and then as three sisters together).

Thus conducting an anonymous questionnaire for refugees and asylum seekers from Syria was possible. The data gathered from this questionnaire has been essential in guiding the research and also in highlighting some of the reality of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria in relation to integration and also shed light on some of the most urgent challenges they face in addition to their understanding, perception and evaluation of the integration process in the city of Cologne- Germany.

The Survey

Using the conceptual framework and the numerous indicators to measuring integration, an anonymous survey has been put together in English and interviews with refugees and asylum seekers from Syria have been conducted (in Arabic) for the purpose of understanding refugees and asylum seekers in their own words and taking a closer look at their integration reality in Cologne one of the biggest cities in Germany.

The respondents were chosen randomly after a total of 30 visits have been made to language schools, refugees and asylum seekers housing facilities and on the streets on Cologne. Potential respondents were informed of the study, its purpose, the fact that the survey is anonymous, that the information gathered would not be shared with a third party and that even after they agree to take the survey they can abstain from answering any question that they prefer not to answer.

The idea behind the survey was a simple one: looking at the process of integration from the perspective of refugees and asylum seekers themselves and trying to find out what this concept means in their own words. The survey is structured in a way that each of the questions included in it attempts to investigate one of the above mentioned indicators. The participants' answers shall provide insight on the integration process in general and about each particular dimension that each indicator deals with.

Moreover, the survey itself provides a good opportunity to find out about refugees' and asylum seekers' challenges and difficulties they face as well as how, in their opinion, could the whole process be, at the same time, more successful and less complicated.

The indicators that the research was interested in were in fact a combination of various set of indicators. The Council of Europe's idea to measure integration by looking at social, political, economic and cultural dimensions seemed an interesting point to start from. But there was an interest to take it one step further by looking more specifically to the Australian Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs' (DIMA) economic and social participation dimensions.

In the survey this translates into looking at whether or not the respondents are working in Cologne or not and if not why not in addition to attempting to tap into the respondents' individual role and motivation by asking if they have already tried to apply for a job in Germany; which would indirectly highlight several information such as language level, labor market readiness and qualification, legal status (the availability of a work permit or the lack of one). (See section in the survey in the annex).

Another very important aspect of the DIMA's approach is to look at the 'Building bridges with the local communities' dimension which focuses on the level of social interaction with the host community in addition to speaking the language and respecting culture and values.⁷⁶ (See section in the survey in the annex)

In addition to these two approaches, both the research on the subject of and perhaps more interestingly the work in this field strongly suggests looking at the mental and psychological wellbeing of refugees and asylum seekers as it is indeed a variable that can have a very important effect on the chances to achieving a successful integration. Amartya Sen for instance has talked about this.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ DIMA 2000:9

⁷⁷ Amartya Sen (1982:334)

Moreover, Lawrence Lester has looked at four indicators for measuring the success or failure of integration.⁷⁸ He mentioned satisfaction with life in the host country, mental health, whether or not the subjects believe that their decision to immigrate was right and if they would encourage others to follow their steps and migrate to Australia.⁷⁹

In addition to the above, the Council of Europe's recommendation to attempt to measure integration success with indicators that "highlight important areas of public activity where integration could be assessed (employment, education, etc.)"⁸⁰ have been taken into consideration in the survey section related to the topics of education and participation in German language and integration courses in addition to the section on entering the labor market. (See section in the survey in the annex)

Another very interesting notion that was also discussed in the Australian context is that of the 'successful settlement'. From this perspective, immigrants' satisfaction with different aspects of their life in Australia may be considered good proxy measures of successful settlement. The findings of the Australian Survey Research Group (2010) study in relation to refugees' perception of settling well can be seen to be consistent with this perspective.⁸¹

In the survey this notion is also taken into consideration in the survey section related to the circumstances for leaving the country of origin; covering the decision to leave in addition to whether or not there was any time to plan and prepare. Also, the survey taps into the level of general satisfaction with life in Germany- in our specific context the city of Cologne- with a bracket on best and worst things about life in Germany whenever they exist. (See section in the survey in the annex)

⁷⁸ Lester 2008; 2009

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ager and Strang 2004: 3

⁸¹ Ibid.

