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**Learning from ‘Best Practice’ Initiatives:  
On a path to fairer, more resilient and efficient actions for  
the labour market integration of female refugees**

by

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This qualitative research explores the measures of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the labour market integration of female refugees. For this, expert interviews with five ‘best practice’ CSOs in Germany were conducted to highlight the measures the initiatives take in light of the obstacles they face in their work. The results show that both tangible and intangible measures are taken, which attempt to increase the participants’ human capital as well as location-specific knowledge while facilitating the creation of networks among the partaking women. Challenges arise primarily in relation to funding, bureaucracy, and labour market discrimination. Overall, this research finds that CSOs present a multifunctional alternative to improve labour market integration while focusing on known gender-specific challenges.

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**Table of Contents**

- 1. Introduction..... 1**
  - 1.1. Research Question and Aim..... 2
- 2. Background..... 3**
  - 2.1. The Definition of Integration and Labour Market Integration..... 3
  - 2.2. Legal and Institutional Aspects to Labour Market Integration in Germany..... 3
    - 2.2.1. Asylum, Refugee Status and International Protection..... 3
    - 2.2.2. Processes for the Integration into Work and Education..... 4
    - 2.2.3. Relevant Policy Developments since 2015..... 5
    - 2.2.4. Relevant Actors in the German Labour Market Integration..... 6
  - 2.3. The Last Decade in Numbers..... 7
- 3. Literature Review..... 9**
  - 3.1 Necessity of Labour Market Integration of Female Refugees..... 9
  - 3.2. Reasons that Inhibit the Labour Market Integration..... 10
    - 3.2.1. Supply Side: Individual Level Factors..... 11
    - 3.2.2. Factors Specific to Female Refugees..... 12
    - 3.2.3. Bureaucracy and Policies..... 13
    - 3.2.4. Demand-side Factors: discrimination..... 14
  - 3.3. Approaches to Improve the Labour Market Integration..... 16
    - 3.3.1. Policy-related Improvements..... 16
    - 3.3.2. The Value of Civil Society Organisations in the Integration Process..... 17
  - 3.4. Concluding Remarks..... 19
- 4. Methodology..... 20**
  - 4.1. Research Design..... 20
  - 4.2. Interview Design and Implementation..... 22
  - 4.3 Limitations and Biases..... 24
- 5. Results..... 25**
  - 5.1. Tangible Assets and Measures..... 26
    - 5.1.1. Knowledge Transfer..... 26

5.1.2. Bureaucratic Support.....	26
5.1.3. Learning Activities.....	27
5.1.4. Measures Adapted Towards Refugee and Migrant Women.....	28
5.2. Intangible Assets: benefits to the way of working.....	28
5.2.1. Unbureaucratic.....	28
5.2.2. Accessible.....	29
5.2.3. Sustainable.....	29
5.2.4. Understanding and Connecting.....	30
5.2.5. Networks.....	31
5.3. Disadvantages and Obstacles to CSO work.....	32
5.3.1. Financing.....	32
5.3.2. Bureaucracy and Relation to Public Authorities.....	32
5.3.3. Discrimination.....	33
<b>6. Discussion.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7. Conclusion.....</b>	<b>37</b>
References.....	39
Appendix A: Coding framework.....	46
Appendix B: Original Quotes in German.....	48
Appendix C: Interview Guide in German and English.....	50
Appendix D: Data Protection Agreement.....	54

## **List of Tables**

Table 1.....	23
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## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.....	6
Figure 2.....	7
Figure 3.....	21

## **Abbreviations**

<b>CSO</b>	<b>Civil Society Organisation</b>
<b>EU</b>	<b>European Union</b>
<b>LMI</b>	<b>Labour Market Integration</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>Non-Governmental Organisation</b>
<b>OECD</b>	<b>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</b>

# 1. Introduction

The refugee crisis of 2015 and 2016 put substantial pressure on European countries to accommodate the flow of refugees seeking protection from war and political oppression. In these two initial years, Germany alone received close to 1,200,000 asylum applications (FRA, 2019, p.18), by far the most in Europe in absolute terms. The attempt to handle the large number of applications put significant pressure on the administrative system, leading to delays in the asylum and integration process that lasted for years. Many refugees had to wait up to two years to get their asylum process approved, which was necessary to be able to work (FRA, 2019). But even with the right to work, refugees often found themselves prevented from entering the labour market due to factors such as discrimination, absence of skills or bureaucracy. Yet, their labour market participation is crucial: not only does it reduce their reliance on welfare (Gericke et al., 2018), but it also aids overall societal integration and counters skill shortages currently present in Germany (Haas & Damelang, 2010).

Almost a decade later, the illegal invasion of Ukraine by Russia led to another instance of millions of people being displaced and seeking humanitarian protection, bringing the topic of integration to the forefront once again. The gendered dimension of the predominantly Ukrainian women highlighted that today and in the past, one group especially struggling in the labour market integration (LMI) is female refugees. In Germany, only fifteen percent of female refugees that arrived between 2013 and 2019 are working five years after arrival, compared to 60 percent of refugee men (Brücker et al., 2024), even though refugee women want to work at the same rate as native-born women (Kosyakova et al., 2021). Despite these numbers, they are often overlooked, letting them end up in a “blind spot in migration and integration policies” (OECD, 2023a, p.4). Much of why these women fare so much worse than both refugee men and migrant women remains unexplained, warranting systematic research in this area (Schieckoff & Sprengholz, 2021).

Civil society organisations (CSOs) are often argued as a valuable measure to improve integration outcomes, especially in terms of the labour market (see for instance Degler et al., 2017; Panchenko, 2024; Collini, 2022). Some of these offer ‘good’ or ‘best’ practice approaches, meaning they provide services that have been scientifically evaluated as efficient, sustainable and transferable in reaching their goal (European Commission, 2021). Yet, there is little research thus far on the impact of CSOs on the LMI (Collini, 2022) as well as their

strategies and practices. Therefore, this research will analyse the practices of CSOs in Germany that focus on the labour market integration of female refugees by conducting expert interviews with relevant representatives from these initiatives. This will not only help to extend the literature on LMI-focused CSOs by gaining insights into real-life practices but also expand the knowledge on how the labour market integration of female refugees can be improved through alternatives to standard integration policy.

The following thesis is structured as follows: first, the aim and research questions are presented. Second, a background section introduces the legal and institutional aspects of the labour market integration of refugees in Germany, and presents the development of the LMI of refugees in Germany over the last decade, supported through basic descriptive statistics. Third, it will present relevant theoretical and empirical literature on the labour market integration of female refugees and the value of research on CSOs. Fourth, the methodological approach will be presented and the limitations of this study outlined. Fifth, the results are presented. Sixth, the results are discussed. Section seven concludes.

### **1.1. Research Question and Aim**

This research is an exploratory analysis to gain insights into the labour market integration efforts of ‘best practice’ civil society organisations in Germany through learning from actual practices and experiences. The goal is to describe what involved experts or representatives of these organisations perceive to be relevant actions of their organisations in the LMI of refugee women and, thereby, expand the knowledge base of the current literature by gaining insights into what makes the work of CSOs relevant. This is achieved by conducting semi-structured interviews with experts from relevant initiatives to answer the research question **“What do representatives of ‘best practice’ initiatives consider the most effective measures of their organisation to improve the labour market integration of female refugees in Germany?”**. Furthermore, to gain insights into opportunities and challenges for integration support through civil society organisations, it will reflect on current and past workings of the initiatives by asking a follow-up research question, namely, **“According to the interviewed experts, what are factors that inhibit their work?”**. This will allow taking into account the complex institutional environment in which the work is done and, thereby, better contextualise the impact of the measures. In conclusion, the research will contribute to the labour market and CSO literature by generating new knowledge into how the LMI of female

refugees can be improved in the future by taking into account civil society organisations as integration measures. Hence, this research has both societal as well as scientific relevance.

## **2. Background**

### **2.1. The Definition of Integration and Labour Market Integration**

The definitions of integration in itself vary often by context. However, there are some general definitions of the term: the International Organization for Migration (2012) defines it as “the process of mutual adaptation between the host society and the migrants themselves, both as individuals and as groups” (p.1). Similarly, De Haas et al. (2020, p.327) interpret it as the process of the gradual fusion, but not absorption, of the newly arrived individuals into the destination society. Udayar et al. (2021) interpret integration along the definition of Engbersen (2003, cited in Udayar et al., 2021) “as inclusion and participation in society through major institutions and without any threat to people’s physical and personal integrity, as well as the development of their individual and shared identities” (p.287). The integration into employment more specifically can be seen as an economic dimension of integration (Sander & Heuchemer, 2020); and is considered achieved by attaining and maintaining formal employment within the labour market of the host country (Gericke et al., 2018; Bakker et al., 2017).

### **2.2. Legal and Institutional Aspects to Labour Market Integration in Germany**

#### ***2.2.1. Asylum, Refugee Status and International Protection***

For individuals applying for asylum, there are multiple alternatives under which international protection in Germany will be granted, of which the two most frequent ones will be discussed below. The right to asylum is anchored into the German constitution and grants the right of protection to individuals who are subject to political persecution and have reached Germany directly from a non-safe third country (UNHCR, n.d.). However, more than often protection is granted through the recognition of a refugee status according to the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention (UNHCR, n.d.); whereby a refugee is defined as an individual who “owing to wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of



a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality” (UNHCR, 2010, p.14).

The formulation of the UNHCR convention is one of the most frequently used definitions for refugees. The general term ‘refugee’, however, is often used not specifically for individuals who received a refugee status according to the UNHCR 1951 convention, but rather, as a collective term for all individuals who are seeking shelter in Germany, irrespective of their status (Bach et al., 2017). This is relevant for this research, as many female refugees do not arrive via the asylum process but through family migration (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). In the OECD in 2018, women made up only 30 percent of all asylum seekers, while women accounted for about 45 percent of all refugees (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018, p.9). In Germany, family migration can occur via either family asylum, meaning that once one ‘principal’ individual has received asylum, family members already present in Germany are granted asylum as well; or family reunification, meaning the reunification with spouse or children after the official granting of protection (BAMF, 2019). For the latter, humanitarian reasons are actively taken into account in the decision to grant reunifications (BAMF, 2019).

Hence, while there are many subtleties and variations in definitions and legal statuses, this research will focus on the more general term ‘refugee’ and will integrate individuals who arrived through family migration that has humanitarian roots.

### ***2.2.2. Processes for the Integration into Work and Education***

Once a displaced person arrives in Germany, they have to apply for asylum to ensure their status as a refugee and to obtain the right of residence and work (FRA, 2019). ‘Proper’ integration often only starts after this decision is made, which in most European states entails significant administrative delays (FRA, 2019). Following an asylum decision, EU states are supposed to offer a residence permit for at least three years. In Germany, this is only upon application instead of being granted automatically (FRA, 2019). Under EU law, asylum seekers have the right to access education on the same level as nationals, though this often varies between countries, especially regarding access to post-compulsory schooling and often includes significant delays in access (FRA, 2019). In Germany, asylum applicants are allowed to partake in vocational training if their application is at least three months old, so long as their stay in a reception facility is not mandatory and they are not considered to be from ‘safe

countries of origin' (FRA, 2019, p.103). Germany has a highly institutionalised and standardised vocational education system that often ensures easy integration into the labour market (Damelang & Haas, 2012). This implies that once asylum seekers and refugees gain access to an apprenticeship, their labour market integration is inherently easier. Once individuals receive a residence permit, they have the fundamental right to work (BAMF, n.d.).

