

# AIMING HIGHER

## POLICIES TO GET IMMIGRANTS INTO MIDDLE-SKILLED WORK IN EUROPE

By Meghan Benton, Madeleine Sumption, Kristine Alsvik,  
Susan Fratzke, Christiane Kuptsch, and Demetrios G. Papademetriou



**A Series on the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Europe:  
Assessing Policy Effectiveness**



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MIGRATION POLICY INSTITUTE

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## Executive Summary

Against the backdrop of persistent economic distress and aging populations, European countries can ill afford to squander the potential of any of their residents. But too often, newly arrived immigrants struggle to gain a secure foothold in the labor market. Many experience protracted periods of inactivity, unemployment, or long tenures in low-skilled work. Skilled immigrants, meanwhile, often experience “brain waste” and are unable to put their foreign qualifications to good use.

The dynamics behind these troubling outcomes are well documented. Limited language proficiency, discrimination, and difficulties in having their qualifications recognized and in signaling how skills and experience meet employers’ needs can all make it hard for newly arrived immigrants to get a foot in the door. Both non-EU immigrants and mobile EU citizens are also more vulnerable to getting stuck in low-skilled work, and tend to be concentrated in the types of jobs that are most vulnerable to economic shocks and offer fewer opportunities to develop skills or find ladders into stable, middle-skilled work.

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While persistent employment gaps between natives and foreign-born residents have driven a profusion of labor market integration policies across Europe, governments have struggled to reduce these gaps significantly. Very few have made securing newcomers’ upward mobility out of the lowest-skilled, most precarious work an integration priority. Nonetheless, a number of strategies have been developed to address the challenges that immigrants and mobile EU citizens face, both through targeted and mainstream programs.

### A. Integration Policies for New Arrivals

Targeted policies to get immigrants into work range from centralized introduction programs in France, Germany, and Sweden, to ad hoc programs developed and delivered largely by civil society in the United Kingdom and the Czech Republic (often with European—rather than central government—funding). Targeted programs have the advantage of allowing policymakers to design services tailored to new arrivals’ specific needs, including orientation and settlement guidance or job coaching. But targeted programs are often small in scale and generally focus on specific entrants such as family immigrants, or refugees. Others with similar needs may fall through the gaps. European Union (EU) nationals, for instance, are rarely the beneficiaries of integration policies.

The limitations of targeted integration policies have prompted several countries to adapt their universal or mainstream institutions—such as public employment services (PES) and education and training institutions—to provide more inclusive services at a greater scale. This approach requires careful coordination among all organizations responsible for immigrant integration, and can benefit from shared accountability metrics for integration outcomes. Mentors or guides to help new arrivals navigate the system or one-stop shops to deliver all services together can also supplement institutional reforms of this kind.

### B. Employment Services

PES could, in theory, be an ideal vehicle for connecting jobseekers with limited networks to employers

and providing advice on career development and retraining. But this potential has not been realized. Employment services are often underequipped to advise jobseekers—whether immigrants or natives—on retraining to meet local labor needs. In some countries, the responsibility of employment services to administer benefits hinders the ability of advisors to consider long-term career development (especially if they are under pressure to get people into work as quickly as possible) or to provide in-work support; in some cases it effectively shuts off services from migrants who are ineligible for benefits. In addition, the challenge of advising a diverse and mobile population with distinct needs has added a layer of complexity to an already difficult job that requires diverse competences—from an understanding of the local economy to the ability to counsel vulnerable individuals. These demands are not always reflected in qualifications and training.

Practices that promise to improve advisors' capacity include providing them with increased flexibility to address nonwork barriers such as child care and travel, bringing new arrivals into contact with intensive services earlier, and training advisors to understand newcomers' specific barriers to work. Improving *incentives* to serve immigrants' needs is more difficult. Approaches that reward private providers for their success getting people into work create the risk of “creaming” (that is, providers will help the ones easiest to help). Other, more sophisticated, approaches involve paying providers a higher rate for demanding cases, although related incentive structures have proved hard to get right.

### C. *Building Skills: Vocational and Language Training*

Designing training strategies that address migrants' needs is difficult. Even seemingly well-designed programs may be overly costly in terms of time and money if employers are not willing or able to promote participants into more-skilled jobs after they gain new skills. Nonetheless, training holds a great deal of promise to reduce gaps in language fluency, basic skills, technical expertise, and even soft skills—if it can be designed to accommodate migrants' often very specific skill needs.

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*Despite some promising innovations, there is clearly no quick fix to the problem of immigrants stuck in low-skilled jobs or unemployment.*

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Tailored training for immigrants includes intensive occupation-specific language instruction, which is thought to be cost-effective even for those with lower levels of education. Modular courses and supervised work experience allow the foreign trained to plug small skills gaps rather than require them to retrain. Such programs are relatively rare and tend to be small in scale. Mainstream training programs for the unemployed often fail to fill gaps, while shutting out those without the residence, language skills, or qualification prerequisites to qualify for enrollment.

Since intensive programs will realistically only serve a small subset of the population, employers' involvement is critical to upward mobility for those who are already in work. Getting employers to invest in training for low-skilled workers is a major challenge. However, there are several promising practices. These include revamping traditional strategies for incentivizing on-the-job training, such as training subsidies and subsidized work experience, to ensure that language training is eligible, and encouraging employers to provide skills assessments as part of the process. Distance learning could also become a useful tool to help fill gaps for middle-skilled new arrivals with busy work schedules.

### D. *Conclusions*

Despite some promising innovations, there is clearly no quick fix to the problem of immigrants stuck in low-



skilled jobs or unemployment. The dearth of evaluations has also hindered progress, suggesting a need for sophisticated, long-term monitoring of programs that are both promising and innovative. In the meantime, a road map for reform has several components. These include improving the incentives of employment agencies to serve the needs of migrants—a task that may include further training and specialization to allow providers to provide both short- and longer-term career advice. Strategies to support the careers of newcomers already in work might include funding partnerships between employers and training institutions, providing technical assistance to employers willing to facilitate language instruction, and supporting work experience programs and apprenticeships. For out-of-work learners, sequential programs could be replaced by courses that require a minimal time commitment, perhaps by combining vocational competences, language, literacy, and digital skills. Finally, an important piece of the labor market integration puzzle is improving the cohesion of policies themselves, through the promotion of common goals, mutual accountability for integration outcomes, and information sharing.

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## I. Introduction

Europe has experienced substantial migration in the last quarter century, both from within and outside of the European Union. Some new arrivals came with highly sought-after skills and found work with ease—especially during the economic boom of the mid-2000s. But for others, labor market integration has not been easy. A majority of immigrants were not selected for their skills but arrived through family reunification, humanitarian channels, or free movement.<sup>1</sup> Although some European countries have made substantial efforts to tip the balance toward labor migration, they continue to receive new arrivals who require significant support finding work. Many newcomers find it difficult to progress out of the lowest-skilled jobs into stable, middle-skilled positions that pay a wage sufficient to support their families. Meanwhile, many skilled immigrant workers are confined to low-skilled positions because employers or regulators do not recognize their overseas qualifications and experience.

Clearly, progress in the labor market is only one aspect of the integration process. Integration has a number of dimensions (political, cultural, social, and economic), and is often described as requiring efforts both on the part of the migrant and receiving country.<sup>2</sup> But the labor market aspect has challenged both national and European policymakers. Despite considerable investment in labor market integration policies over the past decade in some countries, little progress has been made toward narrowing the gaps between the outcomes of natives and immigrants. Indeed, the onset of the global economic crisis only deepened such disparities.<sup>3</sup> These gaps are particularly significant for women, migrants who come on visas other than work visas, and

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1 This report examines new arrivals both from within and outside the European Union (EU). Unless specified, “immigrants,” “new arrivals,” and “newcomers” refer to newly arrived third-country nationals and newly arrived mobile EU nationals. Where relevant differences exist between the two groups, we refer to “mobile EU nationals” and “non-EU migrants.”

2 For instance, the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy, agreed on in 2004, state that “employment is a key part of the integration process,” alongside basic knowledge of the host country’s language, history, and institutions; education; equal access; intercultural interaction; freedom of religion; and political participation. European Council, “Press Release: 2618<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs” (press release, November 19, 2004), [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_PRES-04-321\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_PRES-04-321_en.htm?locale=en)[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf#zoom=100](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf#zoom=100).

3 Between 2007 and 2013, for instance, the gap in employment between natives and immigrants in the European Union grew from 5 percent to 7 percent; disparities in several major countries were much larger. Eurostat, “Employment Rates by Sex, Age, and Nationality [lfsa\_ergan],” [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment\\_unemployment\\_lfs/data/database#](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/employment_unemployment_lfs/data/database#).

immigrants from outside the European Union (EU).<sup>4</sup>

With much of Europe still struggling to find its economic footing, immigrants' job prospects have slipped down policymakers' to-do lists. Competition for jobs and high unemployment in countries still mired in the economic crisis have made labor market integration policies seem an unaffordable luxury—Spain's Fund for the Integration of Immigrants, for instance, was completely suspended following austerity cuts and has not yet been reinstated.<sup>5</sup> Elsewhere, public anxiety over immigration in countries such as France and the United Kingdom has reduced the political capital for immigrant-focused support programs. Meanwhile, policymakers—and publics—continue to focus on labor immigration when debating the merits of immigration policies, thus sidelining the question of how to accommodate new arrivals who lack skills in demand by local employers.

Yet as large numbers of immigrants continue to arrive in Europe to reunite with families and seek asylum, the question of labor market integration becomes more pressing. Without access to the right employment policies and training, new arrivals may face long-term underemployment and even exclusion from the labor market—with a number of negative ramifications, such as social exclusion, marginalization, and intergenerational cycles of poverty.<sup>6</sup> Looking ahead, Europe's demographic prospects make clear that human capital is a resource that countries can ill afford to squander.<sup>7</sup>

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This report examines the factors behind the slow progress in the field of labor market integration, and lays out a road map for making the most out of the skills and experiences that immigrants bring. It is based on 12 case studies across six European countries, and interviews with more than 50 experts, policymakers, and service providers who offered first-hand accounts of why labor market integration has been such a complex challenge (see Box 1 in the next section).

The report begins by examining the dynamics through which immigrants get stuck in low-skilled work and their difficulties entering work in the first place. It then analyzes how effectively integration, employment, and training policies are seeking to overcome these challenges. Finally, the report recommends ways for European and national policymakers to improve newcomers' prospects for labor market integration and upward mobility.

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4 Meghan Benton, Susan Fratzke, and Madeleine Sumption, *Moving Up or Standing Still? Access to Middle-Skilled Work for Newly Arrived Migrants in the European Union* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/moving-or-standing-still-access-middle-skilled-work-newly-arrived-migrants-european-union](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/moving-or-standing-still-access-middle-skilled-work-newly-arrived-migrants-european-union).

5 See Elizabeth Collett, *Immigrant Integration in Europe in a Time of Austerity* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/TCM-immigrant-integration-europe-time-austerity](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/TCM-immigrant-integration-europe-time-austerity).

6 Immigrants are at particular risk of poverty and social exclusion. In the Czech Republic, France, Spain, and Sweden, the rate of non-EU immigrants at risk of poverty and social inclusion, an indicator that combines unemployment, inactivity, and in-work poverty, is at least twice as high as that of natives. In France and Spain, it is over 50 percent (49 percent in Sweden) for non-EU immigrants. Eurostat, "People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by broad group of citizenship (population aged 18 and over)" [ilc\_peps05], [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc\\_peps05&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_peps05&lang=en).