Additionally, as Lester points out, not all immigrants migrate with the intention to participate in the labor market. Other avenues of community participation should be included in a consideration of successful settlement. These include participation in any community or social activities that demonstrate linkages to local communities such as playing sports, attending community events and volunteering, and having contacts and friends in the community.⁸²

For this reason, a section of the survey addresses the level of interaction with locals by looking at the frequency of interaction and the place or context where these interactions take place.

This being said, it seemed logical to try and come up with a combined approach to try and get as much insight as possible on all of this variety of indicators and merge them into one simple and quick survey designed to generate as much data as possible in as short as 30 to 45 min of duration which is really at the very margin of what can be done when it comes to this particular type of interviews.

Key observations and evaluation of the survey

A total of 70 interviews have been made in the city of Cologne over a period of 5 months-between January 2017 and July 2017. As mentioned earlier, the interviewees were selected randomly at language schools, refugees and asylum seekers housing facilities and on the streets on Cologne. It is important to mention that it was observed that male refugees and asylum seekers from Syria were more interested and willing to be interviewed as opposed to women as a general rule.

⁸² Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 1997; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999; Richardson et al, 2004

This might actually explain why only 15% of this sample is women. Moreover, the main bulk of the respondents fall within the age groups from 18 to 54 for men and between 35 to 54 for women.

Asylum seeker constitutes the biggest chunk with regard to the current legal status for respondents with a percentage of 87%. Refugee as a current legal status is the second lagging far back at 10%. The rest is other and it was mainly given by respondents who didn't actually know what exactly their current legal status is.

Over 80% of our respondents have answered married to our current relationship status question and about 95% of those have children. However, only around 30 % of the respondents have said that they are here with their immediate family.

Around 95% of the respondents have a primary level of education, followed by 3% with secondary and roughly 1% with bachelor or equivalent. But perhaps more importantly, over 87% of the respondents have said that they are unable to read or write in their own language- which was Arabic (approx. 80%) followed by Kurdish (20%). Only 2 % speak another Latin language.

The majority of the male respondents have had some work experience in Syria, whereas only about 1% of women have said to have worked in their country of origin.

Very few respondents have said that they have had some time to prepare for the trip before fleeing from Syria. A significant number of respondents have already been in Germany for at least one year.

Language learning discrepancies exist between men and women. Around 85% of respondents who have or are attending a German language course or an integration course in Cologne are in fact men. (Details in the findings' report and analysis section)

Around 30% of male respondents have looked for some kind of job since their arrival in Germany while roughly 26% actually applied for a vacancy when they found one.

Slightly over 85% get some income from some government authority and only 22% have said to have some form of interaction with locals.

The survey findings and analysis

In 2015, the state of northern Rhine Westphalia (NRW) had the highest quota and Bremen the lowest quota of asylum seekers.⁸³

The survey in Cologne shed light on some important dynamics which have proven to be real challenging, if not hindering, to the integration process. This section will address the difficulties as well as the potential opportunities which our respondent refugees and asylum seekers from Syria have talked about.

Furthermore, the methodology used for this study is an ego-ecological psycho-contextual analysis developed by Prof. Marisa Zavalloni. As mentioned in the methodology section above, the methodology is founded in the idea that whenever words or thoughts about the world are produced or received, something else is activated at the periphery of consciousness as background thinking.

By displaying and analyzing the content of the affective and representational elements that are activated as background thinking, an attempt to construct an approximate model of the individual “self” in transaction with his social ecology becomes possible.⁸⁴ The specificity and originality of the ego-ecological approach mainly reside in the ability to identify for each individual and group the keywords used to make sense of, interpret and evaluate reality, and

⁸³ "Königsteiner Schlüssel." *Glossar-Hilfe*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 May 2017.

⁸⁴ Zavalloni, Marisa . "Identity And hyper-identities: The representational foundation of self and culture*." University of Montreal.

then see how these words are re-appropriated and reinterpreted by a person based on a history or a project.

The most significant insights that the survey has provided as far as the purpose of trying to evaluate the process of integration of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria seem to revolve around the vicious cycle which components will be discussed below.

A significant number of our responses have highlighted elevated illiteracy rates compared to very low cases of secondary and or graduate level education. This suggests a very significant discrepancy with regard to the level of education as well as the quality of education or perhaps it is better to call it the difference between how things are done in the country of origin compared to the host country.