### ***2.2.3. Relevant Policy Developments since 2015***

There have been substantial efforts to improve the integration of refugees and asylum seekers in Germany since 2015 (Sander & Heuchemer, 2020). This section will give a brief overview of the most important policy implementations regarding the LMI specifically. The most immediate effort following 2015 was the establishment of a new integration law ('Integrationsgesetz') that allows asylum seekers to easier access integration measures and traineeship during their asylum process in case they have a high propensity to stay (Deutscher Bundestag, 2016). Since 2020, the 3+2 rule, also known as the 'Ausbildungsduldung' ('Apprenticeship Tolerance') is a part of the German residence act that supports the "temporary suspension of deportation for the purpose of training" (§60c AufenthG; see Federal Ministry of Justice, 2024, n.p.). It allows individuals who have not received rights to asylum but are protected under such temporary suspension, to take on (or continue) their apprenticeship for three years, and receive the right to (search for) work for another two years after finishing their apprenticeship (Peitz, 2023). This has been further extended in 2023 to extend the rule with a right to residence from March 2024 onwards (Peitz, 2023). The 3+2 rule can be argued to give more security and stability to individuals with uncertain or rejected asylum statuses.

In 2021, the German government signed the third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security under the UN Security Council with the main focus to better protect women, among others female migrants (UN Women, n.d.). It has been recognised as an improvement to previous action plans by 16 German civil society organisations, yet also criticised, among others due to lacking clarity and commitment to financing (UN Women, n.d.). In 2022, following the illegal invasion of Ukraine, the Temporary Protection Directive was activated in the EU, allowing Ukrainian citizens the immediate right to work (Dumont & Lauren, 2023). Furthermore, in 2022, the Opportunity Residence Act ('Chancen-Aufenthaltsrecht') was passed. It gives individuals faster access to residence rights if they show signs of successful

integration through facilitating language learning and better support in maintaining living expenses (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022). It applies to individuals who have a right to residence or are suspended from deportation and have lived in Germany for more than five years (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022).

**2.2.4. Relevant Actors in the German Labour Market Integration**

The asylum and integration process of individuals in need of international protection is split among multiple actors. The following section will briefly introduce the most relevant actors in Germany. Mayer (2016) gives a brief overview of the involved actors (see Figure 1). These include the government, the federal states, municipalities, the economy and civil society initiatives. Generally, asylum procedures happen on the federal level, while integration services are often carried out on a municipal level (Galera et al., 2018). Some integration efforts, such as housing are also outsourced to NGOs and similar organisations (OECD, 2018).

**The Different Actors in the Labour Market Integration of Refugees**

German Government	Federal States	Municipalities	The Economy	Civil Society
Federal Employment Agency	State governments and ministries	Municipal job agencies	Business associations	(Sponsors of) refugee aid programmes
Federal Office for Migration and Refugees	Regional offices of the employment agencies	Municipal administrations	Chambers of Commerce and Industry	Volunteers (such as mentor networks)
IQ Network		Immigration authorities	Chambers of craft	Federal volunteer services
IvAF network		Economic development initiatives	Individual companies	
Varying federal ministries				

Translated from German, Source: Mayer, 2016

Figure 1. Different Actors in the LMI of Refugees (Source: Mayer, 2016).

Degler et al. (2017) note a split in responsibilities regarding integration between the different federal states and the employment agencies. They find that this often causes issues and delays in the handover of information. Beyond state-level integration efforts, the FRA (2019) reports the relevance of individual support for integration into education and employment. As examples of this, they mention support through social workers, mentors and buddy systems

which can significantly speed up the process (p.91). This highlights the relevance ‘best practice’ initiatives, often provided by CSOs, might have in the integration process. The relevance of CSOs will be further discussed in the literature review.

### 2.3. The Last Decade in Numbers

This section presents some of the numbers relevant to refugee migration in Germany, focusing specifically on demographic variations and employment as an indicator of labour market integration. The covered period relates both to the 2015 / 2016 ‘migration’ crisis as well as the recent arrival of Ukrainian refugees.

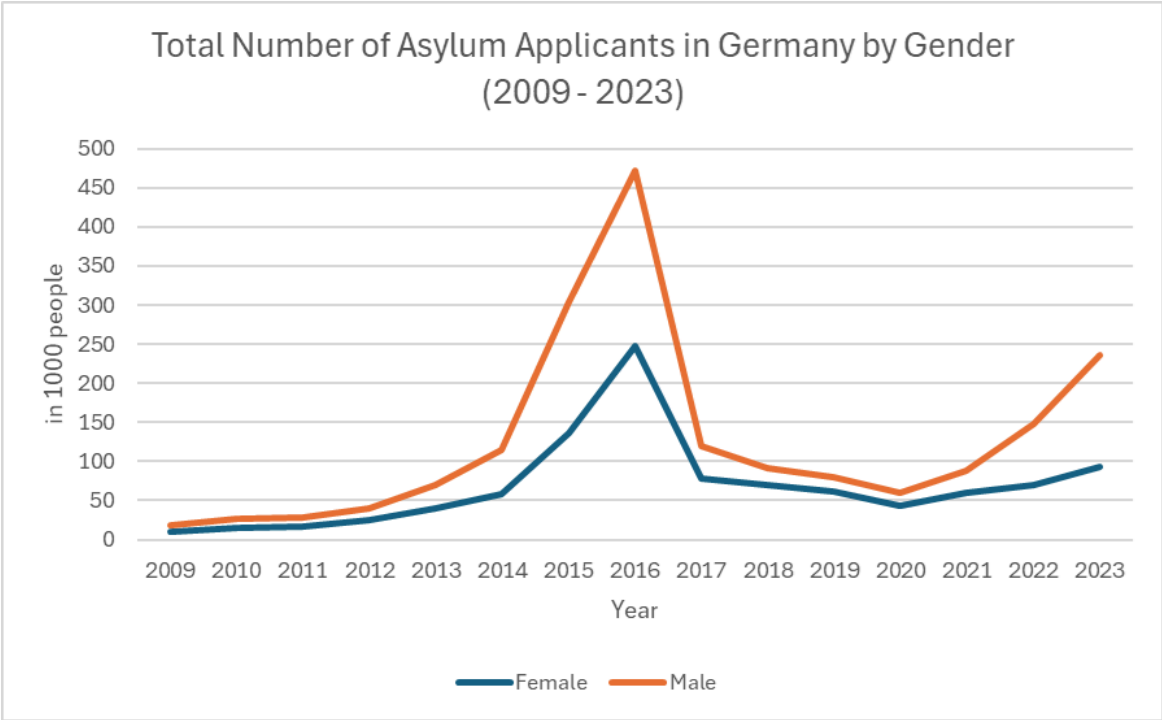


Figure 2. Total Number of Asylum Applicants from non-EU countries in Germany by Gender (Source: Eurostat, 2024b).

Following the start of the Arab Spring and the onset of the ‘migration’ crisis, 2014 represents the initial departure from previous levels of asylum applications being made, reaching their peak in 2015 (about 136,000 applications by women and around 304,000 for men) and 2016 (~248,000 applications by women and ~472,000 for men) (see Figure 2). During this period, Germany received the most individuals across Europe in absolute terms, standing at around 1,200,000 asylum applications (FRA, 2019, p.18). The levels subsequently declined and

increased again in 2020, though not as high as in 2015 and 2016. Over most of the observed period in Figure 2, women made up about 33 to 36 percent of all adult refugees, though slightly higher (at around 42 percent) between 2017 and 2020 (see Figure 2). It has to be noted that the percentage of women presenting asylum applicants is generally much lower as women more often arrive through family reunification (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). Disaggregated statistics for the number of family migrants related to individuals with international protection in Germany, unfortunately, seem to not exist.

As of February 2024, 4.15 million Ukrainians were under temporary protection in the European Union, of which about 1.25 million in Germany (Eurostat, 2024a). Contrastingly to the composition of earlier asylum seekers, Ukrainian refugees show a very gendered dimension: as most Ukrainian men are conscripted, the refugees are primarily women and their dependents (Dumont & Lauren, 2023). In Germany, women accounted for 75 percent of all adult Ukrainian refugees, while children made up 36 percent of all Ukrainian refugees (Dumont & Lauren, 2023).

Of refugees that arrived in Germany between 2013 and 2019, about 46 percent of individuals worked five years after arrival, although only 15 percent of female refugees (Brücker et al., 2024). About 63 percent worked seven years after arrival (29 percent for women), while 68 percent worked after eight years (33 percent for women) (Brücker et al., 2024). For the cohort of refugees that arrived in 2015, about 75 percent of men and 31 percent of women were working in 2022 (Brücker et al., 2024). While the level of employment of refugee men eight years after arrival is even higher than that of native-born men, female refugees do not follow this trend (Brücker et al., 2024). Furthermore, of the refugee women working, about 40 percent work full-time, 27 percent part-time and 15 percent find themselves in internships or apprenticeships (Kosyakova et al., 2021). In addition, women are more likely to longer remain in integration activities such as language courses, education, or paid maternity leave: Kosyakova et al. (2021) note that five years after arrival, about 56 percent of women are in this type of non-employment, but only 22 percent of men. Hence, while the overall LMI of refugees is improving, only a minority of female refugees is employed, and often not in full-time employment. This arguably makes it a high priority for integration policies. For Ukrainian refugees, preliminary numbers show a generally successful labour market

integration (see OECD, 2023b). However, more insightful numbers will most likely only be published in a few years time.

### **3. Literature Review**

After briefly touching upon the definition of integration and labour market integration, this section will present a literature review of four relevant fields. First, the benefits and necessities of the LMI of (female) refugees will be presented. Second, the barriers and challenges to the LMI will be discussed. Third, scholarly positions on approaches to improve the LMI will be briefly touched upon. Fourth, and lastly, the merit of CSOs in the LMI as well as the value of ‘best practice’ research in this field will be highlighted. All sections will discuss more general theoretical and empirical aspects, as well as arguments relevant to Germany in particular.

#### **3.1 Necessity of Labour Market Integration of Female Refugees**

There are a multitude of points in the migration literature that show the relevance of the labour market integration of refugees, and female refugees in particular. Overall, there is a consensus among the scholars on the factors at play, which will be presented in the section below. This will include arguments both regarding the benefits to the displaced individuals themselves as well as benefits to the host country society, in this case, Germany.

Generally, refugees are found to take significantly longer to integrate into employment, also compared to other migrant groups (Degler et al., 2017; see also Background: 2.4.). However, attaining employment is considered essential for full integration into society, as supported by Ager & Strang (2008) and Boese (2015). Furthermore, early intervention is essential, as it otherwise can lead to the depreciation of human capital (Degler et al., 2017; Brell et al., 2020). There are multiple benefits to the LMI for refugees themselves. Bakker et al. (2017) argue that attaining a job can improve the mental health and confidence of refugees. This is especially valid in light of the fact that many refugees are keen to work, also among women (see Kosyakova et al., 2021; Degler et al., 2017). Moreover, the gain of collective employment of refugees implies better opportunities to pass on job offers within the refugee community, leading to a ‘positive information effect’ (Brell et al., 2020).