7 See Joseph Gagnon, "Demographic Change and the Future of the Labour Force in the EU27, other OECD countries and selected large emerging economies," in Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and European Commission, *Matching Economic Migration With Labour Market Needs* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2014).





## II. Immigrants and the Labor Market: Barriers to Employment and Upward Mobility

Immigrants and mobile EU citizens arriving in European countries during the 2000s have had highly variable labor market outcomes, according to the data analysis conducted for the first phase of the project (see Box 1).<sup>8</sup> In some countries, including the Czech Republic, Spain, and the United Kingdom, immigrants found work relatively quickly. In others, notably France, Germany, and Sweden, initial employment rates were low—with only a minority employed in the first year after arrival—but improved substantially over the first five or so years. Nonetheless, immigrants were over-represented in the lowest-skilled jobs in all countries, and the studies found little evidence that they were systematically progressing into middle- or high-skilled work over time across all of the case study countries.

### Box 1. An Overview of the Project

The Migration Policy Institute (MPI) and the International Labour Office (ILO) have spent two years evaluating the ease with which foreign-born workers—both from within and outside the European Union—are able to establish themselves in destination-country labor market during the first ten years after arrival. The project looked in depth at six countries: the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. These case studies were selected to provide a spread of different demographic, economic, and social contexts.

The first phase of the project considered the influence of individual characteristics and broader economic conditions on the employment prospects of foreign-born workers. Researchers in each of the six case study countries conducted analysis of national Labor Force Surveys and register data to examine the conditions under which new immigrants were able not only to find employment, but also to progress out of low-skilled work into middle-skilled jobs. It defined low-skilled according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) as Major Group 9, “Elementary Occupations.” Group 9 includes occupations that are among the lowest-wage jobs (generally paying more than one-third less than the EU average), can be physically demanding or dangerous, and may leave workers at risk of poverty, particularly in single-income households.

This report caps the second phase of the project, which evaluated the effectiveness of integration and workforce development policies in helping foreign-born workers overcome barriers and move up into middle-skilled positions. Six further case studies by local researchers were complemented by more than 50 interviews with experts, service providers, and policymakers.

The 12 country case studies and the overview of the first phase of the project can be found at: [www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/labor-market-integration-new-arrivals-europe](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/programs/labor-market-integration-new-arrivals-europe).

The barriers faced by newly arrived immigrants are well known, and include insufficient skills and experience (especially language barriers, low levels of education, or a lack of local work experience); difficulties navigating host-country labor markets (including poor information about how to present themselves or look for jobs); and formal and informal obstacles to employment (such as legal restrictions on working, employer discrimination, family responsibilities, or health and housing needs).

The dynamics through which immigrants get stuck in low-skilled work are less well established, and are described in Box 2. In theory, low-skilled work can provide valuable host-country work experience—highlighted by interviewees across all six countries as the most valuable asset for people seeking work—and thus ultimately “unlock” migrants’ skills and offer them an opportunity to return to their predeparture occupations. But it can also prove “sticky,” and signal to employers that migrants are not qualified for middle-skilled jobs. Low-skilled work also provides fewer opportunities to benefit from employer-led

<sup>8</sup> Benton, Fratzke, and Sumption, *Moving Up or Standing Still?*

training, according to empirical evidence from several countries.<sup>9</sup> Those in low-wage, low-skilled jobs may find it harder to finance further study or training outside of work, while people working shifts that vary week on week may struggle to attend classes at the same time each week.<sup>10</sup>

The evidence on the conditions under which people are able to use low-skilled work as a stepping stone is mixed. In general, low-skilled work is also thought to be the first rung on a ladder to more skilled work for young, urban, and educated workers, while older workers, the less educated, and rural residents are more likely to remain there.<sup>11</sup> Immigrants with higher education levels are more likely to progress out of low-skilled work over time, although evidence suggests they continue to be over-represented even after a decade of residence.<sup>12</sup>

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*Immigrants and mobile EU citizens arriving in European countries during the 2000s have had highly variable labor market outcomes.*

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9 See footnote 63 for more details.

10 For example, interview with Judy Kirsh and Karen Dudley (National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults) in discussion with one of co-authors, April 2014. See also Greater London Authority (GLA), *Migrants in low-paid, low-skilled jobs: barriers and solutions to learning English in London* (London: GLA, 2013), [www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Low%20paid%20work%20and%20learning%20English%20%20Final%20report\\_0.pdf](http://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Low%20paid%20work%20and%20learning%20English%20%20Final%20report_0.pdf).

11 For a review, see Sue Richardson and Lauren Miller-Lewis, “Low Wage Jobs and Pathways to Better Outcomes” (New Zealand Treasury Working Paper 02/29, Adelaide, December 2002), [www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/research-policy/wp/2002/02-29/twp02-29.pdf](http://www.treasury.govt.nz/publications/research-policy/wp/2002/02-29/twp02-29.pdf). In France, one interviewee suggested that native French youth and immigrants initially occupied similar roles in the transport sector, but that young people who had grown up in France moved up out of these jobs rapidly while immigrants remained static. Interview with Jean-Marc Paris (Association pour le Développement de la Formation dans les Transports et la Logistique) in discussion with MPI Europe policy analyst, June 2014.

12 Benton, Fratzke and Sumption, *Moving Up or Standing Still?*



## Box 2. Barriers to Entering Middle-Skilled Work

**Insufficient skills and experience for available jobs.** Language barriers, low levels of education among certain immigrant groups, and a lack of local work experience put many jobs out of immigrants' reach, especially in countries where few low-skilled jobs are available. Even jobs traditionally considered relatively low skilled (such as those of waiters and receptionists) can require a considerable level of language proficiency, literacy, and information and communication technology (ICT) skills; others require language proficiency to get through the door, since employers rely on application forms and interviews. (For example, one interviewee described how cleaning, the epitome of low-skilled work, increasingly requires familiarity with the host-country language to understand health and safety regulations and the instructions on cleaning products.) And lower levels of education or basic skills (such as literacy or numeracy) can make promotion to more skilled positions difficult.

**Unrecognized qualifications.** Even where immigrants have considerable training abroad, they often find it difficult to signal how their skills and experience meet employers' needs. Employers may not trust foreign qualifications and experience, and it is unclear to what extent formal evaluation services allay these concerns. In some occupations, unrecognized qualifications impose a formal ceiling on upward progression because professional regulation or employer recruitment practices make particular credentials a legal or practical prerequisite. And in some countries, such as France and Germany, pathways into middle-skilled work can be rigid even in unregulated occupations; career progression is often dependent both on specific entry-level qualifications and on continued training (see Speckesser).

**Difficulties navigating local labor markets.** Native-born workers are more likely to develop both hard knowledge about where to search for jobs, and soft knowledge about the best way to approach employers or seek advice. As a result, immigrants often have to rely on social networks, which are less likely to offer access to middle- and high-skilled work (see Sumption for a review of the literature). Immigrants may also find it difficult to present themselves in different cultural contexts, relying on different norms about the appropriate way to present their competences. In the workplace language barriers can make it difficult for workers to develop "soft skills" such as understanding workplace norms and communicating effectively, reducing their opportunities for promotion.

**Formal or informal obstacles to employment.** Individual barriers to finding work include complex psychological or medical needs often found among refugees; family responsibilities, especially for women coming from countries with low female participation in the workforce; legal restrictions on early labor market entry for certain individuals, such as asylum seekers; and disincentives to work created by the welfare system. Additionally, overt and subtle forms of discrimination range from employers being more likely to overlook candidates with "foreign-sounding" names to expectations that candidates will fit the "normal" profile of entry-level workers trained domestically (see Kaas and Manger; and Carlsson and Rooth).

*Sources:* Interview with representative from Jobcentre Plus, North London in discussion with one of the co-authors, April 2014; Stefan Speckesser, *The Immigrant Workforce in Germany: Formal and Informal Barriers to Addressing Skills Deficits* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), <http://migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-workforce-germany-formal-and-informal-barriers-addressing-skills-deficits>; Madeleine Sumption, "Social Networks and Polish Immigration to the UK" (IPPR Economics of Migration Working Paper 5, Institute for Public Policy Research, London, May 2009), [www.ippr.org/assets/media/images/media/files/publication/2011/05/social\\_networks\\_polish\\_immigration\\_1690.pdf](http://www.ippr.org/assets/media/images/media/files/publication/2011/05/social_networks_polish_immigration_1690.pdf); interview with representative of the Agency for Higher Vocational Education in discussion with two of the co-authors, June 2014; Leo Kaas and Christian Manger, "Ethnic Discrimination in Germany's Labour Market" (IZA Discussion Paper No. 4741, Institute for the Study of Labor [IZA], Bonn, February 2010), <http://ftp.iza.org/dp4741.pdf>; and Magnus Carlsson and Dan-Olof Rooth, "Evidence of Ethnic Discrimination in the Swedish Labor Market Using Experimental Data," *Labour Economics* 4, no. 14 (2007): 716–29.

Not only do workers face difficulties developing new competences once they are already employed in low-skilled positions, they may also find few natural stepping stones to more-skilled work even if they do develop new skills.<sup>13</sup> Some sectors, such as retail, offer large numbers of low-skilled jobs and few middle-

<sup>13</sup> David Devins, *Improving Progression in Low-Paid, Low-Skilled Retail, Catering and Care Jobs* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2014), [www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/employment-progression-skills-full.pdf](http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/employment-progression-skills-full.pdf).

skilled jobs. This means that employers may be unable to promote workers who are overqualified for their current roles. Moreover, upward mobility—when it does occur—can be difficult to sustain. In Spain, for example, the construction sector is thought to have provided opportunities for workers to progress from low- to middle-skilled jobs, but many of these gains were reversed by the recession.<sup>14</sup>

Immigrants are also over-represented in part-time, agency, and temporary work, which is easier to access than regular, full-time employment but may be less amenable to upward mobility. While temporary work can provide a useful stepping stone to full employment for migrants,<sup>15</sup> precarious forms of employment can also limit upward mobility. Some sectors, such as retail, rely heavily on part-time workers, many of whom are students or women returning to work, and are not expected to stay with the same employer for long periods.<sup>16</sup> People in these precarious jobs can move in and out of work and unemployment, limiting opportunities for progression.<sup>17</sup> Employers with higher staff turnover, meanwhile, are more likely to worry that training costs will be wasted as workers will leave after finishing the training. This fear may be even more pronounced among employers who hire mobile EU citizens, in the face of the common perception (whether or not true) that they are more transient, and will return home once they have saved money rather than try to carve out a career.

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*Some countries have invested significantly targeted immigrant integration policies, though most serve immigrants largely through mainstream programs.*

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These barriers to employment and progression into middle-skilled work create a diverse set of policy challenges across the countries in this study, ranging from highly educated immigrants whose qualifications are being wasted in low-skilled jobs, to immigrants with very little education and insufficient skills to even enter the labor market. Challenges also vary by gender and age. For example, women who arrive at childbearing age may start a family on arrival if they face pressure not to work or if the barriers to finding employment are high.<sup>18</sup> For older workers nearing the end of their working career, significant investments in education or training are likely to be less attractive.