On the one hand, a good number of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria arriving to Germany are already 'underequipped' to say the least when it comes to the level of education as the majority has had a primary level education if any. On the other hand, the discrepancies related to the system of education and the quality of education are also a factor to consider since even the people who have a good level of education still have to, in the best cases scenarios, have their degrees recognized and their professional expertise evaluated.

Even lawyers, doctors and architects among the ranks of the incomers must take some equivalence courses where their skills and knowledge is updated as well as adapted to the German standards. They cannot directly work in their field without obtaining the proper qualifications. This is true for blue, white and pink collar jobs.

This obstacle suggests that refugees and asylum seekers from Syria will probably always have this as a drawback to their language-learning as well as their readiness for the German labor market.

Some respondents who cannot even read or write in their mother language need to be alphabetized so that they can read and write the Latin alphabet. This has proven to be the most difficult thing to achieve. It is extremely difficult to teach them especially in the cases of adults over 40 years old and traumatized children and youth. Even combining letters together has been cited as a difficulty to learning the language.

Although in fact that roughly most of the vacant positions in the German labor market can be filled by graduates of vocational training institutes, the language barrier is still a significant wall between this category of refugees and asylum seekers and their potential places in the German labor-force.

Another factor that also appeared frequently is not having a residency permit which means that the person is not allowed to work yet. Now this factor not only highlights the inability of the famous German bureaucracy system to go through asylum application as quickly as needed but also suggests that long periods of waiting can have a negative effect on the well being of the incomers and is one of the main hindering factors to refugees' and asylum seekers' access to the labor market as well as the opportunity to get out of shared housing units.

This is especially important for families and especially their privacy as well as students in particular with regard to a studying friendly environment. More than 90 % of respondents have complained about shared housing citing reasons such as: "...bad environment for studying, bad living conditions, over crowdedness, no privacy, noise pollution leading to sleep deficit". Around 57 % of those 90% mentioned above have cited these reasons as main barriers to language learning and studying at "home".

"They have no people to talk to. They lost their roots and now they're in a completely new country with different habits, whose language they don't speak."⁸⁵

Even though there is an integration law at a national level with a budget of around 3,300 euro (per refugee/year for language and integration classes in addition to a lot of community-based initiatives as well as private, public and civil society sector initiatives and cross-sector initiatives, Syrian and Iraqi refugees are less likely to achieve successful integration in Germany due to difficulties in learning the language.

Learning German is the key to economic and social integration in Germany. It is the most important foothold that would allow any foreigner who wishes and qualifies to stay in the country, including migrants from other European countries.

Learning the language is a must if any newcomer wants to get an education in German schools, universities or vocational training centers. It is equally important not only in order to qualify to work in Germany, but also to find a job in the first place.

Moreover, when the vacancy is found, applying to that vacancy would be basically impossible if the applicant is incapable of presenting a CV in German in addition to a "Job Bewerbungsbrief" or cover letter. Just as the knowledge of the German language is necessary for applying to getting employed in Germany, being employed is in turn a pre-requisite for joining the labor market hence achieving economic integration.

Another dimension of a successful integration is the ability to deal with the relevant authorities such as the BAMF, Jobcenter, the Bundesagentur für Arbeit; respectively the federal agency of migrants and refugees, the job-center and the federal labor agency. Dealing

⁸⁵ Palca , J. (2017, January 3). Learning German In The Name Of Science And Cross-Cultural Collaboration. Retrieved January 05, 2017, from <http://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2017/01/03/508033549/learning-german-in-the-name-of-science-and-cross-cultural-collaboration>

with these agencies is an essential factor of the integration process whereby a refugee or asylum seeker must go through the relevant paperwork associated with the integration process.

The legal process of applying for asylum is also not very easy and needless to say much more difficult in case the applicant has no or limited knowledge of the language.

The requirements for obtaining a residency permit, for instance, include having an or working operational level of German and some effort on behalf of the applicant showing the will to learn not only the language but also a bit about the culture, values, politics and history of Germany. These will be discussed in details as this research unfolds.