In addition, a successful LMI has several benefits to the host country. Among others, it reduces the reliance of refugees on welfare payments (Gericke et al., 2018; Brell et al., 2020). Comprehensive employment also is expected to increase levels of innovation and easier labour market entry through a more diverse labour force (Damelang & Haas, 2012). Additionally, acknowledging equal rights in all aspects of society for individuals likely to stay permanently can lead to reduced marginalisation of refugees (de Haas et al., 2020, p.238). Lastly, it is argued to be able to counteract labour shortages and thereby reduce imbalances in the labour market (Orav, 2022; Panchenko, 2024). For Sweden, there is empirical support that there is a positive effect on employment when women were specifically targeted through introductory measures (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). This argument could be relevant for Germany, which in recent years increasingly experienced a substantial shortage of skilled labour (Panchenko, 2024). This is primarily due to the continued demographic change, but also a reduced interest in apprenticeships among native-born individuals (Panchenko, 2024). While Scott and Tegunimataka (2020) argue that evidence for migration as a solution to labour shortages is mixed, they state that as long as this comes with a contribution to the tax system, migrant labour can combat certain aspects of labour market shortages. The integration of female refugees into employment in particular is of high relevance as it has been shown to impact the integration trajectory of their children, especially their daughters (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). Furthermore, in light of the desire of many female refugees to work (see Kosyakova et al., 2021); it can be argued that the limited LMI among women is a matter of facilitation, making it a valuable focus of research.

### **3.2. Reasons that Inhibit the Labour Market Integration**

There is a substantial amount of literature that discusses barriers to the labour market integration of refugees in a European and German context. The consensus among scholars about the factors that lie behind these barriers seems to be high, with both theoretical and empirical evidence being well represented. This section will present these factors that generally inhibit the complete or partial integration into the labour market, for refugees more generally and female refugees more specifically. The discussed factors relate to supply-side issues such as absent skills and low levels of host-country-specific human capital; issues with the quality and sustainability of employment; the barriers imposed through bureaucracy and migration policies; and lastly, demand-side issues such as employer-based discrimination.

### ***3.2.1. Supply Side: Individual Level Factors***

One of the biggest supply-side issues to the LMI stems from the individual-level characteristics of humanitarian migration: Kanas and Steinmetz (2021) highlight that these types of migration decisions are not made based on previous human capital and resource availability, as in the case of economic migrants. This implies that upon arrival, there is usually a substantial mismatch in the skills of the refugees in relation to the destination-country labour market; reducing not only their potential wages but also their overall employability (Brell et al., 2020). Moreover, there is often an absence of destination-country-specific human capital or only a slow accumulation thereof. Dumont and Lauren (2023) argue that this is often based on “High levels of uncertainty [that] can deter refugees from making country-specific investments in host societies [...] and hinder integration due to the potentially temporary nature of their stay” (p.167). Yet especially, insufficient language skills are among the biggest barriers to integration into employment, training and education (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017). However, if spoken at a high level, it can substantially improve employment chances (Brell et al., 2020; Baranik et al., 2018). This is also of high relevance for female refugees: Cheung and Phillimore (2017), for instance, found empirical evidence in the UK that women attended language classes less while also having worse language skills relative to men, though there is a catch-up over time. Another skill-related aspect concerns redundant education or missing certification of previous educational achievement: this can make it difficult for applicants to enter employment in similar fields (see Degler et al., 2017; Ager & Strang, 2008). This aspect will be further explored below in relation to bureaucracy in the destination society.

One further barrier to the LMI of refugees lies in the impact of often bad psychological well-being following the flight from warzones and other forms of persecution. Brell et al. (2020) note that this can be a further factor leading to the depreciation of human capital as individuals are less likely to work. Cheung and Phillimore (2017) also note the possibility of the occurrence of delayed PTSD (Post-traumatic stress disorder) after the asylum decision. In their study about integration in the UK, they also find that health outcomes are generally worse for women.



### ***3.2.2. Factors Specific to Female Refugees***

Overall, labour market integration is more difficult for women with an immigrant background, and even worse for female refugees. Fendel and Kosyakova (2023) note that immigrant women face a so-called ‘double disadvantage’ in the LMI, as they “have a secondary role in family migration decisions, resulting in their lower human capital and earning potential in the destination country” (p.4288). This double disadvantage manifests in worse labour market outcomes relative to both immigrant men and native women (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). In addition, immigrant women are often more likely to take on household work and childcare, which is inelastic regarding their levels of earnings, thereby limiting their ability to take on market work (Fendel & Kosyakova, 2023). Overall, migrant mothers generally face a much higher ‘child penalty’ on employment than native-born mothers, and childcare options are much less likely to be taken on, partially due to the absence of knowledge of how to access it (OECD, 2023a). Regarding refugee women, Liebig and Tronstad (2018) argue that they face a ‘triple disadvantage’, as refugee women generally have worse labour market outcomes than other migrant groups.

In addition, the cultural and normative context in the perception of gender and work through migrant families is often argued to influence the uptake of employment (see OECD, 2023a; Hartmann & Steinmann, 2020). Hartmann and Steinmann (2020), for instance, find that among refugee families in Germany, more conservative values regarding gender roles imply reduced networks for the women in the relationship. As (local) networks are often found a factor to positively impact labour market outcomes (see Kosyakova et al., 2021; Brell et al., 2020), culture can be argued to be an indirect factor influencing the labour market outcomes of female refugees. Furthermore, Kosyakova et al. (2021) find that in Germany, refugee women want to take up employment at a similar level to native-born women. This is hence not showing an impact of the varying cultural values held by the country of origin compared to the destination societies on employment. The more important influence in this regard seems to be the impact of the institutional context: the OECD (2023a) argues that a potentially negative view of women working founded in the culture and norms of refugees can be exacerbated or weakened by the labour and family policies in the destination societies.

One further issue specific to the LMI of female refugees is especially in terms of quality and sustainability of their labour market attachment if they have the opportunity to attain employment. Kosyakova et al. (2021) argue that female refugees are more likely to have been active in occupations specific to their home country—occupations that in Germany are also often strongly regulated and hence require larger human capital investments in the destination society. Moreover, due to their intersectionality (see 3.2.4.) migrant and refugee women are likely to end up in employment that is often insecure or even exploitative (De Haas et al., 2020). This is also seen empirically: the OECD (2023a), for instance, notes that most employment of refugee women occurs in elementary professions, such as cleaning jobs, which are not easy to combine with family responsibilities due to low wages and social security. Individuals in these jobs often do not experience a significant enough financial loss when dropping out of the labour force after, for instance, childbirth (OECD, 2023a). This reduces the likelihood of long-term employment and makes contact with the labour market often very unsustainable. Furthermore, there is a higher likelihood that they find themselves in involuntary part-time work rather than full-time employment (OECD, 2023a). Kosyakova et al. (2023) find that refugee women who arrived between 2013 and 2019 in Germany face a ‘compounded disadvantage’ in their LMI, whereby the employment gap between them and male refugees actually increases over time as they only receive low human and social capital returns together with disproportionate care responsibilities. In the case that female refugees have higher qualifications, two patterns emerge: while their qualifications allow them to take on employment at a much higher rate than other refugee men; they were (within the OECD) twice as likely to be overqualified relative to native-born individuals (Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). This pattern is currently visible among Ukrainian women in Germany (see OECD, 2023b).

### ***3.2.3. Bureaucracy and Policies***

In addition, limited access to the labour market often stems from state-level bureaucratic issues, especially in the German context. Here, the FRA (2019) and Brell et al. (2020) mention the length of the asylum process as a substantial issue. Long post-arrival procedures can further depreciate the human capital of refugees (Kanas & Steinmetz, 2021). This shows an interdependency of institutional processes such as post-arrival procedures with potential skill regressions (Kanas & Steinmetz, 2021). As of 2017, Degler et al. (2017) found that while

integration courses in Germany exist, there are too few spots for the number of refugees, thereby hampering progress in language learning and employability. In regards to the recognition of qualifications, Mayer (2016) notes that these processes are much too bureaucratic. In the case of Germany, the split in responsibility regarding integration between different states and employment agencies (see Background) complicates the already bureaucratic process (Degler et al., 2017). The LMI of female refugees is often further limited by their status as family migrants. According to the OECD (2023a), integration measures are often less likely to apply to them in particular (see also Besic & Aigner, 2023), and family migrants are often more likely to take on care and household responsibilities. Related to this, Liebig and Tronstad (2018) note that female refugees generally receive fewer contact hours of integration support. While it has to be acknowledged that Germany is one of the countries that have not just gender-mainstream but also gender-specific policies (EMN, 2022); there is still substantial critique of the current policy approaches and their lack of focus on female refugees (see Degler et al., 2017; Kosyakova et al., 2021; Montero Lange & Ziegler, 2017). In light of the statistics for female refugees (see Background, 2.4.) it seems relevant to focus on targeted efforts and policies (see e.g. Degler et al., 2017; Kosyakova et al., 2021). This gives merit to analysing the workings of civil society organisations focusing on female refugees specifically.

#### ***3.2.4. Demand-side Factors: discrimination***

Employer-based discrimination and uncertainty also impede effective labour market integration. While lacking skills relate to supply-side issues in the LMI, discrimination comes from the demand side (Di Stasio & Larsen, 2020). Statistical discrimination in employment stems from employers using “beliefs about group characteristics to select some individuals for an interview and exclude others” (Arai et al., 2016, p.391), meaning that call-backs to interviews are based on between- or within-group differences in productivity that might be real, or perceived by the employer. Furthermore, hiring decisions by the employer can stem from taste-based discrimination, meaning that they arise from discriminatory opinions of the employer (Arai et al., 2016).

There is substantial empirical evidence that discrimination is present in the employment process. Boese (2015) finds that discrimination is a systemic issue preventing the success of applications by overqualified refugee applicants. Cheung and Phillimore (2017) find that there

are gender differences in integration due to “gender stereotyping and discrimination within women’s own communities, and by policymakers” (p.215). Di Stasio and Larsen (2020) conducted an experiment about gendered racism in the employment process. Their experiment confirmed the presence of ethnicity-based discrimination in the employment process. And while they find that disadvantages based on ethnic background only show negligible differences by gender (p.241), minority women face more racial discrimination in female-typed employment fields. Arai et al. (2016), conducted a similar experiment as Di Stasio and Larsen (2020). Contrastingly, they find that while there were lower call-back rates for individuals with an Arabic-sounding last name independent of gender, women received slightly higher call-back rates, implying that there are slightly reduced levels of discrimination for women with a foreign background (Arai et al., 2016). Di Stasio and Larsen (2020) analysed the discrimination in the hiring process by the intersection of race and gender and found that “in female-dominated occupations, minority women experience substantial ethnic and racial discrimination, whereas minority men receive callbacks at a comparable rate to majority men” (Di Stasio & Larsen, 2020, p.244). Lastly, Degler et al. (2017) argue that uncertainty about the work permit of the applicant often leads to early rejection by the employer. Hence, while there is no exact agreement on the impact of gender on statistical discrimination, there is sufficient evidence that refugees are often subject to statistical or taste-based discrimination.