These challenges have driven different policy responses across the countries in our study. Some countries have invested significantly targeted immigrant integration policies, though most serve immigrants largely through mainstream programs.

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14 One explanation for this finding is that progression into middle-skilled work in this sector relied less on language proficiency than in other sectors, see Núria Rodríguez-Planas and Natalia Nollenberger, *A Precarious Position: The Labor Market Integration of New Immigrants in Spain* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/precarious-position-labor-market-integration-new-immigrants-spain](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/precarious-position-labor-market-integration-new-immigrants-spain). For a discussion of how the recession limited the opportunities of U.S. immigrants, see also Randy Capps and Michael Fix, *Still an Hourglass? Immigrant Workers in Middle-Skilled Jobs* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2010), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-workers-middle-skilled-jobs-0](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/immigrant-workers-middle-skilled-jobs-0).

15 Pernilla Andersson and Eskil Wadensjö, "Temporary Employment Agencies: A Route for Immigrants to Enter the Labour Market?" (IZA Discussion paper series No. 1090, IZA, Bonn, March 2004), [www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/20325/1/dp1090.pdf](http://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/20325/1/dp1090.pdf).

16 See Lynn Gambin, Terence Hogarth, Gaby Atfield, and Yuxin Li, *Sector Skills Insights: Retail*, Evidence Report 53 (London: UK Commission for Employment and Skills, 2012), [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/304319/Sector\\_Skills\\_Insights\\_Retail\\_evidence\\_report\\_53.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/304319/Sector_Skills_Insights_Retail_evidence_report_53.pdf); and Devins, *Improving Progression*.

17 See Tony Wilson, Laura Gardiner, and Kris Krasnowski, *Work in Progress: Low Pay and Progression in London and the UK* (London: Inclusion and Trust for London, 2013), [www.cesi.org.uk/publications/work-progress](http://www.cesi.org.uk/publications/work-progress).

18 There is some evidence for this proposition in France; see, for example, Virginie Jourdan, "ELIPA 2013: The First Results," *Info Migrations n°72-23*, July 2014, [www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Publications/Numeros-parus-en-2014/ELIPA-2013-the-first-results](http://www.immigration.interieur.gouv.fr/Info-ressources/Documentation/Publications/Numeros-parus-en-2014/ELIPA-2013-the-first-results).



### III. Policies to Support Labor Market Integration

How can governments help new arrivals overcome some of the barriers to employment and career progression? Immigrant destinations have put in place an enormously varied range of programs and initiatives that should—at least in theory—help newcomers enter and advance in the labor market. Some are designed especially for immigrants, while others are universal or “mainstream” programs designed for everyone but available to immigrants. This section examines the three areas in which resources to support entry into work and progression into middle-skilled jobs are concentrated: (1) integration policies, (2) employment policies, and (3) vocational and language training. It assesses key questions affecting associated programs’ success, including their quality and relevance to immigrants’ needs and—particularly in the case of mainstream services—accessibility to immigrant newcomers.

#### A. Integration Policies for New Arrivals

Approaches to the integration of new arrivals differ across Europe. With the exception of the United Kingdom, all the countries in this study have dedicated integration strategies at varying stages of development—although not necessarily with a focus on labor market integration. On one end of the spectrum, Sweden has made significant investments in innovative programs that target newly arrived refugees and their families. Czech integration policymakers, by contrast, have had more limited resources at their disposal, relying primarily on funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Fund for the Integration of Third Country Nationals (EIF) to set up targeted programs.

Several countries have developed formal introduction programs. For example, in France, new arrivals from outside the European Union (other than students) are required to sign a reception and integration contract (RIC), after which they receive language training, orientation information, and a skills assessment. Germany, too, runs a separate integration program that operates in parallel to the services available through its public employment offices (discussed in the next section). Sweden provides an introduction program for refugees and their families that was once administered by municipalities but is now delivered through the public employment service.

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#### *Approaches to the integration of new arrivals differ across Europe.*

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In some countries, integration programs for new arrivals have been developed at regional or city levels, with greater variation in the types of services available. Areas with larger immigrant populations enjoy greater economies of scale that enable them to provide specialized settlement programs. In some large cities, one-stop shops provide the first point of call for new arrivals. For example, Madrid and Prague offer welcoming centers that provide advice on a host of services. Nonprofits and public-private partnerships have also maintained targeted services in many local areas, especially for certain target groups. In the United Kingdom, for example, nonprofit organizations provide intensive support to refugees (or refugees in certain occupations, such as health care or teaching), including arranging work experience with employers, and providing advice on getting foreign qualifications recognized and navigating the local labor market. These programs relied on delivery by contractors and small providers, and many found their funding discontinued with the onset of the recession.<sup>19</sup> In some countries, trade unions have played an active role in providing

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<sup>19</sup> For example, the Refugee Employment Advice and Support Service, the Refugee Health Professionals project, and Refugees into Teaching. See Rachel Marangazov, *Benign Neglect: Policies to Support Upward Mobility for Immigrants in the United Kingdom* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/benign-neglect-policies-support-upward-mobility-immigrants-united-kingdom](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/benign-neglect-policies-support-upward-mobility-immigrants-united-kingdom).

training and support to migrant workers—often complemented by efforts to increase native workers’ awareness of issues relevant to multicultural working environments.<sup>20</sup>

Whether or not countries have introduction programs or sustain targeted programs on a smaller scale, they are likely to face a number of structural and institutional challenges.

## I. Target Groups: Meeting Diverse Needs

Integration programs that provide support or training to new arrivals often target specific groups considered to be the most in need, such as refugees or non-EU migrants. In theory, these programs have the advantage of enabling carefully tailored support. However, eligibility criteria for targeted programs create a risk that groups who do not fulfill the criteria will fall through the net—despite having similar needs as those who do.<sup>21</sup> In the Czech Republic, for example, about one-quarter of all integration funding comes from the EIF and cannot be used for EU citizens, thus excluding Romanians and Bulgarians, who often share integration needs with third-country nationals.<sup>22</sup> In Sweden, where only refugees and their immediate families are eligible to participate in an introduction program, interviewees observed that the exclusion of other family unification arrivals was somewhat arbitrary.<sup>23</sup>

To address this problem, some governments have sought to design broader workforce development systems responsive to integration needs. Reaching a larger population is the rationale behind the “mainstreaming” trend gaining ground across Europe. The ethos of the mainstreaming approach is to open up mainstream services for a diverse population in order to capture a larger group than could be served by stand-alone programs.<sup>24</sup> In France and the United Kingdom, approaches to immigrant integration have always been somewhat “mainstreamed” (although this term is not used in either country). In France, policies to address disadvantaged geographical areas are more common than those that target disadvantaged groups, an approach that has also been tried in the United Kingdom.<sup>25</sup> Mainstreamed approaches do not eliminate the risk of certain subgroups falling through the net. Area-based policies, for example, may not meet the needs of new arrivals who live outside deprived neighborhoods. However, policymakers may reduce such problems if they design policies to be sufficiently inclusive.<sup>26</sup>

## 2. Difficulties Navigating the System and Coordinating Services

Interviewees in several countries described a “labyrinth” and “maze” of different programs and services that can be bewildering to new arrivals, who often find it hard to identify the appropriate support even when it is available.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, several service providers complained that their programs were undersubscribed because

20 Interview with Susanna Hosler of the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO), in discussion with two of the co-authors, June 2014.

21 See Meghan Benton, *Maximizing Potential: How Countries Can Address Skills Deficits within the Immigrant Workforce* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/maximizing-potential-how-countries-can-address-skills-deficits-within-immigrant-workforce](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/maximizing-potential-how-countries-can-address-skills-deficits-within-immigrant-workforce).

22 Data are from 2012; Dušan Drbohlav and Ondřej Valenta, *Building an Integration System: Policies to Support Immigrants Progression in the Czech Labor Market* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/building-integration-system-policies-support-immigrants-progression-czech-labor-market](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/building-integration-system-policies-support-immigrants-progression-czech-labor-market).

23 Interviews with Hosler; Anne Markowski, and Sam Yildirim of Swedish for Professionals (SFX); and SFX teachers in discussion with one of the co-authors, June 2014. These interviewees also suggested that many long-standing residents with similar needs were falling through the net as they had entered the country before the reforms to introduction programs.

24 Mainstreaming immigration was first established as a European Union (EU) objective within the 2004 Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration and reiterated in the Common Agenda for Integration in 2005. European Commission, “European Website on Integration: EU Actions to Make Integration Work,” accessed October 21, 2014, [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/EU\\_actions\\_integration.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/en/EU_actions_integration.cfm).

25 Elizabeth Collett and Milica Petrovic, *The Future of Immigrant Integration in Europe: Mainstreaming Approaches for Inclusion* (Brussels; Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/future-immigrant-integration-europe-mainstreaming-approaches-inclusion](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/future-immigrant-integration-europe-mainstreaming-approaches-inclusion).

26 For a discussion of the risks and opportunities that mainstreaming offers, see Collett and Petrovic, *The Future of Immigrant Integration in Europe*.

27 For example, interviews with Markowski and Yildirim; and interview with Knut Diekmann of the German Chambers of Industry



new arrivals did not know about them.<sup>28</sup>

Service providers must often refer individuals from one service to another—for example, from employment services to specialized support or training. However, they often lack mechanisms to do this systematically, resulting in duplicated work and inefficiency. Officials do not always use the same terminology—for instance, the concept of “credential recognition” is central to integration policy, yet some employment officials we spoke to did not understand the term. Being referred to the appropriate service can therefore be a matter of chance, based on the knowledge, networks, and time possessed by officials who come into contact with newcomers. Diverse eligibility criteria and funding reserved for certain target groups can further increase the demands on service providers, increasing the risk that migrants are turned away from—or not referred to—services they are eligible to receive.

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*Government agencies working in isolation may find it difficult to address cross-cutting policy challenges such as immigrant integration.*

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The multiplicity of agencies and actors involved can also undermine the coherence of integration policies overall. Introduction programs may not be integrated with mainstream services, for example, making pathways between services difficult or time consuming. France’s RIC, for example, requires new arrivals to reach a certain level of language proficiency before their skills are assessed, and only then are they referred to the public employment service. A similar situation—where new arrivals were required to reach a certain language proficiency before accessing employment services—once existed in Sweden, until the government moved responsibility for the introduction program to the public employment agency. While there are practical reasons why it is easier to assess someone’s skills and employment potential once they have acquired some language proficiency, delaying this process may increase the risk that immigrants’ skills will atrophy. Evaluations of the Swedish reform suggest it has been highly successful in bringing new arrivals into contact with employment services more quickly and has improved employment rates.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, government agencies working in isolation may find it difficult to address cross-cutting policy challenges such as immigrant integration. Different agencies can duplicate or undermine each other’s work, while missing other (especially long-term) integration challenges for which they are not responsible.<sup>30</sup> The performance of employment ministries in particular is likely to be evaluated on the basis of fairly narrow criteria—how many people they get into work, for example—and they are not generally accountable for long-term impacts that may nonetheless be affected by employment (precarious or low-paid work in particular might make migrants and their children more vulnerable to social exclusion in the long run). This focus on a particular category of integration outcomes can result in some short-sighted policy decisions. In the United Kingdom, for example, employment advisors can refer unemployed migrants to language courses to help prepare them for work, but cannot continue funding training after workers find jobs—even if this would make their employment more sustainable in the long term.