Adding to that, one of the things that a person takes for granted in their homeland is the ability to communicate with other members of the society and to tend to everyday life demands such as things as basic as grocery shopping. This can prove difficult for someone living in Germany with no knowledge of the language.

Moreover, a good number of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers have either not had or have not completed their education and sometimes completely illiterate which makes it even more difficult for them to learn the German language. Also, a good number of Syrian refugees suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is a significant factor that limits their learning abilities thus hindering their German language acquisition.

Refugees in general, including those coming from Syria, tend to refrain from interacting with the local communities and mostly prefer to keep to themselves and stay within their communities and communicate in their mother tongue which is another factor that hinders their acquisition of the German language. The reasons for this kind of behavior could vary; from suffering from what could be called ‘‘newcomer shyness syndrome’’ which is basically

being more or less self conscious about being an outsider in a new society, trying to fit and at the same time suffering from a certain lack of self-confidence which is grounded in an incapacity to communicate effectively in the foreign language. This can lead a person to being overwhelmed with how new and different the host community's values, culture in addition to how things are done in Germany. From a psychological perspective, this condition is called Ulysses Syndrome (Immigrant Syndrome of Chronic and Multiple Stress). It is an atypical set of depressive, anxious, dissociative, and somatoform symptoms that results from being exposed to extreme levels of stress unique to the process of modern migration. Rather than a mental disorder, this syndrome is a natural reaction to toxic levels of stress seen in migrants who are otherwise in normal mental health.⁸⁶

Thus, and since learning German is the key to economic and social integration in Germany, Syrian refugees are less likely to achieve successful integration in Germany due to difficulties in learning the language.

This is mainly due to high illiteracy rates among the refugees in addition to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) hindering their learning abilities and them preferring to stay within their communities and communicate in their mother tongue.

⁸⁶ Achotegui, Joseba (2014). *The Ulysses Syndrome: The immigrant Syndrome with Chronic and Multiple Stress*.

Concluding Paragraph

“True economic and social integration in Germany requires a working proficiency in the German language; however, few refugees arrive with any knowledge of it.”⁸⁷

This means that if refugees fail to acquire the German language due to illiteracy, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or having no interaction with their host community, their integration in the German society will be more difficult to say the least.

So in other words, if by the term integration in Germany economic and social integration in the German society are the two main pillars, then, not acquiring the language due to the above-mentioned reasons would mean not being able to find a job and not being able to interact with locals. This would basically make usually simple everyday life tasks significantly more complicated and integration virtually impossible.

Additionally, a good number of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which is a significant factor that limits their learning abilities thus hindering their German language acquisition. “For many refugees there is not a sufficient level of education to build upon.”⁸⁸

Based on the results of the international schoolwork studies of Pisa and Timss from 2011 - for the now 18-year-olds - a crushing picture emerges: In Syria, 65 per cent of pupils do not jump over what the OECD defines as basic competences.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Katz, B., Noring, L., & Garrelts, N. (2016). Cities and Refugees— The German Experience. *Brookings Institution*, 1-29. Retrieved January 4, 2017, from <https://www.brookings.edu/research/cities-and-refugees-the-german-experience/#footnote-1>

⁸⁸ Wößmann, L. (2015, November 19). "Zwei Drittel können kaum lesen und schreiben" [Interview by Jan. M. Wiarda]. *DIE ZEIT*.

⁸⁹ Ibid

‘‘Syrian eight-year-olds are lagging behind five-year-old German pupils.’’⁹⁰

This is a huge challenge, as long as the asylum procedures last so irresponsibly. They will not learn German with the same emphasis or integrate into a society if only 15 months pass before they know whether they can stay.⁹¹

Two-thirds of the students in Syria can only read and write very limited in their mother language, let alone Latin alphabet, that they can only solve the simplest computing tasks. The visit to the secondary school there is only 69 percent. This means that these students in Germany, even if they have learned German, can hardly follow the lessons.

About two-thirds of the asylum seekers from the war countries have no vocational qualification or their qualifications need to be adapted to the German standards which will also mean it will take the capable refugees and asylum seekers a longer time to enter the labor market.

Two-thirds of the young Syrians, who have to be regarded as functionally illiterate according to international standards of education, will usually lack the necessary training for the local businesses. ‘‘According to the chamber of commerce Munich and Upper Bavaria, 70% of those apprentices from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq that have begun their apprenticeship two years ago have already abandoned it prematurely’’.