This section showed the barriers to a successful labour market integration, both for refugees in general and female refugees more specifically. However, while the barriers and determinants of a successful LMI for female refugees are well known both in theoretical and empirical terms, Schieckoff and Sprengholz (2021) note that “the unexplained heterogeneity that remains in many cases between immigrant women and other groups on the labor market calls for more systematic and comprehensive investigations” (p.1). These issues, together with the remaining gap in employment between female refugees and other migrant groups, as well as native-born individuals, make it a relevant topic to further investigate, also through the use of qualitative methods looking for new perspectives such as this research attempts to do.

### **3.3. Approaches to Improve the Labour Market Integration**

The previous issues to a successful LMI warrant the need for better policies and approaches to improve the integration of refugees, especially female ones. Across the LMI literature, scholars note multiple factors that could facilitate improvement in this matter. These will be briefly outlined below, focusing first on policy efforts and later on civil society initiatives.

#### ***3.3.1. Policy-related Improvements***

Kanas and Steinmetz (2021) argue that while refugees are at a large disadvantage regarding their labour force participation relative to economic immigrants, this impact can be lessened by the presence of active general labour market policies that target among others economic inequalities, social security and labour rights. Sander and Heuchemer (2020) further argue that education is the most important aspect to guarantee integration into the labour market. To combat the ‘double burden’ of household and market-based work that many female refugees face, Fendel and Kosyakova (2023) suggest that policy should be targeted towards allowing a better combination of work and family for immigrant women. Cheung and Phillimore (2017) further argue that it needs more and faster language learning opportunities, ideally with the possibility of separation by gender. Furthermore, they note the benefit of mentorship programmes that facilitate cultural integration but also help women build networks. Kosyakova et al. (2021) note similar points: among the need for better language learning facilities and mentorship programmes, they also highlight the value of childcare facilities.

Several authors also suggest different policy approaches that could improve the LMI of (female) refugees within Germany specifically. Degler et al. (2017) call for tailor-made integration measures to target the increasingly diversified nature of refugees in terms of education, experience and family situations. They further state that these initiatives should extend their offers beyond traditional integration measures and combine them into a more sustainable, long-term option for language and employment training. Mayer (2016) notes that it requires actions in four fields: firstly, selection criteria for state support have to be widened to also cover refugee groups who are less likely to stay permanently. This is touched upon also by Galera et al. (2018) who argue for the presence of a tiered integration system, as policy support is predominantly targeted towards asylum seekers from countries of origin that have a generally high recognition rate of their status. Second, according to Mayer (2016), it

needs certification of informal skills on a national level, as well as the certification of partial qualifications. This could allow a reduction in the level of bureaucracy present in the acknowledgement of qualifications. Third, he argues for easier access to a ‘social’ labour market to prevent informal employment; e.g. through combining low-skilled employment with language training. This can especially allow to better include minorities such as women, unskilled, or disabled people into the labour market. Lastly, he argues for the necessity to scale integration efforts to reach a larger group of individuals than these measures often do.

### ***3.3.2. The Value of Civil Society Organisations in the Integration Process***

Civil society organisations (CSOs), or non-state actors, are often tools highlighted in the literature that also can facilitate a better LMI. These will be discussed in the following section, together with an overview of the current literature and its gaps. Civil society organisations are often referred to as the third sector (Collini, 2022), and usually relate to initiatives of non-state actors, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and non-profit organisations. Their defining feature is that they are often “based on sets of values and norms that can be political, cultural [or] religious” (Anheier, 2005 cited in Jönsson & Scaramuzzino, 2024, p.85). Collini (2022) argues that in recent decades, CSOs moved from working solely together with the state to provide welfare services, to a separation between policy provider (state) and service provider (CSO) (Ranci, 1994, 1999 cited in Collini, 2022, p.897). This, however, seems not to apply to every context: Jönsson and Scaramuzzino (2024) note that these collaborations with the state are still quite common in Sweden. Generally, CSOs are service providers in one way or another. In the context of the LMI, this often relates to services such as language training, support for job applications or computer skills training.

Several sources highlight the value of civil society organisations for the integration process. In general, it is argued that humanitarian organisations could either help facilitate liberal integration policies or offset more restrictive approaches (De Haas et al., 2020, p.252). Degler et al. (2017) highlight the relevance of complementary mentoring programmes to bridge the gap between applicant and employer. They also argue that the involvement of social and civil society organisations can improve the matching process for refugees in finding employment. Panchenko (2024) also mentions that civil society organisations react visibly faster than the government to meet the needs of Ukrainian refugees. Collini (2022) finds that CSOs are of the highest relevance to support vulnerable groups such as women. Furthermore, in a report on

local integration measures for refugees and migrants, the OECD (2018) notes that it is relevant to develop local measures towards increasing the capacity of civil society measures and call for greater involvement of non-state actors. The benefits from these types of bottom-up initiatives often stem from specific expert knowledge, but also often a closer relation of the initiatives to the people that are supported (OECD, 2018). It has to be noted that this increased ‘localisation’ of integration efforts can have its disadvantages, such as the issue of increased competition for public agency resources or the sheer absence of coordination between the different actors. Moreover, Numerato et al. (2023) point out that CSOs should not just be taken by their face value, especially as they could potentially increase levels of ‘otherness’ refugees face.

Yet, there is not much research on them in empirical terms, especially not relating to the LMI of female refugees. Collini (2022) notes that “there is no single strand of the [integration] literature dealing with the topic of CSOs” (p.897), specifically not in terms of their roles regarding labour market integration. Jönsson and Scaramuzzino (2024) note that while theoretical insights generally agree that CSOs can provide ‘added value’, this has rarely been shown in empirical research. However, there is a small number of studies and reports discussing integration-service-focused CSOs, which will be presented below. Collini (2022) analyses the role of CSOs in the LMI of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Italy for their labour market integration potential and finds a high involvement and relevance of CSOs in this process. Numerato et al. (2023) also analyse the role of CSOs in the LMI and find that their benefit to integration accrues together with the work of other institutions and actors. Additionally, they find that CSOs support the skills development of refugees and other migrant groups, and can help to give them more agency at the same time. This presents one of the few studies of the roles and practices these initiatives take on. Jönsson and Scaramuzzino (2024), in turn, conducted a case study to analyse the benefits of the cooperation between public agencies and a CSO in Sweden, but not practices by the initiatives themselves. Barriers and facilitators to the work of CSOs have been the focus of both Numerato et al. (2023) and Collini (2022). One further study focusing on CSOs and immigrant integration is by d’Auria et al. (2018). However, it focuses on the spatial patterns of the CSOs in the field of urban planning, hence shows little relevance to this research.

In addition, two reports stand out in terms of their focus on non-state actors. The OECD (2018) interviewed NGOs and their relation to local and municipal policymakers. Yet, the

focus is more on the working of the initiatives, as well as issues with the interaction with municipalities (e.g. communication and financial issues especially in relation to often delayed payments) instead of interpreting the measures that these organisations implement. Galera et al. (2018) look at the effectiveness and innovation of four non-state actors in the integration of asylum seekers and refugees. In their results, they highlight the benefit of bottom-up initiatives together with the mobilisation of volunteers. Furthermore, they find that the tendency of non-state actors to be more innovative in their approaches to integration primarily stems from their success in drawing from private resources that the public sector can often not access. This is especially relevant for “human, environmental and cultural resources as well as economic and non-economic resources” (Galera et al., 2018, p. 32). In addition, these initiatives go beyond the provision of public policies and address factors that are often otherwise neglected, thereby leading to more efficient and innovative policies.

### **3.4. Concluding Remarks**

This literature review highlighted the ongoing issues with the labour market integration of female refugees, but also the benefits of achieving this form of integration. Thus far, the levels of employment among women refugees remain comparatively very low, warranting research on solutions to improve these numbers. Across the literature, civil society organisations are frequently mentioned as an additional measure to address these challenges. Yet, there has been only limited research on their workings and value in particular. Therefore, this research addresses the workings of CSOs in Germany both due to it being a potential facilitator for a better LMI for female refugees but also in light of the presence of a gap in CSO research. Contrasting to the majority of the aforementioned CSO research, it will focus on the practices of the initiatives and what makes the work of CSOs relevant. This focus is chosen to improve the success of integration measures, the OECD (2018) argues that it needs both “Diachronic learning, which looks at past success and failure [and synchronic] learning through the sharing of best practices” (p.133).



## 4. Methodology

This section is split into the three following sections: first, the chosen research design will be presented. Second, the interview design and implementation will be outlined, including aspects such as the selection of interview candidates and matters of the sampling process and representativeness. Third, the limitations of the research design and interview design will be discussed in depth in the last section.

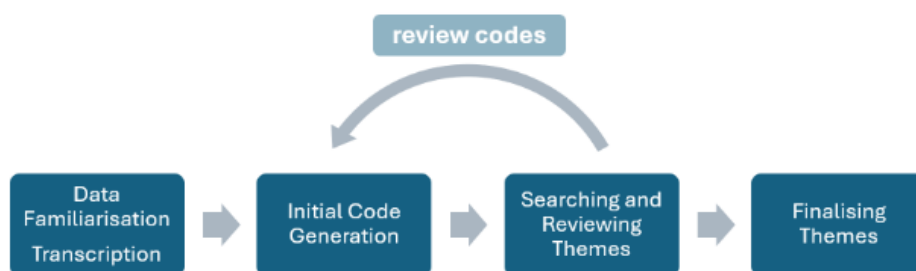
### 4.1. Research Design

The methodology of the research is as follows: a qualitative approach will be used to answer the research questions, namely “*What do representatives of ‘best practice’ initiatives consider the most effective measures of their organisation to improve the labour market integration of female refugees in Germany?*” and “*According to the interviewed experts, what are factors that inhibit their work?*”. The research is inductive and explorative in its nature as there are thus far only few insights into the practices of civil society initiatives for the labour market integration of female refugees (see Collini, 2022). The goal of this form of research is to gain new insights from the primary data. For this research, a qualitative focus is the adequate choice to answer the research question: it gives insight into why and how some practices are successful. Additionally, compared to a quantitative approach where data restrictions might apply, this form of research allows to give a more nuanced understanding of real-life examples.

For this research, the primary data will be gathered through semi-structured expert interviews. In the context of this research, experts are deemed professionals who are currently working (or have worked) for civil society initiatives focused on the labour market integration of refugees. Expert interviews are suited for this research as they can give in-depth theoretical insights regarding the working of such initiatives through a reflected subjective lens of the CSO representatives. These subjective insights make it possible to better capture the nuances and specificities in the answers, as compared to more quantitative approaches (Bumbuc, 2016). Moreover, it will give insights into real-life experiences of working in such initiatives. The theoretical aspect refers to both process knowledge (e.g. what barriers are met in the initiative’s integration process) as well as context knowledge (e.g. what role certain factors

play; how many cases occur,...) (see Flick, 2023). Furthermore, it can move beyond explicit knowledge and generate new implicit insights.