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and Commerce in discussion with two co-authors, July 2014.

28 Ibid.; interview with French service provider in discussion with MPI Europe policy analyst, June 2014.

29 Henrik Emilsson, *No Quick Fix: Policies to Support the Labor Market Integration of New Arrivals in Sweden* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), <http://migrationpolicy.org/research/no-quick-fix-policies-support-labor-market-integration-new-arrivals-sweden>; interview with Johann Nylander and David Olsson (Arbetsförmedlingen) in discussion with two of the co-authors, June 2014.

30 Collett and Petrovic, *The Future of Immigrant Integration in Europe*.

A number of innovations across the case study countries seek to overcome these organizational challenges:

- **Navigation support.** Sweden has introduced introduction guides—-independent contractors who provide mentoring, job search support, and information about social and practical issues. The introduction of these guides has not yet significantly improved labor market outcomes; some providers are offering only the minimal hours of contact necessary to maintain their monthly fee and few have received the extra payment for getting someone into work. But the longer-term impacts remain to be seen, and planned adjustments to incentive structures look promising.<sup>31</sup>
- **Cooperation among local authorities.** Where localities lack sufficient numbers of immigrants with particular occupational needs to warrant targeted programs, they can pool resources and work together to pursue innovative options. This was the case with a program (discussed in the training section) to update the skills of trained drivers, craftsmen, and engineers in Sweden. In contrast to municipalities elsewhere in Sweden, which provide mainly generic language training, the County of Stockholm’s 26 municipalities have signed a cooperative agreement to provide language training relevant to particular occupations.<sup>32</sup>
- **Collective accountability.** Effective integration programming often requires several government departments to incorporate integration priorities into their work. This requires good coordination and accountability. In the Czech Republic, for example, departments with responsibility for aspects of the national integration policy must regularly report their progress toward annual goals agreed on with the Interior Ministry, which coordinates integration strategy.<sup>33</sup>
- **Multilevel coordination.** To improve coordination between federal and *Länder* efforts toward integration, Germany introduced a National Integration Plan that seeks to promote closer collaboration on policy areas related to integration and improve collective accountability for integration outcomes.<sup>34</sup>
- **Information sharing.** In France, an agreement between the Ministry of Interior and the public employment service enables employment advisors to access the skills assessment collected as part of the RIC, in order to minimize the time advisors must spend taking a work and skills history, allowing them to move more quickly to providing support targeted to the needs of new arrivals.
- **Social dialogue and coordination with other actors.** Some countries—such as Sweden and Germany—have well-established systems for facilitating dialogue between governments and social partners on issues such as educational curricula, but these systems are less well developed on integration questions. Germany is working hard to improve this. As part of the National Integration Plan, the IQ (Integration durch Qualifizierung) network and its regional branches bring together chambers of commerce, *Länder*, and other regional economic players on labor market integration issues (see Box 3).

European countries are continuing to reform governance structures relevant to integration policy; the new Swedish government just announced the abolition of the post of integration minister, for instance, highlighting a desire to support integration priorities through mainstream employment, education, and welfare policies.<sup>35</sup> While most countries look likely to sustain at least some targeted policies, mainstream

31 Emilsson. See also OECD, *Finding the Way: A Discussion of the Swedish Migrant Integration System* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2014), [www.oecd.org/migration/mig/swedish-migrant-integration-system.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/migration/mig/swedish-migrant-integration-system.pdf).

32 Interview with Markowski.

33 Interview with representative from the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs in discussion with two co-authors, June 2014.

34 Petra Bendel, *Coordinating Immigrant Integration in Germany: Mainstreaming at the Federal and Local Levels*, (Brussels: Migration Policy Institute Europe, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/coordinating-immigrant-integration-germany-mainstreaming-federal-and-local-levels](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/coordinating-immigrant-integration-germany-mainstreaming-federal-and-local-levels).

35 Swedish Government, “Statement of Government Policy,” October 2014, [www.government.se/content/1/c6/24/75/69/c749588b.pdf](http://www.government.se/content/1/c6/24/75/69/c749588b.pdf).





systems will bear the weight of many integration needs. A lack of tailored services may, however, impair integration outcomes. One criticism of mainstreaming is that it can be used as a justification to cut programs—whether to save money or because the public is skeptical about or opposed to investing scarce resources in immigrants—without complementary efforts to improve access to mainstream services. The effectiveness of such strategies will be discussed in the next two sections.

### Box 3. The IQ Network: Cooperation in a Decentralized System

Germany has seen huge changes to labor market integration policies in recent years. Demographic changes on the horizon and a shortage of skilled workers helped make the case for policies to deploy all available human resources in the country to their full potential.

The IQ—Integration durch Qualifizierung or Integration through Qualification—Network is one of the flagship programs. It brings together disparate actors at federal, regional, and local levels to strengthen the coherence of the overall labor market integration system. Established in 2005 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, with support from the European Social Fund, the IQ Network initially focused on increasing the competencies of long-standing migrants in Germany and people with a so-called “migration background,” but its remit has since been broadened to issues affecting new arrivals.

A study on brain waste by one of the IQ Network members raised the issue of recognition of qualifications as a central barrier to labor market success and paved the way for the adoption of a new *Law on the Assessment of Equivalence of Vocational Qualifications* (BQFG), for short *Recognition Act*, in force since April 2012.

The IQ Network, renamed into IQ Support Program, has now been expanded and given the responsibility of helping implement the act. It has become a central labor market policy instrument of the federal government to implement the National Integration Action Plan. Its responsibilities include (1) creating regional support structures for the *Recognition Act*, (2) supporting authorities responsible for labor market integration, in particular employment services (Agenturen für Arbeit and Job Centers), but also Chambers of Crafts and Chambers of Industry and Commerce, and other regional economic players; and (3) ensuring that pathways between various integration measures—e.g. between general integration courses, job-related language qualifications, and vocational training—are logical and easy for new arrivals to follow.

While the IQ Network/Program has enabled the development of some highly innovative practices in several cities and regions (such as individual “language coaches” in Bielefeld or one-stop-shops and welcome centers in Augsburg and Hamburg), most projects are still pilots, and it is unclear to what extent these projects can be scaled up.

## B. Employment Services

Public employment services (PES) are the main public actors facilitating access to work in Europe. The rationale for government involvement in matching jobseekers and employers is that people lack optimal information about what opportunities (or candidates) exist.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, impartial career guidance and information on local labor needs can, in theory, help people decide how to build and manage their skills over time. Recognizing this potential, the European Employment Strategy highlights the role that PES can play in “increasing labor market participation” and “developing a skilled workforce.”<sup>37</sup>

PES might therefore be thought to be the ideal vehicle for addressing some of the policy challenges outlined in the previous section. They promise to overcome new arrivals’ limited personal and professional networks by connecting them with employers. Moreover, they could suggest ways for jobseekers to upgrade their skills or retrain if their skills are not in local demand.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, OECD, *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2004), [www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34050171.pdf](http://www.oecd.org/education/innovation-education/34050171.pdf).

<sup>37</sup> European Commission, *EUROPE 2020: Integrated Guidelines for the Economic and Employment Policies of the Member States* (Brussels: European Commission, 2010), <http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/pdf/Brochure%20Integrated%20Guidelines.pdf>.

In practice, the potential for PES to act as a job broker or career advisor has not been realized for natives, let alone migrants. A minority of vacancies are advertised through PES, hirings through the PES are much more likely to be low-skilled.<sup>38</sup> Employment services often lack prestige, and are seen as a repository for less-educated workers and the long-term unemployed, prejudicing employers against applicants who come through the job center.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, because of their gatekeeper role in administering benefits to jobseekers, employment services may not always offer impartial advice; they also rarely offer services to people already in work.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to these general limitations, PES are also poorly structured to serve the needs of new arrivals, for a number of reasons: (1) newcomers often face barriers accessing employment services; (2) service providers may have low incentives to serve language learners and individuals with complex needs; and (3) the qualifications and training of employment advisors is insufficient to meet the difficulty of the task.

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## I. Formal and Informal Barriers to Access

Barriers to accessing employment advice can be formal or informal. Chief among the formal barriers is that the gatekeeper function performed by employment services can exclude new arrivals from services. Where employment counseling is provided only as part of the administration of benefits, those who are ineligible for such benefits (whether EU nationals looking for work, migrants without legal status, or non-EU migrants on temporary residence permits) are effectively ineligible for face-to-face services.<sup>41</sup> A related problem is that in countries where national employment services serve only those who have contributed to social security systems, new arrivals may not be able to use services for skilled jobseekers and instead rely on municipal services designed for the long-term unemployed and inactive.<sup>42</sup> The gatekeeper function of employment services also means that unauthorized immigrants are excluded.<sup>43</sup>

New arrivals may also face informal barriers to access. First, they may find it difficult to navigate services and the pathways among them. In Spain, for example, the registration process is complex: individuals first

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38 On the whole, 9 percent of self-reported hirings in the European Union were through public employment services (PES). In Sweden, the figure is 13 percent, in the United Kingdom 6 percent, and in Spain 2 percent. Over one-quarter of vacancies found through the PES are in elementary occupations. Martin van der Ende, Kenneth Walsh, and Natalija Ziminiene, *European Vacancy and Recruitment Report 2014* (Brussels: European Commission), <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11897&langId=en>. See also Christian Albrekt Larsen and Patrik Vesan, "Why Public Employment Services Always Fail: Double-Sided Asymmetric Information and the Placement of Low-Skilled Workers in Six European Countries," *Public Administration* 90, no. 2 (2012): 466–79.

39 Whether employers are likely, or indeed required, to register vacancies varies widely. In the Czech Republic employers are obliged to notify the PES of vacancies. Elsewhere, countries have sought to separate the roles of career advisor and benefits gatekeeper, as in the case of the United Kingdom's new National Careers Service.

40 OECD, *Career Guidance and Public Policy*.

41 In the United Kingdom, for example, many groups of new arrivals are ineligible for benefits, and this effectively limits access to publicly provided employment advice, because face-to-face services are tied to the administration of benefits. See Marangozov, *Benign Neglect*. The Czech Republic allows only permanent residents to use the public employment agency (although some employment-related counseling is available through nonprofit organizations and regional centers supported in part with government funds).

42 Although outside the scope of this report, this is the case in the Netherlands. It was also one of the reasons in Sweden for moving responsibility for the introduction program for refugees and their families from municipalities to the public employment services.

43 Interview with representative of Directorate General for Immigration, Catalan Regional Government in discussion with a co-author, June 2014; and Javier Ramirez (Madrid Office for Information for Immigrants) in discussion with a co-author, June 2014.



have to register with the national service, SEPE, and then go to a regional service provider.

A second informal barrier is language. Some immigrants may not be able to access employment services before gaining sufficient language proficiency. When Sweden's introduction program was administered by municipalities, for example, the incentives were for PES to turn away refugees who had not yet reached a certain level of language proficiency and leave them for the municipality to support. Similarly, skills assessments in France take place only after language training, delaying access to job-search information. Even where new arrivals are eligible to use employment services, most do not systematically provide translation and interpretation services, which can be very costly. As a result certain groups are effectively shut off from using services—or reliant on friends and family who may not convey information effectively.<sup>44</sup> An alternative way to avoid these costs is to recruit multilingual advisors.