Finally, the most important reason **Syrian refugees are less likely to achieve successful integration in Germany is due to difficulties in learning the language.** However, ‘‘If we make it right now for the children of the refugees, if we give their parents an opportunity to

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Wößmann, L. (2015, November 19). "Zwei Drittel können kaum lesen und schreiben" [Interview by Jan. M. Wiarda]. *DIE ZEIT*.

work and integrate, then the children will be the ones who will reduce our demographic problems in 25 years.’’⁹²

Indeed, while there is an integration law at a national level with a budget of around 3,300 euro (per refugee/year for language and integration classes in addition to a lot of community-based initiatives as well as private, public and civil society sector initiatives and cross-sector initiatives, Syrian refugees are less likely to achieve successful integration in Germany mainly due to the many difficulties mentioned earlier in this paper including learning the language and simply being willing to make an effort to integrate on the one hand and the sustainability of the “Refugee Welcome Culture” in Germany and in this case in the city of Cologne.

It has already been established how vital is learning the language to achieving a successful integration in a country like Germany. As it was mentioned earlier, learning German is the “golden key” to even having a chance in achieving a successful integration. However, this is still one of the most challenging subjects for the people who work in this field be it language teachers, social workers or public employees. The difficulties facing the majority of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria are many especially when it comes to learning the language.

First and foremost is the level of education of the individual in the country of origin. In this context, a general observation is that the higher the level of education of an individual the better the ability to grasp new and different concepts or grammatical nuances when learning the language. Unfortunately, a good number of refugees and asylum seekers from Syria have either a basic level education (primary school not completed) or have not completed secondary school.

⁹² Wößmann, L. (2015, November 19). "Zwei Drittel können kaum lesen und schreiben" [Interview by Jan. M. Wiarda]. *DIE ZEIT*.

Though asylum seekers must attend integration courses, German is an exceedingly difficult language to learn. When the German Federal Office for Migration conducted a large-scale survey of the recent refugees in late 2016, only 18 percent reported their command of the language was "good," while 47 percent confessed it was "bad."

The difficulty in learning the language has inevitable consequences on the success of the integration of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Cologne. Not learning the language means no access to the labor and no chance of neither formal nor informal interaction with the host-community.

At this point, after having gone through the dynamics of asylum seeking, refugees, migration and integration, the picture is a bit clearer... certainly all of the factors that have been examined are altogether indispensable to both understanding the dynamics of integration. But what is striking is the following rather simple hypothetical idea:

Assuming that much of the obstacles that have been mentioned do not exist for a little moment; Suppose asylum seekers and refugees from Syria have no trouble learning the language, have no obstacles to hinder their process of integration as it was mentioned earlier and to state some of them again: obstacles related to bureaucracy, housing, traumas, resistance from the host communities etc... if all of these factors were to be eliminated simply by pretending that they do not exist then the following question would likely arise: would the refugees and asylum seekers be able to integrate if they do not genuinely have a true desire and will to integrate?

Interestingly enough, the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees clearly takes into consideration the will factor of a refugee or asylum seeker ‘‘someone who is unable or **unwilling** to return to their country of origin [...]’’⁹³

‘‘someone who is unable or **unwilling** ...’’ it appears that this might be the most important factor that might affect the process of integration both from the side of the individual or group who is expected to integrate as well as from the side of the host community’s readiness to welcome and accept someone new into their social fabric.

The literature on this subject is very limited to say the least and it would be a great source of insight for the field of integration studies to take this ‘‘will factor’’ into consideration. Perhaps it has managed to slip unnoticed for so long because it is more or less taken for granted. It is clear that it plays a very important role because the example from language courses alone shows that it can influence the language acquisition component of integration among others. One can either attend the language course out of a genuine will to want to learn the language because it is a major requirement on the road to achieving integration – or they can attend for reasons of personal convenience.

It has been already mentioned how some tend to attend only in order to just sign the attendance sheet in the end so that the ‘‘Jobcenter’’ will keep wiring unemployment money into their bank accounts. One way serves the process of integration while the other cheats it and the system into malfunction.