The interview results will be analysed by conducting an inductive thematic analysis. Contrary to other common qualitative approaches such as grounded theory, a thematic analysis does not attempt to develop full-fledged theories (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Rather, it will focus on finding commonalities between the best practices and approaches of the civil society initiatives to allow for more generalisable insights as to what facilitates the labour market integration of female refugees. In addition, conducting a thematic analysis is an approach that focuses on the in-depth analysis of the primary data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These aspects make the approach well suited for the explorative nature of the research question; though it has to be noted that results stemming from thematic analyses are more descriptive in nature and do not allow to draw larger inferences (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The themes will be generated through manual coding adapting Flick's (2023) and Braun and Clarke's (2006) guideline on the conduction of thematic analyses (see Figure 3). After an initial open coding from the interview transcripts, preliminary themes and more distinct codes will be developed. Braun and Clarke (2006) define that a theme "represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p.10). Generally, these themes can be found by looking at aspects such as repetitions, similarities and differences in the responses, metaphors and analogies, as well as missing data (Bryman, 2016). Later in the process, the themes and codes are reviewed to find the most relevant aspects of the data. The finalised coding framework is found in Appendix A.



*Figure 3. Schematic overview of the thematic analysis. Adjusted by author from source: Flick (2023); Braun & Clarke (2006).*

The final results will be presented and analysed by overarching themes that relate to the research question and were either directly or indirectly mentioned by the majority of the

interviewees. Supplementary material from the literature and background section will be included for a better understanding of the results. Furthermore, quotations and paraphrases from the interviews will be included if they are deemed relevant.

## **4.2. Interview Design and Implementation**

The selection of the organisations and interviewees followed the principle of generic purposive sampling. The initiatives were selected based on several criteria to answer the research question: first, ‘best practice’ organisations that work for better labour market integration of refugees will be identified. ‘Best practice’ organisations are established through a database of the European Commission (2023) that presents integration practice projects that fulfil selection criteria regarding efficiency, effectiveness and transferability and are thus deemed ‘good practice’ (European Commission, 2021). This reduces researcher bias as to what is deemed a ‘good’ or ‘best’ practice. While many of the noted projects in the database were already finished, the database provides a first overview of organisations that previously provided ‘good practice’ initiatives. These practices were selected based on factors such as stakeholder and target group interaction, and the practices’ transferability in terms of resource and funding generation, replication potential and longevity (European Commission, 2021). Second, among these, civil society initiatives were pre-selected if they provide services related to the labour market integration of refugees. Third, the final selection of initiatives was made based on whether they could provide insights into the LMI of refugee women specifically. This last step also focused on ensuring a certain level of variety in the organisation types. The sampling process was non-iterative, meaning that the organisations were determined from the start without adding more initiatives in the course of the data collection process.

As the chosen methodology is in the form of expert interviews, the participants were selected based on their perceived ability to answer the research question, their level of involvement in the initiatives, as well as previous experiences in the field of labour market integration of refugees. The initial sample size goal was set at six organisations and initiatives with one in-depth expert interview each. The selected initiatives included: one refugee-led organisation with bottom-up initiatives for language and employment training of refugee women founded during the pandemic; one German-wide initiative focusing on the LMI of Ukrainian refugees

through mentor networks; three established initiatives focusing on the support of women, migrant and refugee women in finding employment; and one German-wide organisation focusing on the LMI of young refugees.

Following the above-elaborated selection criteria, the sample can be argued to reach a level of ‘theoretical’ representativeness given the scope of this thesis assignment. Potential interview candidates were contacted via email with an invitation to participate in the research. They also received the interview guide (see Appendix C) and the data protection agreement (see Appendix D) in advance. This was done as part of the ethical considerations of this research to guarantee informed consent and confidentiality. In the case of no response, the potential interviewees were contacted again, first via email and then by phone. Out of the six contacted initiatives, five individuals participated in the research. An overview of the roles and experiences, as well as insights into responses are found in Table 1 below.

Role	Field / Experience	Interview conducted
Social education pedagogue	Labour market integration of female migrants	Yes
Project leader	Labour market integration Ukrainian refugees	Yes
Founder of civil society organisation	Language learning and LMI support for women with a refugee background	Yes
Project lead	Labour market integration of migrant and refugee women	Yes
Former team lead	integration of young refugees into the labour market	No
Project Lead	Labour market integration of migrant and refugee women	Yes

*Table 1. Overview of contacted individuals.*

The interview was designed to be semi-structured. This is to allow for comparability between the answers of the different interviewees, while also leaving space for open answers, anecdotes and other insights. The semi-structured approach further allows for taking into account the organisational differences between the initiatives and to adjust interview

questions when needed. In total, seven questions were included in the interview guide that left room for follow-up questions and probing (see Appendix C). The questions were directed towards getting insights into the working of the initiative, best practices in the LMI of women, and issues in the working of the initiatives. Depending on the focus of the initiatives, as well as the positions the interviewees hold, the questions were slightly adjusted. The interviews were conducted online via Zoom. The interview language was German. The resulting audio recordings were then transcribed locally with Whisper to align with the data protection regulations of LUSEM. On average, the interviews lasted 32 minutes, with the transcriptions being on average 15 pages long. The results were transcribed and coded in German and the results only later carefully translated into English to upkeep the integrity of the interviews and data quality across languages. All data was pseudonymised, or completely anonymised if the interviewees decided so in the data protection agreement (see Appendix D, Point 9). Indirect identifiers were only included if the interviewees explicitly consented to their information being used in the project and if it was necessary to provide the details to answer the research questions.

### **4.3 Limitations and Biases**

As with any research, the design of this thesis faces several limitations that will be discussed below in regard to the research design itself, as well as the interview design and implementation. First and foremost, the qualitative nature of the research dictates that the results cannot be seen as representative or theory-inducing. This is also reflected in the sampling size, which is limited by the scope of the research, as well as time-intensive aspects such as transcription and translation of the results from German to English. Nonetheless, the selection of the organisation was focused on reaching a certain level of variation and representativeness of different civil society organisations working with issues related to the research question. While the inductive focus will allow the research to reduce potential confirmation biases and form certain generalisations from the data, the results are not guaranteed to apply to all civil society organisations in Germany. Furthermore, while using a thematic analysis as a choice of method allows in-depth insights into the data, it has to be acknowledged that there are several weaknesses to this form of analysis: firstly, the flexibility of the approach can be argued to not limit the researcher's subjectivity adequately. Secondly,

Braun and Clarke (2006) note that thematic analyses generally have “limited interpretative power beyond mere description” (p.27).

Second, the focus on experts rather than female refugees takes away the perspective of the people who directly experience the workings of these initiatives. Measures that might be seen in a positive light by the experts might be perceived negatively by the partaking individuals. It has to be noted that one of the initiatives is refugee-led, potentially giving more reflected insights in this regard. Moreover, experts might introduce subjective biases into their answers. Nonetheless, experts are the adequate choice as they allow gaining insights into the workings and operations of civil society organisations. They are also more likely to experience the institutional environment which might either limit or facilitate their measures. This is important as the measures should not be analysed and discussed in isolation. While subjectivity can influence their answers, this can be argued to be well-informed and even beneficial if it uncovers implicit themes. Third, a further limitation of this research is a potential bias in the interview questions that leads to interview answers being steered towards certain topics. To prevent this, the questions were designed to be as open as possible, letting the interviewees determine the aspects they want to highlight. Lastly, the research attempts to account for potential social desirability biases in the interviews. For this research, the social desirability bias is interpreted as answers by interviewees that do not reflect their real insights or opinions, but rather one that aligns with what they are expected to say, for instance, by their employer. To counteract this, the interviewees got the choice to actively decide on the anonymisation of their results.

## **5. Results**

The results are presented by overarching themes found in the data, with each section discussing the respective sub-themes as seen in the coding framework found in Appendix A. The three larger topics that were identified through the thematic analysis are tangible assets and measures; intangible assets; and disadvantages and obstacles to CSO work. The two former themes relate to the first research question, while the latter theme relates to the second research question.

## **5.1. Tangible Assets and Measures**

One of the first aspects mentioned by the interviewees in relation to successful measures of their organisations related to tangible assets and measures that CSOs have and use to support the successful LMI of female refugees. These measures often relate to the programme content of the initiative. The measures found related to knowledge transfer, bureaucratic support, learning activities, and measures adapted to refugee and migrant women.

### ***5.1.1. Knowledge Transfer***

One of the most highlighted merits of CSOs by the interviewees is their goal in passing on knowledge to the participants, primarily relating to information about the German labour market, bureaucracy and application processes. All initiatives do this to some extent. One respondent explained how they offer specific workshops that discuss the functioning of the labour market and education system. Their information is often also targeted to women, for instance, by showing them that the opportunity to part-time work exists to combine it with child-care responsibilities. Furthermore, they also give insights into the workings of the German bureaucracy, which is often difficult to understand for new arrivals. Some of the interviewees mention that their initiative also passes on specific information regarding adequate job platforms, or employment and apprenticeship opportunities. One of the respondents, the founder of a refugee-led initiative, highlighted that they proactively focus on passing on knowledge about the German system to help the women understand which questions they need to ask in the first place. This measure is taken based on her own experience of arriving in Germany as a refugee and having to establish herself in the labour market. Speaking from her own experience, and that of many other women she noted that *“Sometimes one does not even know which questions to ask. One does not know [in what regard] it is a different system, a different culture—everything is new.”*<sup>1</sup>

### ***5.1.2. Bureaucratic Support***

Most of the initiatives also take measures to support the women with bureaucratic issues, a factor that many participants would otherwise struggle with on their own. This is primarily in relation to support in the qualifications assessment process, but also regarding residence status. One respondent noted that their first step is to assess the skills and qualifications of the

partaking individuals to then support them in getting any qualifications officially recognised. This respondent noted that this brings many difficulties with it: after having to officially translate them, many are not immediately recognised as equal to other official qualifications in Germany. The total process can take several months and can be difficult even for people experienced with the German system: “*All this bureaucracy behind this, German forms in ‘German Officialese’ that we sometimes don’t even understand ourselves*”<sup>2</sup>. Overall, the measures taken by CSOs to offer bureaucratic support can be seen to increase the efficiency of the LMI process, compared to if the women would attempt to solve these issues themselves.

### ***5.1.3. Learning Activities***

The activities that the organisations explicitly offer to the participants are related to learning and take the form of workshops or classes. Most activities are targeted to newcomers and beginners. If there were slightly higher requirements, the CSOs were very willing to offer support to the individuals to reach the required level. Four out of five initiatives had language learning as one of the key pillars of their courses and offers. One initiative specifically put a focus on conducting their lessons only in German as this also allows the women to become more comfortable in practising the language while also learning about labour market related topics such as interview practices. Furthermore, most initiatives have workshops offering application training and interview practices. One initiative focused primarily on mentoring in the form of tandems between volunteers and refugees who support them in the LMI directly, though they offer additional measures such as workshops and individual consultations. One of the interviewees highlighted the focus of their initiative on teaching online competencies such as the European Certificate of Digital Literacy. Lastly, one more recently established initiative stood out in how they offered their activities. It was implemented through a Facebook group where the interviewee shared language learning videos and further information regarding training opportunities and the recognition of qualifications with refugee women who were in the Facebook group. This was later expanded with casual and regular online meetings. Generally, this was the most bottom-up approach among all CSOs. Overall, most CSO measures were based on developing more location-specific human capital and enhancing the skills of the participants.