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*Some immigrants may not be able to access employment services before gaining sufficient language proficiency.*

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Finally, vulnerable groups of new arrivals—such as single mothers, refugees, and Roma—may face a number of challenges at once—such as finding housing, transportation, and child care—leaving them little time or resources to avail themselves of counseling or other employment assistance programs.<sup>45</sup>

## 2. Inadequate Systems for Identifying and Addressing Needs

The structure of employment services allows new arrivals to fall through the cracks without being identified as in need of more intensive services; meanwhile, advisors may have little incentive to address the particular needs of newly arrived immigrants.

### a) *Targeting Groups in Need of Support*

In the context of diminishing resources, many mainstream employment services have targeted spending on the worst-off, a category that is typically determined by the length of time they have been out of work or in receipt of benefits. Since new arrivals are treated as “newly unemployed” (regardless of their employment history elsewhere), they are therefore unlikely to benefit from the most intensive support or innovative programs. By the time new arrivals become eligible for support they may have been out of work for some time, making it harder to facilitate their employment. In Spain, for example, the new labor market reform programs emphasize support for the long-term unemployed, which can mean that newly arrived immigrants find it difficult to access special training programs.<sup>46</sup>

### b) *Identifying and Addressing Immigrant-Specific Needs*

Many PES lack a systematic approach for identifying the needs of language learners and people with foreign qualifications. Among the countries in the study, only the Swedish PES seeks to validate existing qualifications in-house. Outside Germany and Sweden, no PES highlighted the issue of qualifications as an employment barrier for new arrivals or as a significant part of its integration strategies—suggesting that

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<sup>44</sup> After many years of providing extensive translation and interpretation in public services, the United Kingdom has recently eliminated translation for jobseekers.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with government official, French government in discussion with MPI Europe policy analyst, June 2014.

<sup>46</sup> Interview with Ramirez.

systems for recognizing foreign qualifications have not become embedded into PES.

Processes for screening for language needs are also frequently criticized for being too basic, particularly for skilled workers—assessments are unlikely to identify higher-level, technical, or written language needs.<sup>47</sup> In the United Kingdom, for example, language-screening processes were thought to be patchy and ineffective until recent guidance was issued to standardize the process.<sup>48</sup>

### c) *Incentives for Addressing Complex Needs*

When responsibility for the policies and programs that affect immigrant integration are dispersed across various actors, it may be difficult to align these actors' interests. Some may even be tempted to “pass the buck” by leaving more difficult cases to other organizations. This problem is particularly common in the field of employment advice services and manifests itself in a number of ways. First, the interests of local authorities may diverge from those of national agencies, especially if different levels of government are responsible for different social support budgets. In Sweden, for example, interviewees said that municipalities do not encourage participation in a program designed for new arrivals that combines subsidized work experience with language classes. Instead, they channel new arrivals into general work experience programs because unemployed graduates from the specialized program are ineligible for nationally funded unemployment insurance and must be supported by the municipalities themselves.<sup>49</sup>

Second, employment services are often driven by targets, meaning advisors face incentives to get people into work as quickly as possible. Such target-driven approaches may increase pressure on advisors to encourage people to take low-skilled jobs rather than retrain or upskill them to meet local labor needs, and/or may encourage advisors to prioritize easy cases at the expense of those who require additional support.<sup>50</sup>

## 3. Qualifications and Training for Employment Advisors

Another common challenge stems from the limited capacity and training of employment advisors. Employment counselors require a broad range of skills and experience, from knowledge of the local labor market to soft skills, such as psychological counseling.<sup>51</sup> But the job can lack prestige. In some countries only a secondary school education is needed, and opportunities for career progression are limited.<sup>52</sup> The challenge of serving a diverse and mobile population has added additional skill needs to an already demanding job that is rarely treated as such.<sup>53</sup>

Without better education requirements and training, it is not reasonable to expect employment advisors to be able to address migrants' long-term skill and training needs. Even in Germany, which has a professional

47 For example, a study of overqualification in Botkyrka, Sweden, found that demand for advanced and specific language skills was not being met. Ian Goldring and Yamina Guidoum, *Addressing overqualification of skilled immigrants in the European Union: Situations and Approaches from the Local Level* (working paper, Realise, March 2013), <http://realise2020.files.wordpress.com/2011/09/realise-final-publication-for-partners.pdf>.

48 Interview with UK government official in discussion with one of the co-authors, April 2014.

49 Interview with Maria Bond and Frida Widmalm (Swedish National Audit Office) in discussion with a co-author, June 2014.

50 See Marangozov, *Benign Neglect*.

51 European Commission, *European Reference Competence Profile for PES and EURES Counsellors* (Brussels: European Commission, 2014), <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=12457&langId=en>.

52 For example, while a bachelor's degree is essential in Germany and Sweden, in the United Kingdom online tests screen candidates, and in France both secondary school education and a bachelor's degree are desirable but not essential. European Commission, *Job Profiles and Training for Employment Counsellors* (Brussels: European Commission, 2012), <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=8936&langId=en>.

53 The professionalization of the PES workforce is a central objective of the European Commission's peer learning network, “PES to PES Dialogue.” The rationale for upskilling employment advisors is clearly greater than serving newly arrived immigrants; the challenge of serving a diverse and mobile population may, however, provide a greater impetus for this move to professionalize the workforce. See European Commission, *PES to PES Dialogue Annual Report 2013* (Brussels: European Commission, 2013), <http://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=11267&langId=en>.



workforce and extensive on-the-job training, some evidence suggests that staff routinely consider people with unaccredited qualifications as “unqualified,”<sup>54</sup> a finding consistent with previous research that uncovered advisors pressuring foreign nationals to take jobs below their qualifications.<sup>55</sup>

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*Without better education requirements and training, it is not reasonable to expect employment advisors to be able to address migrants’ long-term skill and training needs.*

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#### 4. Adapting Employment Services to Meet Newcomers’ Needs

In recent years, a number of innovations have sought to improve the quality of employment services and their responsiveness to migrants’ needs. Among these are the following:

- **Adapting incentive structures.** Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom have all taken inspiration from an approach pioneered in Australia, and are paying private service providers largely or solely on the results they achieve.<sup>56</sup> Payment-by-results can create incentives for “creaming” (helping the easiest to help) and “parking” (ignoring those with complex needs). These countries are therefore experimenting with ways to incentivize providers to help individuals with greater needs and place clients in jobs they are likely to be happy with long term—by attaching greater payments to these results—which may benefit migrants. But designing incentive structures that make it cost-effective for providers to address costly training needs, including limited language proficiency, has proved difficult. Studies suggest that language learners are still being parked.<sup>57</sup>
- **Improving flexibility to address complex needs.** Germany and Sweden have experimented with reducing the caseloads of advisors serving groups with particular needs, including newly arrived refugees (Sweden) and young people (Germany). Additional flexibility can be provided to advisors at an individual level, such as guidance on addressing nonemployment obstacles to work. Among these are the need for transportation and child care (France), or discretionary funds to pay for costs associated with attending interviews or training, such as child care, transport,

54 Carola Burkert and Anette Haas, *Investing in the Future: Labor Market Integration Policies for New Immigrants in Germany* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/investing-future-labor-market-integration-policies-new-immigrants-germany](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/investing-future-labor-market-integration-policies-new-immigrants-germany).

55 Jan Schneider, Michael Fischer, and Vesela Kovacheva, “Migrants in the Job Centre: Qualitative Findings on Migrants’ Experiences with Public Employment Support Services in Germany” (HWWI Research Paper 3-16, Hamburg Institute of International Economics, Hamburg, 2008), [http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/doc/4268\\_457216535.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/ewsi/UDRW/images/items/doc/4268_457216535.pdf). For interview evidence on how employment services are poorly designed to help with questions of overqualification, see Goldring and Guidom, *Addressing overqualification of skilled immigrants*.

56 In Spain 40 percent of funding for regions is conditional on results—in 2015 it will be 60 percent—and regional PES are being encouraged to outsource where possible. The United Kingdom outsources services to the long-term unemployed and other disadvantaged groups through its Work Programme, while Sweden complements the support provided by employment advisors with a system of privately contracted introduction guides or mentors for newly arrived refugees and their families. Raul Ramos, *Turning a Corner? How Spain Can Help Immigrants Find Middle-Skilled Work* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/turning-corner-how-spain-can-help-immigrants-find-middle-skilled-work](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/turning-corner-how-spain-can-help-immigrants-find-middle-skilled-work).

57 Payments attached to registration are thought to create incentives for providers to get as many people on their books as possible (as was the case in the original Australian system and may be happening among Sweden’s introduction guides for refugees and their families). But paying providers on the basis of results alone can mean it is not cost-effective for them to support those with special needs, such as limited language proficiency (a criticism of the UK system that several interviewees pointed to). See Marangozov, *Benign Neglect*. See also interview with Pippa Lane (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion) in discussion with one of the co-authors, May 2014, and interview with Nylander and Olsson. For a broader discussion, see Lauren M. Cumming, *Payment-by-Outcome in Welfare to Work* (London: 2020 Public Services Trust, 2011), <http://clients.squareeye.net/uploads/2020/documents/W2W%20case%20study.pdf>.

and cell phones (United Kingdom).<sup>58</sup> Giving service providers more autonomy to experiment may also help. For example, UK Job Centers were recently given additional flexibility to better adapt services to the populations they serve, where before they had been required to follow centrally mandated processes.<sup>59</sup>

- **Early contact with services.** One of the most systemic reforms was undertaken in Sweden, which moved responsibility for the introduction program for refugees and their families to the PES in order to shorten the time new arrivals spent before starting to look for work. These reforms have been highly effective in bringing new arrivals into contact with employment services earlier, but it is too early to assess impacts on long-term employment outcomes.<sup>60</sup>
- **Diversity training.** Germany's IQ Network is seeking to make PES more responsive to migrant needs by training staff in recognition procedures and intercultural competences, although diversity training is not yet part of the initial qualification of employment advisors. Elsewhere (such as in the United Kingdom) diversity and intercultural training is common, but is often focused on cultural issues and race relations rather than needs specific to new arrivals.

These innovations aside, the promise of PES to function as a one-stop shop for new arrivals has yet to be realized. Not everyone is entitled to access the services, allowing many people to fall through the cracks. Advisors are often stretched and insufficiently trained to deal with complex needs. Finally, where employment counseling is tied exclusively to the administration of benefits, it seems unlikely that PES will be able to offer newcomers far-sighted career advice.

### C. Building Skills: Vocational and Language Training

Immigrants hoping to penetrate the middle-skilled labor market need both sufficient skills to perform available middle-skilled jobs and a way of demonstrating these skills to local employers. Some workers lack competences ranging from language, literacy, and numeracy to technical expertise and “soft skills” such as those needed for customer service.<sup>61</sup> Others possess relevant competences but lack either formal qualifications or work experience to demonstrate them to employers. In both cases, destination-country training and credential-recognition programs are an intuitive policy response and have become a central part of many countries' immigrant integration strategies.

Most new arrivals who are jobless or work in low-skilled positions have limited financial resources and thus rely primarily on training for which they do not bear the full cost. Depending on their destination, immigrants who arrive as adults may have one or more of the following options at their disposal:

- **Employer-provided training**, which may be offered at the employer's expense or with the help of public subsidies. In some cases, training is tailored closely to the firm's specific needs, while in others participants acquire formal qualifications certified by an outside organization.
- **Universal, publicly provided adult vocational education**, such as courses designed to help the unemployed (particularly benefits recipients) into work. This option may also be open to employed workers looking to upgrade their skills.