While the system remained the same and the social environment remained the same only a variation in the ‘‘will’’ of the participant was shown to be able able to move the outcome from one extreme to the other.

⁹³ 1951 Convention and protocol relating to the status of refugees

The same is very valid in the case of the host community. Looking at the example from the section on housing, it can also be observed how this variable is overseen. In the same system and the same housing as well as integration laws, in the end even if everything is looking good on paper but the landlord does not want to do business with refugees in general the whole thing is bound to fail. It could also directly shift the result from another positive milestone on the road towards integration to a frustrated refugee trapped in a transitional housing unit unable to find an independent private place for themselves and/or their families.

Some people just want to ideally go back when it is possible and for them it is maybe not worth it to even try to integrate. Some people cannot go back or want to stay; even between these two there would be a difference for example: it could very well be that someone who cannot go back might find it a bit more difficult to integrate than the one who actually wants to stay and is not just still in Germany because they cannot go back.

Perhaps a focus on the individual cases might actually bring a lot more accurate results to studying the success or the lack of it when it comes to the integration process of refugees and asylum seekers. Another very important point which should be reiterated while concluding is the urgent need to evaluation of the refugee's or asylum seeker's mental and psychological health especially in the cases that are known to have suffered from traumatic experiences because this can be perhaps the most crucial factor which can negatively influence the will to make an effort.

Following the German Bundestag elections earlier in September 2017, the Christian Socialist Union (CSU), which has served as sister party to the Christian Democratic Union for decades, fears heavy losses in next year's Bavaria election and is digging its heels in over a demand for a cap on the number of refugees. Merkel says a cap would breach the constitution

which guarantees asylum to politically persecuted people.⁹⁴ Merkel, who left Germany's borders open to 1 million migrants in 2015, acknowledged her handling of that crisis had shaken the relationship between the CDU and CSU, and took responsibility for election losses because of her decision.

Most of the migrants who arrived two years ago entered Germany through Bavaria. The CDU, and above all its boss, Angela Merkel, did not want to touch upon the basic right to asylum, and therefore did not set a ceiling for refugees and compromise the Basic Law (Grundgesetz). The CSU wanted under all circumstances exactly this ceiling and had also already a number ready: not more than 200,000 people a year are to come, otherwise the Bavarian parliamentary election 2018 is not for them to win or breaks order and law together, which is basically the same.⁹⁵

It appeared at first as if a coalition formed by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) - the party of Chancellor Angela Merkel- in addition to the sister party the Christian Socialist Union (CSU) in a coalition with the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Green Party was the most likely to happen. However, internal differences, especially on migrant policy that exist between these once potential allies and hindered the mentioned coalition to materialize. In a surprise move by Christian Lindner, leader of the Free Democrats party, the latter walked out in late November 2017 from the coalition negotiations, citing irreconcilable differences.⁹⁶ "We are unwilling and unable to take responsibility for the spirit of the negotiation results," Mr. Lindner announced. "We would be forced to abandon convictions which we have spent

⁹⁴ Reuters. "Merkel pushes for three-Way 'Jamaica' coalition in Germany." www.Reuters.com, 7 Oct. 2017, www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-politics-merkel/merkel-pushes-for-three-way-jamaica-coalition-in-germany-idUSKBN1CC0BZ.

⁹⁵ Kuzmany, Stefan . "Asylkompromiss der Union Saisonales Süppchen." Spiegel Online, 9 Oct. 2017, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/cdu-und-csu-mit-obergrenzen-kompromiss-saisonales-sueppchen-a-1172041.html.

⁹⁶ Eddy, Melissa, and Katrin Bennhold. "Consensus? No, Thanks. German Politics Suddenly Get Messy." *The New York Times*, *The New York Times*, 24 Nov. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/11/24/world/europe/germany-merkel-coalition.html.

years fighting for.”⁹⁷ A couple of months after that Merkel successfully agreed on a deal with the Social Democrats (SPD), led by Martin Schulz, along with the CDU’s sister party the CSU to form a coalition government.⁹⁸ The major consequences of this deal were as difficult as the negotiations that lead to it. After five months of political stalemate and government uncertainty in Berlin, the result of the SPD referendum, showed that 239,604 members voted in favor of a new alliance with the centre-right, with 123,329 votes against.⁹⁹ One consequence of the aforementioned vote is the change in leadership for the SPD; the new SPD leadership revolves around Andrea Nahles, the current head of the SPD parliamentary group who is set to take over as party chief.¹⁰⁰