#### ***5.1.4. Measures Adapted Towards Refugee and Migrant Women***

Four out of five initiatives were specifically focused on the support of migrant and refugee women, with measures such as female-only courses being one of the tools to better facilitate the women's LMI. One interviewee specified that among these women, the majority have a refugee background. The interviewee from the initiative supporting refugees from Ukraine noted that while they also support men, the gendered nature of this refugee movement implies that the focus of many of their measures is on women, and mothers specifically. They, for instance, support them in finding childcare for their children so they can start working; and help them to get into jobs of interest such as care work and preschool education jobs. Moreover, another interviewee noted that their project specifically arose from the knowledge that refugee and migrant mothers have significantly more obstacles in the LMI than other migrant groups. Lastly, three initiatives mentioned that their activities are designed to counteract the tendency of refugee women to stay isolated at home, which is often as they *“either [...] are mothers, or they come from cultures where women of girls have very essential organisational roles in the family”*<sup>3</sup>. Many activities of the CSOs were adjusted for this by holding it in safe spaces in person, often with a certain flexibility regarding attendance; or the possibility to conduct activities online or hybrid.

## **5.2. Intangible Assets: benefits to the way of working**

The second theme that was standing out among the interviewees was the intangible assets of the CSO that allow them to better facilitate the LMI. While some of the sub-themes were mentioned explicitly, many of the characteristics were implicit goals of the organisations.

### ***5.2.1. Unbureaucratic***

The first benefit to the work of CSOs was found to be their low level of bureaucracy, especially if compared to state-level efforts. One interviewee highlighted that one of their best practices is how they support individuals in their job search, which allows them to skip the bureaucracy that it would take to access advanced job centre support. Another interviewee highlighted their low level of bureaucracy regarding the requirements for their programme. While participants technically need to fulfil a certain level of German and previous education, the initiative does not fully adhere to it when they see that the individuals show them that

*“there is a very very strong motivation, an enormous eagerness to learn. That means, when I can tell that there is a good foundation [in skills], then I invite the women to the course”<sup>4</sup>*. In addition, they also refrain from taking sanctions or compulsory attendance, making it more relaxed for the participants in comparison to, for instance, taking part in job agency workshops. Another aspect that was conducted unbureaucratically was the length of the support. Two initiatives specifically pointed out that their programme offers flexibility regarding the time each participant needs, which was often determined by previous skills, qualifications, but also ambitions.

### **5.2.2. Accessible**

The second intangible asset that emerged in the data is the accessibility of CSOs, which was explicitly highlighted by four out of five initiatives. One interviewee highlighted how individuals can just come by and make an appointment, which the women also do. The interviewee also noted that as the courses are free, the financial accessibility is very high: *“And that makes it such a valuable offer, because it allows people to take part, even if, let's say, there is a participant whose husband works but doesn't earn so much. They have five children at home. That means, a course would be out of question if there wouldn't be an offer like this”<sup>5</sup>*. Another interviewee argued that through their offer of online language cafes, the project is easily accessible for many individuals who would otherwise live too far away to attend in-person events. Furthermore, one interviewee noted that by picking Facebook as a communication platform for their learning material, many women in the refugee community could be directly and easily reached. Lastly, one respondent noted that one of the benefits of their initiative was much more approachable than the offers by public agencies.

### **5.2.3. Sustainable**

The third intangible asset of the interviewed CSOs lies in the sustainability of their LMI efforts. Two organisations explicitly mentioned that looking at employment sustainability is part of their best practices. One of the interviewees highlighted that they have a sustainability quota where they check that individuals who went through their programme are still in employment or training six months after they started it. They noted that *“the point is to integrate the people sustainably and long-term. That is why it is part of [the work] to also support them during their apprenticeship and see that they also finish it”<sup>6</sup>*. However, the latter

representative also noted that for a sustainable outcome, it is important to have a combination of the ‘classic’ LMI supports of job agencies, together with the work of CSOs: while the caseworkers of job agencies might have several hundred cases at once, CSO initiatives do often have the time to support the individuals longer and more thoroughly. One further organisation showed sustainable behaviour: the programme of the interviewee focuses on developing an action plan together with each participant until the end of the course. This plan focuses on giving individuals a guide as to what to do after the course ends while giving them realistic insights into fitting employment opportunities based on their resources and previous skills.

#### ***5.2.4. Understanding and Connecting***

The fourth intangible asset of CSOs lies in their ability to understand the specific positions the women are in, especially concerning traumatic experiences when fleeing their home country, and how this might impact the LMI outcomes. Most organisations highlighted that they take into account the impact of potential trauma on the women in their programmes. One initiative specifically offers trauma-sensible consultations. According to the interviewee, this measure leads to more successful learning outcomes. In the case of the refugee-led initiative that was interviewed, the respondent noted that she understands what women are going through, which makes it easier to talk with the women about specific problems they experience. For the interviewee, this direct connection and understanding significantly improves the support the organisation can offer to the women.

Based on this ability to understand, the analysis of the data found that CSOs often facilitate the connection among the partaking women. One respondent noted that the initiative gives space for women to meet and have a protected place “*where they can form their own networks with other women who feel the same way, also to get away from this ‘I am home alone and care for my family and children’, to instead [go to] a place where they can care for their own future and get to know themselves better*”<sup>7</sup>. Another interviewee noted that this not only allows the refugee women to build their own networks but also learn from each other and see each other's positive results regarding their LMI. Lastly, one interviewee noted that facilitating the learning of German also significantly increases the likelihood of the women having contact outside of their group and building connections with the German society at large, which in turn can increase their chances of employment.

### 5.2.5. Networks

The fifth asset highlighted in the interviews is the large size of the networks and connections CSOs can access. These relate to connections to employers and companies, to other CSOs, to public agencies but also to the refugee and immigrant communities. One respondent stated that their good connections to the industry allow them to place individuals into jobs in companies in their network. Another representative noted the same benefit to industry connection with their organisation, specifying that it often allows them to bypass regular recruitment processes by recommending individuals from their programme. This is to the benefit of both the companies and their organisation and helps individuals who are often otherwise disadvantaged in the application process due to, for instance, statistical discrimination. Two other initiatives reported especially good connections to other local initiatives, which helps them to place individuals in additional support measures regarding the LMI. One of the respondents, however, noted that this benefit primarily arises as they are already a well-established initiative in their local community.

Three of the initiatives also highlighted the value of having good networks to the migrant communities themselves that facilitate more women to take part in their labour market programmes. For one of the initiatives, this connection comes from (former) participants who pass on information about the possibility of taking part in the courses: *“In fact, the people talk among each other that there is this place where they can go. It really happens that people just pop by the reception and say ‘I hear that the organisation can help me’”*<sup>8</sup>. One other initiative benefits from contacts of their alumni. The interviewee here highlighted how one woman not only managed her high-school certificate after taking part in the course but also successfully integrated herself into a job she wanted. *“That is a really tough woman. And now she is supporting other women [in our organisation]. She is now working as a translator, for example ”*<sup>9</sup>. Lastly, one interviewee noted how the benefits of these networks have reached far, noting it as one of the main roles of CSOs: *“I think they are the bridge between the public authorities and individuals in general”*<sup>10</sup>. But this not only benefits the individuals, the interviewee notes: *“they also help society, especially for refugees, to make their path in Germany easier and to also make Germany a better place”*<sup>11</sup>.

### **5.3. Disadvantages and Obstacles to CSO work**

Despite the large number of efforts taken by CSOs, the analysis found that there are three factors that either limit their work in the first place or limit their efforts in the LMI of the women. These obstacles related to financing; bureaucracy and relations to public authorities; and discrimination. These will be discussed in this section.

#### **5.3.1. Financing**

Funding-related issues were the single largest issue that all CSO representatives pointed out in the interview. They not only were mentioned to limit their work in the first place but also to hamper the development of their initiatives. All initiatives are reliant on funding from either public actors such as the EU's European Social Fund, the German government and local municipalities; or private companies. In the case of funding through public actors, the initiatives have to repeatedly apply for new funding that is often project-specific. Furthermore, it is often temporary, meaning that initiatives cannot rely on being able to keep their operations going. One interviewee stressed how this takes up a lot of their time and resources to deal with securing funding, noting that *"It often is very late in the process that we have the financing secured. Yeah, then we are already half unemployed once again, but then [the financing] gets granted after all. This is clearly the problem here"*<sup>12</sup>. Another respondent highlighted how in times of not yet guaranteed funding, *"my work is a shot in the dark, I try to not spend too much money. But still so I can keep up the quality of the course. And that is what annoys me the most. That it is at the cost of the participants. But also on ours, because, in the end, we have fewer resources available"*<sup>13</sup>. One interviewee noted that due to current societal and political changes, integration disappears from the agenda of many companies and, hence, reduces their donations to CSOs such as theirs. They also mention that the increasing rise of anti-immigrant sentiments in politics can further also reduce funding from municipalities and the state.

#### **5.3.2. Bureaucracy and Relation to Public Authorities**

Bureaucracy and public administration issues are a second barrier that hampers the success of their work according to the interviewed individuals. One factor is the differences in working tempo between CSOs and public job agencies, which three interviewees explicitly pointed

out. This is especially the case for bureaucratic processes. One representative noted how in one instance the job centre was not reacting to a request of one of their participants who was trying to access additional training to gain a higher qualification. In the end, the CSO took on the work of the job agency, to which the interviewee noted: *“It is very absurd, that we take on the tasks of the state because the state can’t manage it, whereas we have to fund ourselves through other means”*<sup>14</sup>. The interviewee further criticised the issue of varying rules regarding rights to work for different refugee groups, especially in light of the Temporary Protection Directive that was activated for Ukrainian citizens, but not people of other nationalities that fled Ukraine. For the latter group, the interviewee criticised that it makes the CSO support much more difficult as *“they arrive under a completely different paragraph, and they are excluded from all the benefits Ukrainian [citizens] receive, and I am wondering how that can be the case”*<sup>15</sup>. One other interviewee noted that working together with public agencies is difficult as they have internal structural problems, as well as very long waiting times regarding the recognition of qualifications and further bureaucratic issues such as residence permits. This was especially visible during the start of the pandemic, where the job agency was not able to contact the help-seeking individuals, and in turn, did not forward any participants to this initiative. This hinders the initiative from helping the individuals seeking support regarding the LMI. Lastly, one respondent noted how there have been cases in which the job centre prevented individuals from participating in their initiatives courses just so they can fulfil their own quotas on employment successes, thereby taking away the opportunity for the women to develop their skills further and find higher-skilled and sustainable employment. It has to be noted, however, that two interviewees did not see the relationship between them and public authorities in a bad light. One representative mentioned that while it is a long and bureaucratic process to gain their support, the government generally supports many initiatives. Another interviewee noted that their relationship with public authorities is positive: while funding remains an issue for them, they have nonetheless been supported by the municipality in some of their projects. Furthermore, the interviewee noted that state support has grown in recent years.

