Next Speaker

Mr Stefano Scarpetta
Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, OECD
The Refugee crisis and the role of PES

Stefano Scarpetta
Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs
OECD
Overview: Not everyone is a refugee

Asylum channel (application in-country)
- Negative or closed
- Positive
  - Convention status (refugee)
  - Other forms of protection

Resettlement channel (via third countries or directly from origin)
- admitted new arrivals through UNHCR
  - + individual country programmes not passing through the UNHCR

Refugees and others in need of international protection
2015: a record year for asylum

In total in 2015 in Europe, more than 1.3 million asylum applications were recorded.

- About one million Syrians sought refuge in Europe since April 2011.
- 4.8 million refugees are in the neighbouring countries of Syria, including 2.75 million in Turkey, 1.1 million in Lebanon and 640k in Jordan.
**In per-capita terms, Sweden, Austria and Germany have received the highest number of asylum seekers in 2015**

New asylum seekers per million population in selected OECD countries

- Australia, Canada and the United States have also sizeable resettlement programmes and have increased their resettlement places for Syrians in 2015.

- Canada alone received more than 25 thousand Syrians in just four months between end of 2015 and April 2016.
First data for 2016: continuing but decreasing numbers of entries

Top-10 nationalities of Mediterranean sea arrivals

Comparison of monthly Mediterranean sea arrivals

Evolution - Mediterranean Sea

Demographics

Source: UNHCR.
Why is this refugee crisis different?

I. Unprecedented numbers

II. Strong concentration of asylum seekers in just a handful of entry points and destination countries

III. Advances in communication technology and the emergence of new smuggling routes leads to rapidly changing situations

IV. Diversity of origin countries and deterioration of the situation in transit countries / countries of temporary refuge

V. Large share of unaccompanied minors

VI. Large differences in the skills and qualifications of refugees

VII. Many crises in parallel in countries relatively close to Europe with little prospect for improvement in the near future

VIII. Part of the public opinion in several European countries is hostile to further migration flows, including refugees
Labour market integration of refugees takes time and requires active support

Employment rate by immigrant categories and duration of stay in European OECD countries, 2008

Simulated labour market impact of the refugee inflow in the EEA and Germany

Estimated cumulative entries in the labour market due to refugees who have arrived since January 2014

Source: OECD (2015) Migration Policy Debate n°8

Labour market entries will be very progressive and relatively small for most countries
10 lessons on refugee integration from OECD work
Lesson 1: Begin activation and integration services as soon as possible for humanitarian migrants and asylum seekers with high prospects to remain

- Early intervention is crucial for future integration outcomes
- Where asylum procedures are lengthy, groups with high probability to remain may benefit from up-front support – including language and job-preparation training, and skills assessment

Average duration of the asylum procedure until first instance decision, selected OECD countries, 2015 or latest available year

* For certain groups

Sources: Processing times: OECD Questionnaire on the Integration of Humanitarian Migrants 2015; Swedish Migration Board
Lesson 2: Facilitate labour market access for asylum seekers with high prospects to remain

- Early labour market entry is a key predictor for integration outcomes in the long-run
- Making labour market access subject to a waiting period and certain conditions helps preventing abuse of the asylum channel

Most favorable waiting periods for labour market access for asylum seekers in selected OECD countries, 2015 (in months)

* Under certain conditions

Source: OECD Questionnaire on the Integration of Humanitarian Migrants, 2015
Lesson 3: Factor employment prospects into dispersal policies

- Where humanitarian migrants cannot choose their place of residence, policies usually aim at an equal ‘dispersal’ across the country – often paying little attention to employment.
- But the costs for neglecting employment-related aspects are high.
- Evidence from Sweden suggests:

  To be effective, dispersal policies ideally should consider:
  - skills profile of refugees
  - local job vacancies
  - local labour market conditions
  - specific shortages
  - avoid segregation

... eight years after dispersal for refugees subject to a housing-led dispersal policy (Edin et al. 2004)
Lesson 4: Record and assess humanitarian migrants’ foreign qualifications, work experience and skills; provide for alternative assessment methods where documentation is missing

• Refugees’ qualifications and skills are often undervalued due to
  – Different education and training contexts in origin countries
  – Lack of documentation
  – No access to / awareness about existing recognition mechanisms
  – Vocational skills acquired through non-formal learning

• A growing number of countries assess refugees’ skills, but few do so for asylum seekers

• Need for systematic assessment and adjusted recognition procedures
Lesson 5: Account for the large skills diversity of humanitarian migrants and develop tailor-made approaches

Education level of new immigrants aged 16-74 in Sweden by latest country of residence, 2015

- Tailor-made integration programmes ideally include:
  - Flexible durations of integration programmes
  - Modular language training
  - Targeted courses for specific groups like illiterate, high educated and mothers
  - On-the-job training

Source: Statistics Sweden, 2016
Lesson 6: Identify mental and physical health issues early and provide adequate support

- Physical and mental health issues are widespread and affect refugees’ integration
- Tackling the issue requires that refugees have legal and effective access to targeted care services, including translation

---

**WHO estimates of mental health issues in adult populations affected by emergencies**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Before emergency: 12-month prevalence (median across countries)</th>
<th>After emergency: 12-month prevalence (median across countries)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Severe disorder</td>
<td>2% to 3%</td>
<td>3% to 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mild or moderate mental disorder</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15% to 20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal distress / other psychological reactions</td>
<td>No estimate</td>
<td>Large percentage</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: WHO, 2012*
Lesson 7: Develop support programmes specific to unaccompanied minors who arrive past the age of compulsory schooling

- Vulnerable group requiring specific (and often expensive) support
- Many arrive with little prior tuition at the end of obligatory schooling but are eager to enter the labour market immediately

Evolution of the number of unaccompanied minors in Austria, EU and Sweden

Sources: Statistics Sweden; Austrian Ministry of the Interior; Eurostat
Lesson 8: Build on civil society to integrate humanitarian migrants

- Civil society creates the conditions conducive to the social and labour market integration of refugees
- It steps in where public policy does not tread or cannot be upscaled sufficiently or quickly enough.
Lesson 9: Promote equal access to integration services to humanitarian migrants across the country

- Integration primarily takes place at the local level
- Where standards are uneven, integration prospects depend not only on the refugee’s characteristics but also on the area of settlement
- To limit differences, countries should:

  - *build and exchange* expertise in municipalities
  - *provide* adequate financial support and set incentives right
  - *pool* resources
  - *allow* for some specialisation
  - *implement* minimum standards
  - *monitor* how municipalities live up to these
Lesson 10: Acknowledge that integration of very low educated humanitarian migrants requires long-term training and support

- Reaching the minimum standards of what is needed to be employable may take several years - but this investment will pay off in the long run
- Support needs to extend beyond training to help refugees enter employment
The key role of PES in refugee integration

- Labour market integration is the single most important step for the integration into the society at large.

- Because of their lack of networks, in many countries refugees tend to rely more often on the PES than native-born and other migrant groups.

- PES is a national service with local presence throughout the country. This bears a number of advantages:
  - Dissemination of good practices
  - Similar standards

- In some countries (including Sweden), the PES is the main coordinating actor for the overall integration activities.
Challenges for PES

- Unprecedented numbers stress the capacity of the system, including in areas with little prior knowledge in dealing with the specific needs of refugees.

- Refugees have multiple and specific needs (lack of host-country language and other basic skills; skills have been acquired in a very different education and labour market context; health problems; etc.).

- Refugees may need long-term support, including during the initial phase of employment.

- In contrast to other migrant groups, refugees tend to arrive with no attachment to the host country and thus no access to networks through which many vacancies are filled.
Challenges for PES

- Large diversity of skills and qualification requires tailor-made approaches
- Growing numbers with unsecure/temporary legal status may negatively impact on willingness to invest into integration – both for employers and for refugees themselves
- Unstable status may also impact on their access to PES services
- Refugees will only gradually enter the labour market; many of the 2015 wave will arrive only late in the year 2016 or early 2017 when policy attention may have shifted elsewhere
- Refugee integration – particularly for low-educated ones – is a costly and long-term process requiring significant investment with returns only in the long run and across generations
- Avoid the notion of favouring refugees over other disadvantaged groups
For further information on the OECD’s work on the integration of refugees and other migrant groups:

Stefano.scarpetta@oecd.org
www.oecd.org/migration