It was also mentioned, at least in the political discourse, that there is a will to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers do not need to seek asylum in Germany which basically means that, in the future, there will be efforts to ensure that the countries of origin remain safe countries. This appears to be an unrealistic goal to be aiming for and would be without a doubt very difficult to achieve. However this is what the authorities consider to be the optimal solution to the current refugee crisis. EU external border protection is also expected to get a boost especially in the areas of joint EU asylum procedures at these external borders and maybe even a reform of the Dublin system.¹⁰¹

It is definitely not easy to make a prediction as to how the policy on migration and integration could unfold from here. Theoretically, a coalition including the SPD would usually mean continuing to accept refugees and Asylum seekers and continue with policies aiming at

⁹⁷ Ibid

⁹⁸ Ellyatt, Holly. “Germany reaches breakthrough in coalition deal, paving the way for a new government.” CNBC, CNBC, 7 Feb. 2018, www.cnbc.com/2018/02/07/german-coalition-deal-reached-between-merkel-and-spd.html.

⁹⁹ Buck, Tobias . “Merkel wins backing for grand coalition.” Financial Times, 4 Mar. 2018, www.ft.com/content/d4993360-1f81-11e8-a895-1ba1f72c2c11.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid

integrating the newcomers into the German society. However the fact that the CDU agreed with the CSU on setting a ceiling for accepting Asylum seekers is at the same time a strategic must for the CSU who is trying to contain the AfD in Bavaria and a definite political no-go for the SPD.

Most of the migrants who arrived two years ago entered Germany through Bavaria. The CDU, and above all its boss, Angela Merkel, did not want to touch upon the basic right to asylum, and therefore did not set a ceiling for refugees and compromise the Basic Law (Grundgesetz). The CSU wanted under all circumstances exactly this ceiling and had also already a number ready: not more than 200,000 people a year are to come; otherwise the Bavarian parliamentary election 2018 is not for them to win or breaks order and law together, which is basically the same.¹⁰²

In the end Merkel had to compromise in order to be able to continue to form the governing coalition. As a result, the ceiling was set to a max of 200,000 people/year can be admitted to Germany for humanitarian reasons. Also in part I believe her decision was also influenced by the need to contain the alarming rise of the Alternativ für Deutschland (AfD) Party.

“The Sept. 24 election returned a difficult result, with seven parties crowding into Parliament, including far-left and — for the first time since World War II — far-right populists.”¹⁰³

It was also mentioned that there is a will to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers do not need to seek asylum in Germany which basically means that, in the future, there will be efforts to ensure that the countries of origin remain safe countries. EU external border

¹⁰² Kuzmany, Stefan . “Asylkompromiss der Union Saisonales Süppchen.” Spiegel Online, 9 Oct. 2017, www.spiegel.de/politik/deutschland/cdu-und-csu-mit-obergrenzen-kompromiss-saisonales-sueppchen-a-1172041.html.

¹⁰³ Eddy, Melissa, and Katrin Bennhold. “Consensus? No, Thanks. German Politics Suddenly Get Messy.” The New York Times, The New York Times, 24 Nov. 2017

protection is also expected to get a boost especially in the areas of joint EU asylum procedures at these external borders and maybe even a reform of the Dublin system.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ibid

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Annex 1: Survey Questions

1. Age

- 18 to 24
 25 to 34
 35 to 44
 45 to 54
 55 to 64
 65 to 74
 75 or older

2. Gender

- Female
 Male

3. Which of the following best describes your current status?

- Migrant
 Refugee
 Asylum Seeker
 other

4. Which of the following best describes your current relationship status?

- Married
 Widowed
 Divorced
 Separated
 In a domestic partnership or civil union
 Single, but cohabiting with a significant other
 Single, never married

5. Do you have any children?

- yes
 no
 If yes (please specify number and age)

6. Do the children go to school here in Germany?

- yes
 no

if not (why?)

7. Are you in Germany with your immediate family?

- yes
 no

8. How would you describe your level of education?

- Primary education
 Secondary education
 Bachelor or equivalent
 Master or equivalent
 Doctoral or equivalent
 Other (please specify)

9. What is your mother language?

- Arabic
 Kurdish
 Other (please specify)

10. Do you know how to read or write in your mother language?

- yes
 no

11. Do you speak any other language(s)?

12. Do you know how to read and write the Latin alphabet?

- yes
 no
 Other (please specify)

13. Do you have any work experience?

- yes
 no
 Other (please specify)

14. If yes, in which field?

15. How did you arrive to Europe?

- by land
 by plane
 by boat
 other

16. Did you have time to prepare for your trip to Germany before you left Syria?

- yes
 no
 Other (please specify)

17. If yes, how?

18. When and why did you come to Germany?

19. Are you and your wife attending an integration or a German language course?

- yes
 no
 Why? (please specify)

20. If yes since when and how would you describe the course?

21. What do you like best/least in your course?

22. How long did it take you to enroll in such a course since your arrival to Germany?

23. Do you think that such courses help with the integration progress?

- yes
 no
 How so? (please specify)

24. How would you describe a successful integration in Germany?

25. Have you looked for a job in Germany?

- yes
 no
 if not, why? (please specify)

26. Have you applied for a job in Germany?

- yes
 no
 if not, why? (please specify)

5

27. Is any other person in your household working in Germany?

- yes
 no
 other

28. Do you get any income from any government authority?

- yes
 no
 other

29. Do you think you have any learning difficulties?

- yes
 no
 if yes, describe (please specify)

30. How often do you interact with locals?

- never
 once a month
 once a week
 almost everyday
 everyday
 all the time
 Other (please specify)

6

31. Do you have free time during your day?

- yes
 no
 if yes, how much and how do you spend it? (please specify)

32. Are you happy here in Germany?

- yes
 no

33. What do you like or dislike about living in Germany?

34. Do you think that you would leave Germany and go back to Syria or migrate elsewhere?

7

Challenges of Integration of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Cologne-Survey results					
Age group	Male	Female			
	18-54	35-54			
Gender	85%	15%			
Work experience	98%	1%			
Legal Status	Asylum Seekers	Refugees	Unknown		
	87%	10%	3%		
Marital Status	Married	Single	Seperated		
	80%	16%	4%		
Children	Have	Do not have			
	95% (of married)	5% (of married)			
Living with immediate family	Yes	No	Living with part of the immediate family		
	30%	58%	12%		
Level of education	Primary education	Secondary education	Higher education	No education	
	95%	3%	1%	1%	
Language	Arabic mother language	Kurdish mother language	Literate in another Latin language		
	80%	20%	2%		
Literacy in mother language	Illiterate	Literate	No answer		
	87%	11%	2%		
Time to prepare before leaving Syria	Yes	No			
	2%	98%			
Language or integration course	Attending	Waiting list			
	92%	8%			
Successful integration in Germany linked to	Reuniting with family	Working	Private apartment		
	44%	25%	31%		
Submitted a job application in Cologne	Yes	No	Not allowed to work		
	3%	74%	23%		
Thinking about going back to Syria	Yes	No	Yes but not possible		
	35%	23%	42%		
Receiving income from a government authority	Yes	No	Not sure		
	99%	0%	1%		
Frequency of Interaction with locals	Never	Monthly	Weekly	Everyday	
	71%	10%	16%	3%	
Learning difficulties linked to	Separation from family	Traumatization	Age	Ability to Concentrate	Language difficulty
	30%	36%	16%	4%	14%

List of Acronymes

UNHCR: United Nations' High Commissioner on Refugees
UN: United Nations
EU: European Union
WWII: World War Two
US: United States
ISIS : Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
DIMA : Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs
BMS: Brussels Minorities Survey
LSIA1: First Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia
LSIA2: Second Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Australia
MENA: Middle East and North Africa
NRW: North Rhine Westphalia
BAMF: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
TFEU: Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
TEU: Treaty on the European Union
ECHR: European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR: European Court of Human Rights
IOM: International Organization for Migration
PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
CV: Curriculum Vitae
OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CDU: Christian Democratic Union
CSU: Christian Socialist Union
FDP: Free Democratic Party
SPD: Social Party of Germany
AfD: Alternative for Germany