### ***5.3.3. Discrimination***

Lastly, one major issue hindering their work in supporting the individuals that was pointed out was the presence of discrimination, primarily among employers. One interviewee noted how

employers are much less likely to employ individuals whose residence is uncertain, something that impacts many refugees. They further highlighted that the German labour market is defined by statistical discrimination that stems from deeply entrenched viewpoints: *“One has to say that in Germany, even though they are in need of high-skilled labour immigration, it hasn’t yet been translated into practice to employ individuals with a migration background”*<sup>16</sup>. While the interviewee noted that they can circumvent some of this through their networks with companies, they also strongly criticised that it should not be dependent on good connections for individuals to find employment. One other interviewee noted that companies have strong reservations against employing individuals, especially when looking at it from an intersectional perspective: *“There are still many companies that are afraid of hiring individuals with a migrant background, of hiring women, of hiring older women, women with children... That’s structural discrimination, it still happens everywhere”*<sup>17</sup>.

## **6. Discussion**

This section will discuss the measures taken by the initiatives as well as the obstacles they face to show how CSOs address current challenges in the LMI of female refugees. The results identified that CSOs apply tangible and intangible measures to facilitate the LMI. In addition, they have three major challenges in their work, namely financing, bureaucracy and public authorities, and discrimination. These themes will be discussed in turn in relation to the literature. While the adjustment of measures to address women-specific LMI challenges is its sub-theme in the results, it is also found throughout almost all measures taken by the CSOs. Therefore, this aspect will be discussed in relation to each theme rather than separately on its own.

In general, the measures taken by CSOs are found to address well-known issues in the LMI of refugee women (see 3.2.). Among the tangible measures, the main impact seems to be in addressing issues related to (location-specific) human capital, location-specific knowledge and human capital depreciation. The transfer of knowledge seems to actively increase location-specific knowledge, for instance, in relation to the working of the German labour market and bureaucracy. This can be argued to help overcome the skills and knowledge mismatch noted by Kanas and Steinmetz (2021) that many newly arrived refugees have.

Moreover, it can be seen as a creation of local networks that can spread country-specific knowledge. The learning activities that CSOs offer seem to address the low human capital found among especially female refugees. This is especially regarding language learning, which Cheung and Phillimore (2017) note as the most relevant location-specific human capital barrier. Additionally, most activities offered by the CSO seem to have a low barrier to entry, especially regarding previous qualifications and skills. This implies that CSOs address the fact that human capital of refugee women is often lower due to their triple disadvantage' (see Fendel & Kosyakova, 2023; Liebig & Tronstad, 2018). Concerning the bureaucratic support offered by the initiatives such as in the recognition of qualifications, the interviewed CSOs seem to address the hurdle German bureaucracy can pose to the swift integration of refugees (see e.g. FRA, 2019). This can be argued to counteract the depreciation of human capital among refugees that otherwise often occurs (Kanas & Steinmetz, 2021).

Similarly, intangible measures address challenges in the LMI, especially concerning female refugees. In light of the interviewees' responses, these assets seem to differentiate them from 'traditional' integration measures that are provided by, for example, public job agencies. First, both the stated unbureaucratic approach as well as the accessibility of the CSOs seem to go hand in hand to lower barriers of entry for female refugees in accessing support to integrate into the labour market, independent of qualifications or migrant 'category' such as family migrants. In the context of Germany, this can be argued to substitute integration measures that are often less accessible or limited in their participant numbers (Degler et al., 2017). Second, the focus on sustainability by the CSOs seems to be one of the most important factors of the interviewed CSOs in light of the weaker labour market attachment and quality of employment (see OECD, 2023a). The interviewed initiatives achieve this by on the one hand making the combination of work and family responsibilities possible but also by helping individuals to find fitting employment according to their qualifications. This can be argued to counteract issues such as under- or overqualification (noted in Liebig and Tronstad, 2018) and prevent women from ending up in insecure employment due to their intersectionality (see De Haas et al., 2020). Third, the understanding of previous experiences and the propensity to connect the women in their programmes seems to contribute to a better LMI of the refugee women. The awareness regarding previous trauma could not only improve the learning outcomes of the participants (as stated by one of the interviewees) but also, according to Brell et al. (2020) prevent declines in human capital. As expanding personal networks is crucial for women's



labour market outcomes (Kosyakova et al., 2021), the tendency of the analysed CSOs to support this network formation among refugee women seems a relevant aspect of their work. Fourth, the availability of networks to the industry, the public sector and to other refugee women can be argued to substitute the ‘positive information effect’ that Brell et al. (2020) find in relation to higher percentages of employment within the refugee community. Arguably, the direct connection to employers furthermore can reduce the impact of statistical discrimination and intersectionality that otherwise limits the LMI of female refugees. Yet, it has to be acknowledged that this cannot be assumed to completely limit discrimination, especially regarding taste-based discrimination.

However, despite the relevance of the measures that CSOs take, the obstacles to their integration work are worthy of attention, with the initiatives only being able to alleviate them in parts or not at all. The barriers that were found in this research are all of an external nature. The biggest hurdle lies in financing the initiatives, preventing the continuity of their efforts and thereby arguably interrupting their efforts for the LMI of refugee women. This is also found by Numerato et al. (2023) in their analysis of barriers to CSOs, who argue that “The dependence on public funding could limit the potentially contentious and transformative character of CSOs” (p.98). While the CSOs showed that they can counteract discriminatory tendencies in the employment process, they cannot be offset fully, supporting the notion that the discrimination is structural, and therefore difficult for individual organisations to address. Lastly, the impact of bureaucracy on the initiatives as well as their relation to public authorities seems to be restraining the impact of the CSOs, though it can also be argued that they at the same time alleviate some of the issues that arise in public providers of LMI-services, hence presenting a sort of mutualism that overall nonetheless benefits the refugees seeking employment. Nonetheless, the workings of CSOs seem to align with many of the suggested recommendations on how to improve the LMI (3.3.). Throughout all measures that were highlighted by the interviewees, they seem to improve the possibility of the combination of work and family for refugee women, which Fendel and Kosyakova (2023) stressed as relevant for a better LMI. Moreover, their programmes are usually tailored to the varying needs of the participants and highlight a sustainable LMI which Degler et al. (2017) called for. In addition, through their networks and knowledge transfers, they could be argued to improve matching processes which Degler et al. (2017) hypothesised for civil society efforts.

In conclusion, CSOs seem a multifaceted tool to address several crucial integration issues at once. In particular, intangible assets stand out and seem to be one of the main tools to address women-specific challenges. Nonetheless, there are several limitations to this discussion. Due to the qualitative nature and small sample size, the effectiveness of the above-mentioned measures can only be assumed but not proven, especially as they stem from the subjective view of the interviewees. Furthermore, the success of the measures on the LMI of female refugees cannot be determined. For this, additional quantitative support would be needed, for instance by comparing the outcomes of CSO participants and non-participants. Alternatively, interviews with female refugees who participated in these initiatives could be conducted to compare the ‘success’ of the measures mentioned by CSO representatives.

## **7. Conclusion**

Integrating female refugees into the labour market is crucial to not only ensure their overall integration into society and prevent a depreciation of their human capital but also to counteract labour shortages in the destination society and reduce reliance on welfare (see section 3.1.) Yet, despite female refugees waiting to take on employment at similar rates as native-born women (Kosyakova et al., 2021), their labour market outcomes are far worse than those of refugee men, migrant women and native-born individuals. With Germany receiving one of the highest numbers of asylum applications in absolute terms over the last few years, it is critical to address this issue and ensure the opportunity for every arrival to integrate into society in a fair and dignified way. Many of the barriers to labour market integration are specific to female refugees, though they are often not addressed in integration policies. Civil society organisations are one frequently brought-up possibility to improve the integration into employment. Despite this, there is little research on which practices they apply to improve the LMI. Hence, this research inductively analysed the measures taken by CSOs, as well as the obstacles they face, by interviewing expert representatives from five different initiatives focusing on refugee women. The findings show that CSOs take tangible and intangible actions to address multiple LMI challenges. These are usually adjusted specifically to challenges faced by female refugees. Among others, the analysed CSOs were found to support the improvement of human capital, which is often comparatively low for female refugees due to their intersectionality. Furthermore, the initiatives spread location-specific

knowledge and give bureaucratic support so that individuals understand the functions of the German labour market. In addition, through their understanding of personal circumstances and the creation of easily accessible safe spaces, they facilitate the formation of networks among the women; thereby not only giving them a support system but also easing the LMI. In addition, the networks of CSOs themselves, especially into the industry, allow them to circumvent statistical discrimination and thereby improve the matching process of women with employers. The work of CSOs was found to be primarily limited through discrimination, complicated relations with public authority and German bureaucracy as well as limited access to funding. In light of this, civil society initiatives show a unique multifunctionality in addressing integration challenges while taking into account the different experiences of, and impacts on, refugee women. Through these insights, the research helps to expand the knowledge base on the current impacts and practices of CSOs in the labour market integration of female refugees. While some of the measures might be specific to the German context, especially concerning interactions with bureaucracy and public authorities, it can be assumed that insights regarding the creation of networks and multifunctionality are valuable for the European context more broadly. Moreover, this research adds to the general LMI literature by analysing CSOs as an alternative to integration approaches.

Nonetheless, this research has a few noteworthy limitations. Firstly, the small sample of interviewed CSOs limits the generalizability of the results found, warranting more extensive research to prove the applicability of the findings. Moreover, although this was attempted to be limited, the subjectivity of the interviewed experts as well as that of the researcher might impact the findings to some extent. Most importantly, however, the qualitative nature of this research means that the effectiveness and success of the measures cannot be proven. The limitations go hand in hand with a need for future research. This could either focus on interviewing CSO participants to gain their perspective, or conduct a quantitative approach to look at success rates in the LMI of CSO participants. Through this, the literature could be furthered even more and, thereby, facilitate more refugee women to find successful, fair and sustainable employment. Regardless, this research is another stepping stone towards creating a fairer, more resilient and efficient labour market integration for female refugees.

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## Appendix A: Coding framework

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
Tangible Assets and Measures	Bureaucratic support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Recognising documents</li> <li>● Translating documents</li> </ul>
	Knowledge transfer	Communicating... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Labour market structures in Germany</li> <li>● Training and education opportunities</li> <li>● Bureaucratic structures in Germany</li> <li>● Job opportunities</li> </ul>
	Learning Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Language courses</li> <li>● CV / application training</li> <li>● Skills assessment</li> <li>● Individual support</li> <li>● Group support / seminars</li> <li>● Digital measures or online meetings</li> </ul>
	Adapted for female refugees / migrants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on (single) mothers</li> <li>● Focus on their lifestyle</li> <li>● Sensible to potential trauma</li> </ul>
Intangible Assets: Benefits to the way of working of the initiatives	Unbureaucratic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Uncomplicated structures</li> <li>● Flexibility regarding programme length</li> </ul>
	Accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Easily approachable</li> <li>● Easily accessible</li> </ul>
	Sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Focus on sustainable LMI into matching jobs</li> <li>● Support beyond end of programme</li> </ul>
	Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Taking into account previous experiences or trauma</li> <li>● Relating to current situation of participants</li> <li>● Giving perspective</li> </ul>

Theme	Subtheme	Codes
	Connecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact with other participants in similar situation</li> <li>● Network building among women</li> </ul>
	Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● To women with refugee experience</li> <li>● To the economy / business contacts</li> <li>● To public agencies</li> <li>● To other CSOs</li> </ul>
Disadvantages and obstacles to CSO work	Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project-based work</li> <li>● Need for reapplication</li> <li>● Not long-term</li> <li>● Political / societal impact on funding</li> </ul>
	Bureaucracy and relation to public authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Long waiting times</li> <li>● Different laws applicable</li> <li>● Relation to public authorities</li> </ul>
	Discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Discrimination through companies</li> <li>● Bias of employers</li> <li>● Statistical discrimination</li> <li>● Discrimination in society</li> </ul>

## Appendix B: Original Quotes in German

1: “Manchmal weiß man auch nicht mal, was für Fragen man stellt. Man weiß auch nicht, das ist hier halt ein anderes System, das ist eine andere Kultur, das ist, alles ist neu”.