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58 This is known as the Adviser Discretionary Fund in the United Kingdom. For a discussion of how this is used by advisors, see Anne Bellis, Joy Oakley, Maria Sigala, and Sara Dewson, *Identifying Claimants' Needs: Research into the Capability of Jobcentre Plus Advisors* (London: Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011), [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/32414/11-935-identifying-claimants-needs-research-jobcentre-plus-advisors.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/32414/11-935-identifying-claimants-needs-research-jobcentre-plus-advisors.pdf).

59 Interview with government official, United Kingdom in discussion with one of the co-authors, April 2014. See also Marangozov, *Benign Neglect*.

60 Emilsson, *No Quick Fix*.

61 Sara Bonfanti and Theodora Xenogiani, “Migrants' Skills: Use, Mismatch and Labour Market Outcomes” in *Matching Economic Migration With Labour Market Needs* (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2014).



- **Targeted training for immigrants**, notably language training (and courses that combine occupational skills with language learning), and programs that help immigrants with foreign qualifications fill specific skills deficits or gain local work experience.

Despite the widely cited role of skills in determining workers' job prospects, designing successful training strategies for immigrants is harder than it sounds. First, training has some natural limitations. Giving workers more skills may have little impact if there are few career ladders into middle-skilled positions. In some countries and sectors, employers' business models rely on low-skilled workers to fulfill labor-intensive tasks and provide few natural opportunities for progression, even for people who improve their skills. Second, employers' interest in formal qualifications varies. While vocational qualifications are considered an absolute necessity in Germany and demand for workers with these credentials is high, training options for adults in other countries—such as the Czech Republic, France, and the United Kingdom—have been criticized by analysts and employers as much less relevant to the labor market, reducing their potential for lifting *either* newcomers or natives into middle-skilled jobs. The reasons for this vary, but can include perceptions of vocational training as a repository for the low skilled and unemployed, difficulties securing employers' participation in training, and lack of capacity in training institutions.<sup>62</sup> As a result, strategies based purely on providing formal qualifications may fail to deliver.

Beyond these overarching challenges, governments must overcome several more specific obstacles when designing training strategies to help immigrants upgrade their skills: (1) formal and informal barriers to accessing training through employers or public institutions; and (2) training that is insufficiently adapted to immigrants' needs. This section describes these obstacles and how governments have sought to address them.

## I. Barriers to Access

Training provided by employers is often seen as the “holy grail” of work-relevant skills building, since employers are unlikely to support training unless they believe it will directly improve productivity. Of course, governments have limited control over who receives such training. Low-skilled workers benefit less often than the highly skilled, limiting the potential for employer-provided training to propel workers into middle-skilled jobs.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, data from several countries indicate that immigrants are less likely to receive employer-sponsored training,<sup>64</sup> in part because they are more likely to be on temporary contracts or to be employed by small and informal-sector companies that tend not to provide training.<sup>65</sup> Discrimination may also play a role.<sup>66</sup>

62 For a detailed review of the issues, see Werner Eichhorst, Nuria Rodriguez-Planas, Ricarda Schmidl, and Klaus Zimmerman, “A Roadmap to Vocational Education and Training Around the World” (working paper, Institute for the Study of Labor, Bonn, Germany, June 2014), [www.iza.org/conference\\_files/worldb2014/1551.pdf](http://www.iza.org/conference_files/worldb2014/1551.pdf).

63 According to Eurostat, workers in the least-skilled occupations in 2011 were less than half as likely to have received employer-sponsored nonformal training within the past 12 months as the average worker in the Czech Republic and Germany, and between half and two-thirds as likely in the other study countries. The share of workers in low-skilled jobs who had received this training was 10 percent in the Czech Republic, 16 percent in Spain, 17 percent in the United Kingdom, 21 percent in Germany, 29 percent in France, and 37 percent in Sweden. These values must be interpreted with caution, however, since they may include basic induction training that provides few transferable skills. Eurostat, “Participation rate in employer-sponsored learning activities by occupation [trng\_aes\_124],” last updated July 22, 2014, [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=trng\\_aes\\_124&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=trng_aes_124&lang=en).

64 Mirna Safi, *Shifting Focus: Policies to Support the Labor Market Integration of New Immigrants in France* (Washington, DC and Geneva: Migration Policy Institute and International Labour Office, 2014), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shifting-focus-policies-support-labor-market-integration-new-immigrants-france](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shifting-focus-policies-support-labor-market-integration-new-immigrants-france); Drbohlav and Valenta, *Building an Integration System*; Emilsson, *No Quick Fix*; and data supplied to the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) by the Spanish Ministry of Employment and Social Security.

65 Small employers face smaller economies of scale when organizing training, and may also have fewer middle-skilled positions into which they can promote successful trainees. Karin Martinson, *Partnering with Employers to Promote Job Advancement for Low-Skill Individuals* (Washington, DC: Urban Institute, 2010), <https://lincs.ed.gov/publications/pdf/PartneringWEmployers2010.pdf>.

66 In Germany recent studies found that candidates with Turkish-origin names were less likely to be invited to interviews for apprenticeships, and that training participants were concentrated in fields offering more limited career prospects. See, respectively, SVR (German Expert Council on Migration and Integration), *Discrimination on the Training Market: Extent, Causes and Recommended Actions* (Berlin: SVR, 2014), [www.svr-migration.de/content/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Summary](http://www.svr-migration.de/content/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Summary).

While governments have more control over eligibility for publicly funded training outside the workplace, formal and informal barriers to access remain. First, new arrivals may be ineligible for training provided through PES, in countries that restrict their access to benefits (notably the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom). They may also lose eligibility for subsidized training once they get a job.

Second, even where newcomers are officially allowed to participate in publicly funded training, they may not qualify for many courses. Most mainstream vocational training and employment programs require a certain level of language proficiency. In France, for example, the introduction program aims to give migrants a basic level of proficiency, but this level is insufficient to access many vocational training courses. In Sweden students must often finish Swedish-language courses before they are accepted into adult education in many municipalities, especially in rural areas, although the government is trying to encourage adult education providers to accept language learners earlier.<sup>67</sup>

Finally, qualifications can be a barrier to entry. In Spain training providers must now require at least a lower-secondary<sup>68</sup> qualification from those seeking adult vocational certifications. Some are concerned this may reduce immigrants' access—particularly since not all applicants are able to demonstrate that their overseas schooling meets the requirement.<sup>69</sup> Some vocational certificates in France also require at least a lower-secondary education, and overseas education is not always recognized.

## 2. Quality and Relevance of Training for Immigrants

Even where newcomers are eligible for mainstream vocational training programs, courses are rarely tailored to the needs of language learners. As a result, the pace may be too fast for some, and few programs systematically offer complementary language programs alongside vocational training.

A second obstacle to providing relevant training for immigrants is that many already hold foreign qualifications and only need to fill specific skill gaps, rather than following the regular training program from the beginning. Policies to support the recognition of foreign qualifications are now widespread in immigrant-receiving countries.<sup>70</sup> Such strategies have generally focused on providing formal certificates evaluating the equivalence of foreign and domestic credentials. These certificates can be useful for obtaining professional licenses or applying for further study, but it is less clear whether employers trust them.<sup>71</sup> The role of destination-country training in helping the foreign trained find skilled work is less well developed in Europe, however. Early assessments of a much-cited German law introduced in 2012 to improve qualifications recognition suggest that simply evaluating prior education is not enough: immigrants also need ways to fill small skills gaps and improve occupational language skills. But training institutions and employer apprenticeship programs have left this gap largely unfilled, in part because of the difficulty of reorganizing training in this way.<sup>72</sup> This is a common problem across all countries that have grappled with the recognition of qualifications. While there are many promising models to help the foreign trained fill specific skills gaps, systematic provision of this kind of training remains a distant aspiration.<sup>73</sup>

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[Discrimination-on-the-training-market.pdf](#); and Burkert and Haas, "Investing in the Future."

67 Interview with Nylander and Olsson.

68 Lower secondary education is basic general education after primary education, typically about three years in duration. OECD, "Glossary of Statistical Terms: Lower Secondary Education," last updated February 26, 2004. <http://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=5385>.

69 Interview with Fernando Gutierrez Justo (Madrid Regional Vocational Education and Training (VET) Network) in discussion with a co-author, June 2014.

70 For an overview, see Madeleine Sumption, *Tackling Brain Waste: Strategies to Improve the Recognition of Immigrants' Foreign Qualifications* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/tackling-brain-waste-strategies-improve-recognition-immigrants-foreign-qualifications](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/tackling-brain-waste-strategies-improve-recognition-immigrants-foreign-qualifications).

71 Little evidence exists on how useful employers find formal credential evaluations, although an assessment of the German system before the 2012 reform legislation found that German employers were often unsure how to use them. Bettina Englmann and Martina Muller-Wacker, "Analyse der bundesweiten Annerkennungsberatung im Modellprojekt Global Competences" (Berlin: IQ Network, 2010), [www.migranet.org/images/stories/pdf/20101208\\_analyse\\_GC.pdf](http://www.migranet.org/images/stories/pdf/20101208_analyse_GC.pdf).

72 Burkert and Haas, "Investing in the Future". As one German interviewee put it, "We legislated only step two (recognition/evaluation), but didn't create any procedures to deal with the other two steps (guidance/advice and supplementary training)." Interview with Diekmann.

73 Sumption, *Tackling Brain Waste*.





### 3. Adapting Training to Newcomers' Needs

A number of promising initiatives have sought to improve access to training and its relevance to immigrants, though most do not focus specifically on new arrivals. These programs serve a range of constituencies, including high- and low-skilled newcomers, as well as employees and the unemployed. Their costs also vary widely, depending on the intensity of training and their ability to draw on resources from employers.

- **Training requirements or subsidies.** To encourage employers to train low-skilled workers, some governments have developed subsidies or regulations. In France employers must dedicate a certain share of revenues to training their staff (whatever their skill level), and language training is considered one of the eligible “professional skills” on which these funds can be spent. Voluntary subsidies are a more common approach, however. The Czech Republic offers subsidies for employer-sponsored training, while employers in Spain can be reimbursed for employees’ salaries while they are absent for training; both options have been used to support language instruction or other training for immigrants.<sup>74</sup> Subsidizing employer-based training can meet political resistance, however, because of concerns that employers will use funds for training they would otherwise have paid for themselves. This was the rationale behind cuts to workplace language instruction in 2010 in the United Kingdom, for example.
- **Subsidized work experience programs.** These programs are designed to help newcomers gain relevant skills and to overcome the “chicken and egg” problem of employers not wanting to employ people without host-country work experience. Despite a number of drawbacks, some studies have found them to be effective in addressing the needs of disadvantaged workers.<sup>75</sup> Innovative variations on subsidized work experience programs include a Swedish program that encourages employers to provide immigrants with skills assessments to help them find other jobs if they are not hired permanently, and another program (also in Sweden) that requires employers to provide or support language training as a condition for getting a subsidized worker. Even with subsidies, however, many countries have found that encouraging employers to take on trainees is not easy,<sup>76</sup> and it has proved extremely difficult to ensure that training is indeed undertaken.<sup>77</sup>
- **Filling gaps in existing qualifications.** Training institutions and nonprofit organizations in several countries have developed specialized courses for the foreign trained, often with government support. These “bridge programs” are designed to help newcomers fill skill gaps more efficiently, focusing on specific deficits they may have. For example, the Czech nonprofit META runs occupational language courses and provides work experience placements for newcomers in occupations such as accounting and social care.<sup>78</sup> While these programs are extremely promising, they are typically small scale, serving a single classroom of students at a time; many are run by nonprofits that rely on uncertain funding sources, making long-term planning difficult; and their availability varies geographically, with fewer options in low-immigration areas.
- **Occupation-specific intensive programs.** Intensive programs that combine work-specific vocabulary, information about regulatory systems, and practical requirements for specific occupations (such as drivers, electricians, or carpenters) are often designed to help people update their skills for the local labor market. Although fairly rare, such programs are sufficiently intensive for people with little experience or training. One of the benefits of such programs is that they work toward a particular

74 For the Czech Republic, interview with a representative from the Czech Labour Office in discussion with two of the co-authors, June 2014; for Spain, interview with Ricardo Guisado Urbano (Tripartite Foundation for Training in Employment) in discussion with a co-author; June 2014.

75 For a review, see Sebastian Butschek and Thomas Walter, “What Active Labour Market Programmes Work for Immigrants in Europe? A Meta-Analysis of the Evaluation Literature” (ZEW Discussion Papers, No. 13-056, Center for European Economic Research, Mannheim, Germany, August 2013), <http://econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/80423/1/766279057.pdf>.

76 Finding employers for subsidized work placements is a slow process in the Czech Republic, according to a nonprofit interviewee; and in Spain, employers have been reluctant to take on “free” trainees while other workers are being laid off. Interview with Hana Markova and Zuzana Vodnanska (META) in discussion with two of the co-authors, June 2014; and interview with Gutiérrez Justo.

77 Interview with Bond and Widmalm.

78 See META (Association for Opportunities of Young Migrants), “Zapojte Se,” accessed November 5, 2014, <http://meta-os.cz/>.

objective, which practitioners describe as critical to improving learner motivation (Box 4).<sup>79</sup>

- ***Embedded language, basic, and vocational skills.*** Although programs for those with low skills are less common, a number of programs seek to enable people to train for occupations such as classroom, child care, and health-care assistants. For example, a number of programs at London colleges integrate literacy, language, and numeracy challenges in a single program.<sup>80</sup> The models with the most positive results—both in Europe and overseas—combine language and vocational teachers in the same classroom.<sup>81</sup>
- ***Distance learning.*** To improve access to mainstream vocational training, Germany’s IQ Network is considering supplementary online courses to allow those registered for training programs to keep up with native workers by catching up on vocabulary or content in their spare time.<sup>82</sup> The potential for distance learning to fill the gaps in immigrants’ training is great: online lectures, for example, can be repeated and slowed down, allowing language learners to absorb material at their own pace. This format can also free up class time, enabling teachers to provide more intensive, interactive support.<sup>83</sup>

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*The models with the most positive results—both in Europe and overseas—combine language and vocational teachers in the same classroom.*

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79 Interview with Markowski and Yildirim.

80 For example, Lewisham College offers English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) for Classroom Assistants, ESOL for Child Care, and ESOL for Health and Social Care, all of which combine English language, literacy, numeracy, and vocational training. Lewisham Southwark College, “ESOL (Day—Lewisham Way),” 2014, [www.lesoco.ac.uk/courseshome-adults/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-\(esol\)/courses/esol-\(day---lewisham-way\)](http://www.lesoco.ac.uk/courseshome-adults/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-(esol)/courses/esol-(day---lewisham-way)).

81 For an overview of the international evidence, see Margie McHugh and A. E. Challinor, *Improving Immigrants’ Employment Prospects through Work-Focused Language Instruction* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2011), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/improving-immigrants-employment-prospects-through-work-focused-language-instruction](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/improving-immigrants-employment-prospects-through-work-focused-language-instruction). One of the main models proved to be effective is Washington State’s Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) program, which provides simultaneous workforce training and English language or adult basic education to reduce the amount of time spent in the classroom. See Sarah Hooker, Margie McHugh, Michael Fix, and Randy Capps, *Shaping Our Futures: The Educational and Career Success of Washington State’s Immigrant Youth* (Washington, DC: Migration Policy Institute, 2013), [www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shaping-our-futures-educational-and-career-success-washington-states-immigrant-youth](http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shaping-our-futures-educational-and-career-success-washington-states-immigrant-youth).

82 Interview with Wiebke Reyels of the IQ Network in discussion with two of the report’s co-authors, July 2014.

83 This approach to maximizing interactive class time while providing online lectures that can be slowed down or sped up, depending on the requirements of the learner, is often known as “flipped learning,” and is steadily gaining ground as a model of good educational practice. The potential for adult learning is, arguably, larger, since adult learners are more likely to be motivated to watch lectures in their own time. See Flipped Learning Network, “Home Page,” accessed October 24, 2014, <http://flippedlearning.org/site/default.aspx?PageID=1>.



#### Box 4. Swedish for Professionals: A Case Study in Coordination Challenges

A consortium of Swedish municipalities runs Swedish for Professionals (SFX), a range of intensive courses for immigrants with some background in occupations such as truck driving, carpentry, and engineering. Programs combine accreditation, occupational language, work placements, and occasional mentoring. Outcomes are highly positive, with almost all participants in work two years after participation—although organizers acknowledge that the program’s evaluation has not been rigorous or involved a control group. Since participants are likely to be skilled and self-reliant, evaluation may suffer from selection bias.

A group of eight SFX teachers and students met with an MPI researcher in June 2014 to discuss the past, present, and future of SFX. A number of themes emerged with broader ramifications for the issue of “scaling up” promising practices.

**Information.** New arrivals to Sweden were described as facing a maze-like system of education, training, and services. One student complained that he had been in Sweden for almost a decade before finding a program suited to him (Swedish for Truck Drivers). Several teachers were in favor of a one-stop shop for new arrivals to consolidate all programs; another suggested that the onus was on the public employment service to make smarter referrals.

**Coordination.** SFX owes its existence to an agreement among all the municipalities in the County of Stockholm, which would otherwise have insufficient numbers of immigrants to make investing in occupation-specific programs worthwhile. Because municipalities are small, a majority provide only generic Swedish courses. The teachers agreed that more central government coordination could help other municipalities follow the SFX model. Several participants pointed to examples of perverse incentives for agencies or municipalities. In the words of one, “everyone is watching their turf.” However, some felt that the flexibility and innovation of the program could be lost with too much central government involvement.

**Workforce.** Recruiting language teachers who could also teach vocational content was described as extremely difficult. Scaling up the SFX program or exporting it to rural areas will face the challenge of recruitment difficulties.

**Engaging employers.** A key ingredient of the SFX program is that teachers have build relationships with employers, but interviewees still described employer reluctance as a major obstacle to expanding the program.

*Source:* Discussion with SFX teachers and students led by one of the co-authors, June 2014.

## IV. Conclusions and Recommendations

Labor market integration challenges in the European Union are diverse, ranging from highly educated immigrants working in low-skilled jobs to individuals whose low education levels, limited work experience, or social and psychological needs prevent them from actively seeking, finding, or keeping employment.

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*Policymakers, service providers, and experts across the case study countries expressed frustration at the intractability of the problem.*

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Despite the considerable attention that has been paid to integration policy at the EU level and in many Member States, these challenges show little indication of being solved. Policymakers, service providers, and experts across the case study countries expressed frustration at the intractability of the problem, and—in some cases—the fact that significant resources have not achieved satisfying results. Meanwhile, few

initiatives aimed to support upward mobility into more-skilled work, and this goal has not been a political priority.

While there is clearly no ready solution, and the lack of evidence makes it difficult to point to consistently reliable policy measures, a roadmap for improving labor market integration and progression for new arrivals will include the following elements:

### A. *The Early Provision of Relevant Career Advice*

While large shares of new arrivals find work without public assistance, many face specific barriers to work and/or career progression and could benefit from expert support. At present, dedicated support for certain groups of immigrants is available through introduction programs in some countries, but the much larger capacity of the PES to support new arrivals is largely untapped. Many PES have struggled to accommodate the increased diversity of their clientele or meet demand for far-sighted career advice that focuses on long-term success rather than immediate job placement.

Governments have a number of options for mitigating these challenges:

- ***Adjust workforce training.*** Understanding immigrants' barriers to skilled employment is essential if advisors are to support them effectively. To enable them to intervene more effectively, employment advisors should receive diversity and intercultural training to understand the specific needs of new arrivals (such as their greater language barriers and more limited job-search experience), and be well-acquainted with processes for qualification recognition. In some countries, the prestige of employment advice could be increased by setting higher entry requirements and improving ongoing professional development.
- ***Encourage specialization.*** Specialists responsible for new arrivals could play an important role in providing advice relevant to the particular needs of this group. These advisors should have reasonable caseloads and incentive structures that (1) account for the additional challenges of placing new arrivals in work, and (2) reward those whose clients find sustained, not just short-term, employment.
- ***Establish separate careers advice.*** Countries where job counseling for immigrants is closely aligned with the receipt of benefits should consider providing far-sighted career advice in the same location. This approach could help increase advisors' incentives to focus on long-term, not just short-term, outcomes. Such a move could potentially benefit the entire workforce, and not just immigrants, in a world where workers are no longer expected to remain in the same field—or even the same job—for life. A career-advice service of this kind could also provide opportunities to screen newcomers' needs earlier and thus provide more cost-effective interventions to those who are not yet eligible for certain benefits or services.
- ***Improve networking and information-sharing mechanisms.*** New arrivals may have several needs, such as work experience, vocational training, training to fill minor skills gaps, and work-related language training. As a result, networking and other information-sharing mechanisms are important to ensure that the counselors advising immigrants are aware of the available options and make appropriate referrals.

### B. *Improving Opportunities for Progression*

Employment policies often implicitly assume that after people get a job they are “integrated” and require little additional assistance. However, employment may be precarious, and language barriers or skills gaps may prevent progression into stable, well-paying work, rendering immigrants more vulnerable to long-term



poverty. The lack of focus on the career progression of newcomers represents a missed opportunity. While skill-building programs are not the easy solution that commentators often assume—they can be expensive, time-consuming, and difficult to align with employers' expectations—newcomers nonetheless need feasible and affordable options to improve their employability. Particularly in the case of language skills, such programs may also yield larger social benefits, such as the ability to participate more effectively in the communities in which they settle.

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*The lack of focus on the career progression of newcomers represents a missed opportunity.*

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Governments committed to improving opportunities for progression may consider several options, including:

- **Create employer incentives to support upward mobility.** Policymakers should ensure that the subsidies and training requirements already in place in many countries are extended to language instruction and that new arrivals are eligible for existing subsidized training programs. Financial subsidies are difficult to target efficiently, however, and governments should also consider a range of approaches to make employer participation easier—especially for employers without large human resources departments.<sup>84</sup> These initiatives could include (1) providing seed funding for innovative partnerships between employers and training institutions that seek to develop career ladders out of low-skilled work, including for language learners; (2) supporting technical assistance or guidance for employers who are willing to support language instruction or other training for their staff but lack experience determining training needs and organizing relevant programs; (3) developing apprenticeships and other organized work experience programs that rely on partners to help match employers with trainees and thus reduce logistical barriers to participation; and (4) ensuring that hiring and promoting trainees does not lead to unexpected costs, such as additional insurance.<sup>85</sup>
- **Shift from generic- to work-focused language instruction.** Sequential approaches that require language learning before immigrants can access training or work experience programs can waste time and resources and often lead to high dropout rates. Governments should shift their mandatory and voluntary language offerings away from generic courses toward those that emphasize vocational competences, literacy, or digital skills.
- **Work with regulators and training bodies to improve access for the foreign trained.** In countries where qualifications are critical to moving into middle-skilled jobs, governments should conduct mapping and assessment exercises to determine the best training options for workers qualified abroad. Cooperation with training providers, regulators, and employers could help forge alternative ways for newcomers to demonstrate their skills through practical assessment. Policymakers should also examine options to encourage modular instruction in regulated

<sup>84</sup> A 2012 review of employer involvement in training suggests that in many countries, financial incentives are considered less important than technical and advisory services designed to encourage participation. Normann Müller and Friederike Behringer, “Subsidies and Levies as Policy Instruments to Encourage Employer-Provided Training” (OECD Education Working Paper, OECD Publishing, Paris, June 2012), [www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/subsidies-and-levies-as-policy-instruments-to-encourage-employer-provided-training\\_5k97b083v1vb-en?crawler=true](http://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/subsidies-and-levies-as-policy-instruments-to-encourage-employer-provided-training_5k97b083v1vb-en?crawler=true).

<sup>85</sup> Swedish National Audit Office, *Ett steg in och en ny start—hr fungerar subventionerade anställningar för nyanlända?* (Stockholm: National Audit Office, 2013), [www.riksrevisionen.se/sv/rapporter/Rapporter/EFF/2013/Ett-steg-in-och-en-ny-start--hur-fungerar-subventionerade-anstallningar-for-nyanlanda/](http://www.riksrevisionen.se/sv/rapporter/Rapporter/EFF/2013/Ett-steg-in-och-en-ny-start--hur-fungerar-subventionerade-anstallningar-for-nyanlanda/). Previous research from the United Kingdom also identified insurance as a barrier to hiring trainees; see Linda Miller, *How can we encourage employers to become involved in education* (Brighton: Institute for Employment Studies, 2007), [www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/446.pdf](http://www.employment-studies.co.uk/pdflibrary/446.pdf).

occupations, so that newcomers can fill specific gaps without starting their training from the beginning.

- **Experiment with e- and m-learning.** Distance learning tools, including online learning and mobile language apps, show considerable promise for reducing the cost of instruction—at least for those with access to these technologies. They can also allow workers with long or unpredictable work hours to learn on a flexible schedule or on the go (such as during transit), and to keep up with vocational programs that are aimed at native speakers. Modest financial support to encourage providers to partner with software developers to design such tools could be a relatively low-cost investment (although it may require complementary investment in information and communication [ICT] skills).
- **Engage employers and unions in integration policies.** While it is now considered good practice to involve employers in developing qualifications, employer involvement in integration policies is less well established. Employers can play an important role in helping develop widely respected assessments and training programs for the foreign trained, and in shaping work-focused language programs that fill local labor needs. Trade unions can also support migrant workers to develop soft skills that can be important to career progression, as well as helping build bridges with native co-workers, and increasing understanding of the local work culture.

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*Employment and skills policies, on the one hand, and integration policies, on the other, tend to be cordoned off from one another.*

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### C. Integrating Departments and Policy Areas

Employment and skills policies, on the one hand, and integration policies, on the other, tend to be cordoned off from one another. To some extent, this phenomenon is inevitable—a natural result of a complex set of policies requiring the specialized expertise of different agencies, ministries, and providers. However, policymakers have a number of options to improve interagency cooperation:

- **Improve information sharing and networking.** Service providers and government agencies must be able to communicate effectively to share policy innovations. Subnational networks are a promising way to improve coordination. At the national level, agreements between agencies to share information on the individuals they serve will help save resources by reducing duplication in processes such as skills screening (subject to data-protection laws).
- **Set up one-stop shops.** Governments may wish to explore ways to consolidate services under one roof so that newcomers can be easily referred among services, even if they are not familiar with the division of responsibilities between providers.
- **Monitor outcomes and hold departments accountable.** Even if responsibilities are divided among government agencies or ministries, governments should develop a coherent integration strategy at the national level that sets out clear objectives and a plan for implementation.<sup>86</sup> They should also develop tools for monitoring and reporting integration outcomes, to help encourage agencies to take responsibility for integration by adopting a long-term outlook.
- **Improve systematic and ongoing evaluation.** Despite recent improvements in the quality of the evidence,<sup>87</sup> rigorous evaluation remains scarce, and studies usually track outcomes for a limited

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<sup>86</sup> Collett and Petrovic, *The Future of Immigrant Integration in Europe*.

<sup>87</sup> Some countries are improving the quality of policy evaluation; randomized control trials and other quantitative methods have



duration. This limited knowledge makes accountability and efficient allocation of resources challenging. The EU institutions could play a role in encouraging better evaluation by providing seed funding for pilot projects and policy experiments that would help generate a better evidence base. This knowledge could, in turn, help make the case for interventions with impact beyond the next electoral cycle.

#### D. *Final Thoughts*

Financial resources for immigrant integration are inevitably limited, even in countries that are deeply committed to improving newcomers' outcomes. However, several of the interventions discussed here represent relatively inexpensive investments. For example, adaptations to make training and assessment more flexible for foreign-qualified workers who have already made significant investments in their own education or training can involve relatively cost-effective steps. The investments required to put other groups—particularly those who enter with low levels of formal education or training—on a path to stable work above the lowest skill levels would be much more significant, although success in bringing people out of long-term unemployment also brings considerable savings.

In a world of tight integration budgets, adaptations to mainstream services such as PES and training institutions hold particular promise as a complement to targeted integration initiatives. These mainstream institutions already receive considerable funding in most countries, and certain adjustments can be made at relatively low additional cost; examples include incorporating materials on newcomers' needs in existing training for PES advisors, or improving the flow of information about specialized services that may be available. Some of the more extensive reforms, such as shifting training systems to provide more modular instruction or developing new capacity for tailored, long-term career advice, would be more difficult. However, they also have the potential to benefit groups of workers well beyond the immigrant population, including workers displaced from declining industries who must retrain mid-career, and people on the margins of the labor force—such as women with children, older workers, and native minorities with low rates of employment.

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*Several of the interventions discussed here represent relatively inexpensive investments.*

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Perhaps most crucially, any approach to improving newcomers' upward mobility must contend with the fact that most recent immigrants are already employed but working in low-skilled jobs. Intensive, full-time programs for newcomers who are not working may be an effective investment in many cases, but such programs will realistically be able to serve only a subset of the population. To encourage larger numbers of new arrivals to develop their skills, greater employer involvement will be critical. The business case for investing in low-skilled workers must be made more compelling, whether through financial subsidies or through technical and logistical assistance for employers willing to develop and promote their staff. At the same time, service providers will need to reach working immigrants outside of the traditional routes of introduction programs and public employment counseling. Training providers should experiment with curricular innovations such as distance and online/mobile learning that have the potential to bring down costs and benefit those in full-time work. Without carefully planned interventions—and without effective partnerships among employers, unions, training providers, and governments—it is hard to imagine serious progress being made to realize the full potential of Europe's immigrant workforce.

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become common in Sweden and the United Kingdom, for example. Data collection on newcomers' characteristics, labor market outcomes, and (to some extent) use of programs has also improved, both through labor force surveys and data projects such as the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC).

## Appendix: List of Interviewees

**From the Czech Republic:** Miroslav Chytil, Directorate General of Labor; Dusan Drbohlav, Univerzita Karlova v Praze; Eva Kafkova, European Contact Group; Hana Markova and Zuzana Vodnanska, META; Vit Samek, Czech-Moravian Confederation of Trade Unions; Danica Schebelle, Research Institute for Labor and Social Affairs; Jana Vanova, National Training Fund; and representatives from the Centers for the Support of the Integration of Foreigners, the Czech Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Labor Office, and the Czech Ministry of Interior.

**From France:** Ommar Benfaid, French Democratic Confederation of Labor (CFDT); Odille Menneteau, Mouvement des Entreprises de France (MEDEF); Jean-Marc Paris, Association pour le Développement de la Formation dans les Transports et la Logistique; Chloé Sené, Fondation Agir Contre l'Exclusion; and representatives from Ministry of Interior, DGEF (Directorate of Foreigners in France), French Office for Immigration and Integration (OFII), and the National Council of Local Missions (CNML).

**From Germany:** Knut Diekmann, German Chambers of Industry and Commerce (DIHK); Wiebke Reyels, Integration through Qualification (IQ Network) Berlin; Ulrich Maria Rüssing and Ulrich Wiegand, Chamber of Crafts (HWK) Berlin; Kathrin Tews, Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) Berlin; and representatives from the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.

**From Spain:** Jose Antonio Moreno Díaz, Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commissions (CCOO); Fernando Gutierrez Justo, Madrid VET Network; Javier Ramirez, Madrid Office for Information for Immigrants; Ricardo Guisado Urbano, Tripartite Foundation for Training and Employment; staff and students from the Construction National Training Center, Madrid; and representatives from the Madrid City Government, Catalonia Regional Government, and the Spanish Ministry of Labor and Immigration.

**From Sweden:** Maria Bond and Frida Widmalm, Swedish National Audit Office; Susanna Holzer, Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO); Anne Markowski, Sam Yildirim, and Swedish for Professionals (SFX) colleagues; Johan Nylander and David Olsson, Arbetsförmedlignen; Eskil Wadensjö, Swedish Institute for Social Research (SOFI); Karin Ekenger and Farbod Rezania from the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise; and representatives from the Swedish Council for Higher Education, Ministry of Employment, Agency for Higher Vocational Education, and Swedish National Audit Office.

**From the United Kingdom:** Karen Dudley and Judy Kirsh, National Association for Teaching English and Community Languages to Adults; Pippa Lane, Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion; Adam Marshall, British Chambers of Commerce; Alex Stevenson, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE); Neil Stevenson, Demos; and representatives from Jobcentre Plus and the Department of Work and Pensions.





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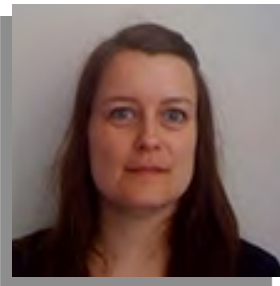
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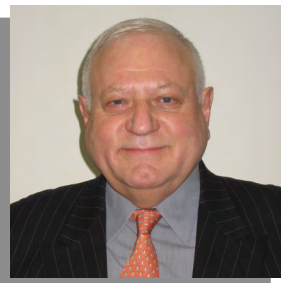
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The Migration Policy Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan think tank dedicated to the study of the movement of people worldwide. MPI provides analysis, development, and evaluation of migration and refugee policies at the local, national, and international levels. It aims to meet the rising demand for pragmatic and thoughtful responses to the challenges and opportunities that large-scale migration, whether voluntary or forced, presents to communities and institutions in an increasingly integrated world.

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