2: “diese ganze Bürokratie, die da dahinter steckt, deutsche Formulare auf Beamtendeutsch, die wir manchmal selber nicht ganz verstehen.”

3: “Entweder sie sind Mütter oder sie kommen halt aus einem kulturellen Kreis, wo die Frauen oder die Mädchen in der Familie ganz essentielle organisatorische Aufgaben haben.”

4: “...es gibt einen enormen, eine enorme Motivation, eine enorme Lernbereitschaft. Das heißt, wenn ich das so feststelle und auch merke, da gibt es eine gute Basis, dann lade ich die Frauen auch in den Kurs ein.”

5: “Und das macht es auch tatsächlich zu einem sehr wertvollen Angebot, weil da auch Menschen teilnehmen können, die eben, sagen wir, eine Teilnehmerin, da arbeitet der Mann, verdient allerdings nicht so viel. Die haben fünf Kinder zu Hause. Das heißt, ein Kurs für sie käme, wenn es drauf ankommt oder, wenn es so ein Angebot nicht gebe, nicht in Frage.”

6: “Es geht ja darum, nachhaltig und langfristig die Leute wirklich zu integrieren. Dazu gehört halt auch, dass wir während der Ausbildung auch noch begleiten und noch da sind und das dann zum Abschluss bringen”.

7: “...wo sie selber Netzwerke auch bilden können mit anderen Frauen, denen es genauso geht, um halt auch so ein bisschen rauszukommen von diesem, “ich bin alleine zu Hause und kümmere mich um Familie und Kinder”, sondern da ist ein Ort, wo ich mich um meine eigene Zukunft kümmern kann, wo ich mich selber besser kennenlernen kann”.

8: “...tatsächlich, die Leute erzählen sich untereinander, da gibt es diese Stelle, geh da mal hin. Es ist auch so, dass die Leute einfach aufploppen, an der Anmeldung stehen und sagen, ich habe gehört, [die Organisation] kann mir helfen.”

9: “Also das ist wirklich eine sehr taffe Frau. Und die unterstützt auch dann wieder andere Frauen bei uns. Also sie arbeitet jetzt als Übersetzerin zum Beispiel.”

10: "Ich denke, die sind die Brücke zwischen Behörden und Menschen allgemein."

11: "und sie helfen auch die Gesellschaft, also für Geflüchtete vor allem, den Weg einfacher zu machen in Deutschland und auch Deutschland einen besseren Ort zu machen".

12: "Dann wird es oft erst sehr spät, wird die Finanzierung klar. Ja, dann sind wir schon alle wieder halb arbeitslos gemeldet und dann geht es halt dann doch durch und so. Also das ist ganz klar einfach das Problem hier. "

13: "Also ich arbeite irgendwo ins Blaue hinein, versuche nicht viel Geld auszugeben. Und immer noch so die Qualität des Kurses beizubehalten. Und das ist das, was mich am meisten ärgert. Dass es insbesondere auf die Kosten der Teilnehmerin geht. Aber auch auf uns, auf unsere, weil wir am Ende weniger Ressourcen zur Verfügung stehen haben."

14: "Es ist ja völlig absurd, dass wir ja auch Aufgaben des Staates übernehmen, weil der Staat es nicht schafft, aber wir uns aus anderen Mitteln finanzieren müssen"

15: "Die kommen unter einem anderen Paragraphen und die sind von diesen ganzen Benefits, die die Ukrainer haben, ausgeschlossen und ich frage mich halt, wie das sein kann"

16: "...man muss halt auch einfach sagen, Deutschland ist, obwohl sie einfach Fachkräfteeinwanderung brauchen, ist es in der Praxis noch nicht angekommen, Menschen mit Migrationshintergrund einzustellen"

17: "Es gibt aber auch immer noch super viele Unternehmen, die große Berührungängste haben, Leute mit Migrationshintergrund einzustellen, Frauen einzustellen, ältere Frauen einzustellen, Frauen mit Kindern einzustellen. Das ist strukturelle Diskriminierung, die passiert immer noch überall"

## Appendix C: Interview Guide in German and English

Interview Leitfaden Deutsch:

### Learning from 'Best Practice' Initiatives

#### **Forschungsfrage:**

Was sehen Repräsentanten von 'best practice' ('gute Praxis') Initiativen als die effektivsten Praxen ihrer Projekte, um die Arbeitsmarktintegration von geflüchteten Frauen in Deutschland zu verbessern?

#### **Information über das Projekt:**

Im Rahmen meiner Masterarbeit befrage ich mich mit dem Thema der Arbeitsmarktintegration von geflüchteten Frauen in Deutschland mit Hilfe von zivilgesellschaftlichen Organisationen und Initiativen. Ich erhoffe mir praxisbezogene Einsichten zu sammeln, wie diese zivilgesellschaftlichen Initiativen vorgehen, um die Arbeitsmarktintegration zu verbessern. Durch die Identifizierung dieser guten Ansätze möchte ich zum Wissen beitragen, wie die Integration in Deutschland in den kommenden Jahren noch verbessert werden kann, um inklusiver, gerechter und effizienter zu sein.

#### **Einstieg und Einstiegsfragen:**

- Bestätigung, dass das Interview aufgenommen wird und die Datenschutzverordnung unterschrieben ist.
- Präsentation des Forschungsthemas
- Kurze Übersicht des Interviewablaufs
  
- Kurze Präsentation der Interviewteilnehmer\*in bezüglich der derzeitigen / ehemaligen Berufsbezeichnung, Arbeitsplatzes und vorherige Erfahrung und Bildung

#### **Fragen bezüglich der Organisation oder Initiative:**

1. Was ist das Ziel der Organisation oder Initiative, bei der Sie arbeiten?
  - Welche Probleme versucht die Initiative anzusprechen?

- Was macht die Initiative für die Arbeitsmarktintegration von geflüchteten Personen / Frauen
  - Wie erfolgreich ist die Initiative?
2. Beschreibe gerne die Gruppe an Frauen, die Sie unterstützen.
  3. Was ist der Mehrwert von Organisationen und Projekten wie Ihrer?
  4. Erfolgsgeschichten:
    - Welche Aspekte Ihrer Initiative würden Sie als 'guten Praxisansatz' oder Erfolgsgeschichte sehen?
    - Gibt es Beispiele, bei denen Sie Frauen besonders gut bei der Integration in den Arbeitsmarkt unterstützen konnten?
  5. Gibt es Probleme, die das Ziel Ihrer Initiative behindern? Wenn ja, woher stammen diese Probleme?
  6. Arbeitet Ihre Initiative alleinstehend oder im Anschluss an andere Akteure wie z.B. der Staat, Kommunen oder der privaten Wirtschaft?
    - Ist es vorteilhaft, wie die Geschäftstätigkeiten stattfinden?
  7. Glauben Sie, dass es möglich ist, die guten Ansätze Ihrer Initiative zu skalieren? Oder sind bestimmte Erfolge größenbedingt (i.e. kleinere Projekte)?

### **Ausblick**

- Information über die Ergebnisauswertung
- Verabschiedung



## Interview Guide English: Learning from 'Best Practice' Initiatives

### Research Question

What do representatives of 'best practice' initiatives consider the most effective measures of their organisation to improve the labour market integration of female refugees in Germany?

### Information about the Project:

I am researching the labour market integration of female refugees with the help of civil society organisations in Germany. I am hoping to gain real-life insight into how these initiatives improve the labour market integration and identify their 'best practices'. Thereby, I want to contribute to the improvement integration measures to make them fairer, more resilient and efficient.

### Introduction:

- Confirm consent for audio record (plus that sheet is signed)
- Present research
- Brief introduction about the interview structure
- Ask the interviewee to briefly present themselves (career related, qualifications, experience) and at which organisation or initiatives they are active at

### The Organisation / Initiative

1. Please describe the purpose of the organisation / initiative you work at.
  - Which present issues does it try to tackle?
  - Why and what does it do for the labour market integration of (female) refugees?
  - How successful is the initiative?

2. Describe the group of women you are helping.
3. What is the advantage / benefit of this or similar initiatives?
4. Success stories:
  - What would you term a best practice looking at your organisation / initiative?
  - Are there any particular examples you remember where you could help someone to integrate into the labour market?
5. Are there issues that limit better action of the initiative? If yes, from where do they stem?
6. Is your organisation working completely on its own or is it connected to the work of others on a state-level, communes or the private sector?
  - Would you say there is a benefit to how it currently operates?
7. Do you think there is a possibility for scalability in the best practices of your organisation? I.e. What can be applied on a larger scale to reach more women? Or is the success based on the smaller scale of the initiative?

## **Conclusion**

- Information about study results

# Appendix D: Data Protection Agreement

## *Interview Consent Form.*

*Thesis Topic: Learning from ‘Best Practice’ Initiatives: On a path to fairer, more resilient and efficient actions for the labour market integration of female refugees.*

*By Julia Hampel (ju3224ha-s@student.lu.se)*

I have been given information about the above-mentioned thesis topic and discussed the research project with Julia Hampel who is conducting this research as a part of a Master’s in Economic Growth, Population and Development supervised by Anna Tegunimataka at Lund University.

I understand that, if I consent to participate in this project, I will be asked to give the researcher a duration of approximately ½ to one hour of my time to participate in the process. The interview will be conducted digitally. An audio recording of the interview for transcription purposes will be made.

**I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate or to not answer particular questions, and I am free to withdraw from the research at any time.**

By signing below, I am indicating my consent to participate in the research as it has been described to me in the interview guide. I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for my thesis only and will be deleted after completion, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Name: .....

Email: .....

Telephone: .....

Signed: .....

I, the undersigned, confirm that (please tick the appropriate box):

1.	I understand the information about the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
2.	I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project and my participation.	<input type="checkbox"/>
3.	I voluntarily agree to participate in the project.	<input type="checkbox"/>
4.	I understand I can withdraw at any time without giving reasons and that I will not be penalised for withdrawing nor will I be questioned on why I have withdrawn.	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.	The procedures regarding confidentiality have been clearly explained (e.g. use of names, pseudonyms, anonymisation of data, etc.) to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
6.	If applicable, separate terms of consent for interviews, audio, video or other forms of data collection have been explained and provided to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.	The use of the data in research, publications, sharing and archiving has been explained to me.	<input type="checkbox"/>
8.	I understand that other researchers will have access to this data only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the data and if they agree to the terms I have specified in this form.	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.	Select only <b>one</b> of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● I would like my name used and understand what I have said or written as part of this study will be used in reports, publications and other research outputs so that anything I have contributed to this project can be recognised.</li> <li>● I do not want my name used in this project.</li> </ul>	<input type="checkbox"/>
		<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	I, along with the Researcher, agree to sign and date this informed consent form.	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Participant:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Researcher:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature