

Needs Assessment Report of the Participation Study

Accessing services, Sharing Approaches and Practices - ASAP Project

Work package 2: Needs assessment and networking

The participatory study was conducted within the framework of the EU - AMIF project "ASAP – Accessing Services, Sharing Approaches and Practices", which is coordinated by COSPE in Italy and implemented in Austria by the development policy organization Südwind.

The ASAP Project aims to improve the availability and quality of information and access to public services for third-country nationals (TCNs), by identifying and addressing the existing obstacles and promoting new promising practices. Its specific objective is to support local service providers and CSOs in six European countries in the implementation of effective and replicable practices that can respond to TCNs' needs in the sectors of employment, housing, education and health.

The project adopts a methodology based on the collaboration and active engagement of public service providers, CSOs and migrants' organizations to ensure that identified obstacles are addressed and migrants' needs are understood and met, through participatory and co-design methodologies.

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The publication was carefully prepared and checked. Nevertheless, all contents are without guarantee. Any liability of the contributors from the content of this work is excluded.

Vienna, October 2022



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ACCESSING SERVICES,
SHARING APPROACHES AND PRACTICES



List of Abbreviations

- ASAP: Accessing services, Sharing Approaches and Practices
- CSO: Civil Society Organization
- EEA: European Economic Area
- EFTA: European Free Trade Association
- EU: European Union
- NGO: Non-Governmental Organization
- TCNs: Third-country nationals



1. Executive Summary

The increase in arrivals of people with migration biographies and refugee experience in Europe starting from 2014 brought to light existing structural limitations of local capacities to provide a migrant-inclusive access to basic services and the Covid-19 pandemic accentuated these deficits. Public services and CSOs play a crucial role in facilitating this access, as they can implement complementary tasks: public service providers should deliver appropriate, culturally, linguistically and gender-responsive services and information, while local CSOs are able to communicate well with migrants and have capacities to engage with their communities.

ASAP aims at improving the availability and quality of information and access to public services for third-country nationals, by identifying and addressing the existing obstacles and promoting new promising practices.

The present study deals with the questions of how to support service providers and CSOs in Graz/Austria in the implementation of effective and replicable practices which can respond to third-country nationals needs in the sectors of employment, housing, education and health.

A close examination of national and international literature, and in particular of empirical studies, has been incorporated into the development of the interview guide. 22 experts from a total of 12 various organizations (public service providers and CSOs) working in the field of civic participation and social inclusion in Graz/Austria were interviewed qualitatively in forms of focus group interviews. In addition, 11 in-depth- interviews were conducted with people with migration biographies and third-country nationals.



During the study, a focus was put on not only numbers (not to only answer the question) of how many third-country nationals arrive in Austria, but who comes and what are the needs of those, who come.

The main findings of the study cover several thematic areas: For example, many of the respondents agreed on and emphasized the transformative power of civil society.

Access to education and health care was rated positively by the respondents, although the disparate differences in resources and access between EU nationals and third-country nationals were emphasized here. The respective residence status would play an important role in access to the health care, labor market and housing market, especially because these things are often connected.

In addition, some of the interviewees reported perceived differences in treatment in the housing and labor markets based on external characteristics, such as skin color or visible religious signs, such as the headscarf (Hijab).

The greatest challenges to access to education, health care and especially the labor market were mentioned when it comes to the different residence titles. Asylum seekers, contrary to people with permanent residence titles, are only allowed to work in Austria under certain conditions, and are required to show an employment permit. Before an employment permit can be issued, the Employment Service Austria checks in each individual case whether nationals, EEA citizens or “advanced integrated foreigners” are registered who are willing and qualified to take up the job in question and if that is the case, this job cannot be claimed by a person whose asylum application is in process.



The interviewees emphasized the need to fight discrimination and to promote labor force participation, not only as an economic necessity, but as a fundamental prerequisite for equal opportunities.

The people surveyed pointed out, that work is also a source of identity and thus, there should be equal opportunities in the labor market. At about the same time as the interviews were conducted, a new law was passed in Austria in this regard. The Austrian government has put together a package of laws to facilitate access to the Austrian labor market for non-EU citizens. and on 06.07.2022 National Council gave the green light for this amendment. Among other things, it introduces relaxed conditions for obtaining the “Red-White-Red Card” and permanent access to the labor market for regular seasonal workers. In addition, approval procedures are to be accelerated and start-ups facilitated by reduced share capital requirements. Likewise, a passage in the law that currently only allows private and non-profit employment agencies to place third-country nationals to a very limited extent will be deleted without replacement.¹

Some of the women interviewed pointed out the lack of childcare and support with care work, which became particularly clear during the Corona period, while some of the male interviewees, whose asylum procedures have not yet been completed, criticized the "idle sitting around".

What the majority of the TCNs interviewed agreed on is the fact that the handling of language course, office, health, education and so on together is very difficult and requires a lot of time and effort. For example, combining care work and payed work is challenging for the majority of the Austrian population too, but traumatization and other psychological illnesses often make things more difficult for people who have fled the country.

¹ Republic of Austria Parliamentary Correspondence No. 831 of 06.07.2022 (retrieved on 09.09.2022)
https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2022/PK0831/index.shtml



With regard to the flow of information, the respondents noted that there is sufficient information in the areas of health, labor market, education and housing market, but often this information is provided in a way that is too confusing and in a difficult, so-called "official language", and much more, it would be difficult getting the right information out of this flood of information. Furthermore the information is often not provided via the channels used by TCNs. Therefore they are never reached by the information provided.

The nostrification procedure was also mentioned by the interview partners as being particularly challenging and lengthy in Austria. Nostrification is the recognition of a foreign degree as equivalent to a domestic bachelor's, master's, diploma or doctoral degree.²

Since the recognition of non-EU/EEA degrees, such as teaching degrees for example is complicated and lengthy, candidates for recognition try to switch to other pedagogical professions - e.g. native language teaching, adult education, child care occupations. Employment is assumed to occur more quickly, even with post-qualification. However, these occupations are not guaranteed and not formally possible for all (e.g., no formal recognition for teachers with third-country qualifications by state authorities in after-school care).

The persons surveyed recommend an overall societal approach that includes, in particular, the promotion of togetherness and participation. There is a great transformative power and willingness of the civilian population noticeable, nevertheless, this can only be achieved with the help of political will.

It is also important that we do not rely exclusively on the institution of democracy to guarantee access to information and resources, but that we all contribute individually, according to our

² Beratungszentrum für Migrantinnen und Migranten (2022): Informationsblatt: Lehramt aus Drittstaaten: Nostrifizierung in Österreich (retrieved on 09.09.2022) https://media.anlaufstelle-erkennung.at/Lehramt_aus_Drittstaaten_Anerkennung_%C3%96sterreich_J%C3%A4hner2021.pdf

respective possibilities and scope for action, to recognizing and pointing out unequal power relations and combating them.

According to the respondents, people living in Austria, whether they are third-country nationals or people with migration biographies or both, should be viewed more holistically and less value should be placed on deficits. Just as there is no such thing as "the" Syrian or "the" Afghan, since we are all individuals with different needs, there is also not one way that we have to use to find an easier access to services for newly arrived third-country nationals. However, all those interviewed persons for the present needs assessment agreed that the barriers to access must be removed and effective access to information, affordable living space, nationwide childcare and jobs that grant economic independence should be seen as common goals to be reached. Furthermore there must be more individual and target group-oriented offers for third-country nationals, since it is important and necessary for certain people to speak perfect German, while for others access to the labor market is most important - and this can also be a labor market where German is not the predominant language, but for example Romanian - as is currently the case in the construction sector.

2. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic occurred at a crucial moment for international migration: Immediately before the COVID-19 pandemic, Austria (as well as Europe as a whole) experienced high migration numbers. Starting in 2014, the rapid increase in arrivals of people with refugee experience and people with migration biographies brought to light pre-existing structural and institutional deficits and exacerbated the structural limits of local public capacity to ensure migrant-friendly access to basic services. The pandemic further highlighted the disadvantages faced by third-country nationals and people with migrant biographies by showing that many people have limited access to social protection and also highlighted barriers



to accessing public health information. Faced with urgent challenges, many local authorities in Austria drastically adjusted their services to the population and adopted emergency social and economic measures, which, however, excluded people with migration biographies from the very same information, support and measures.

Several EU reports point out to the need to be inclusive in providing basic services and specific information and guidance to refugees and people with migration biographies. Reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups continues to be challenging: Social isolation - along with intersecting forms of discrimination - is one of the main problems faced by third country nationals in Austria.

The ASAP project aims to support local authorities and civil society organizations in six European countries (Austria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Romania and Spain) in implementing effective and replicable practices that can meet the needs of people with migration biographies in the areas of employment, housing, education and health. In Austria, the Migrant Advisory Council in Graz provides valuable experience as best practices and implements the project together with Südwind at the local level.

This participation study is part of the ASAP project, which aims to improve the availability and quality of information and access to public services for third country nationals in Austria by identifying and addressing existing barriers and promoting promising new practices.

Third-country nationals are persons who are neither EU nor EEA citizens and who need a residence title for Austria if they want to stay in Austria for more than six months. There are different residence titles. For stays up to a maximum of six months, third-country nationals do not have to apply for a residence title, but for a visa. Stays of up to 90 days within 180 days are also possible without a visa for certain third-country nationals.

Currently, more than 22 million third- country nationals live in the European Union, which is more than 4% of the European Union's population, and about half of them have been living in an EU state for more than 10 years.



More than 1.2 million people applied for protection in a state of the European Union in the years 2015 and 2016, the majority of whom came from Syria. This number has halved, with 630,550 asylum applications across the European Union in 2021. Most asylum seekers come from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, and the countries that received the most applications in the European Union were Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Austria.

Based on a comprehensive international literature search, the key questions for the broad-based qualitative study were developed. Experts from various organizations in Graz working in the field of social integration, public service providers and members of civil society with migration biographies were interviewed about the major obstacles for third-country nationals in accessing basic services in Austria and their specific needs in relation to the topic. The interview guidelines were structured based on issues related to the four main sectors identified: employment, health, education and housing.

Building on these, the aim was to identify the needs of citizens with migration biographies, especially those of third-country nationals, to analyze the strategies used in social integration processes based on the desk research and to develop and implement effective and replicable practices that can respond to the needs of third-country nationals in the employment, housing, education and health sectors.

The European Union makes available to third-country nationals, on various websites and not only, a collection of data related to the right of residence, the right to work, public health, culture and other subjects of interest.

The results of this study shall serve as a basis for more successful dissemination of the required data and facilitate access to them easier for third-country nationals.

Chapter 1 of this report provides an executive summary of the needs assessment, while after an introduction (chapter 2) an overview of the methodological procedure is given (chapter 3),



before summarizing the most important results of the guideline-oriented interviews with relevant actors involved in social inclusion and integration work in Graz/Austria in Chapter 4, taking into account current literature.

On average in 2020, there were around 2.138 million people with a migration background in Austria. In relation to the total population in private households, this corresponded to a share of 24.4%. Around 1.579 million people belong to the so-called "first generation", as they were themselves born abroad and have moved to Austria. The remaining approximately 559,000 persons with a migration background are descendants born in Austria of parents with a foreign place of birth ("second generation").³

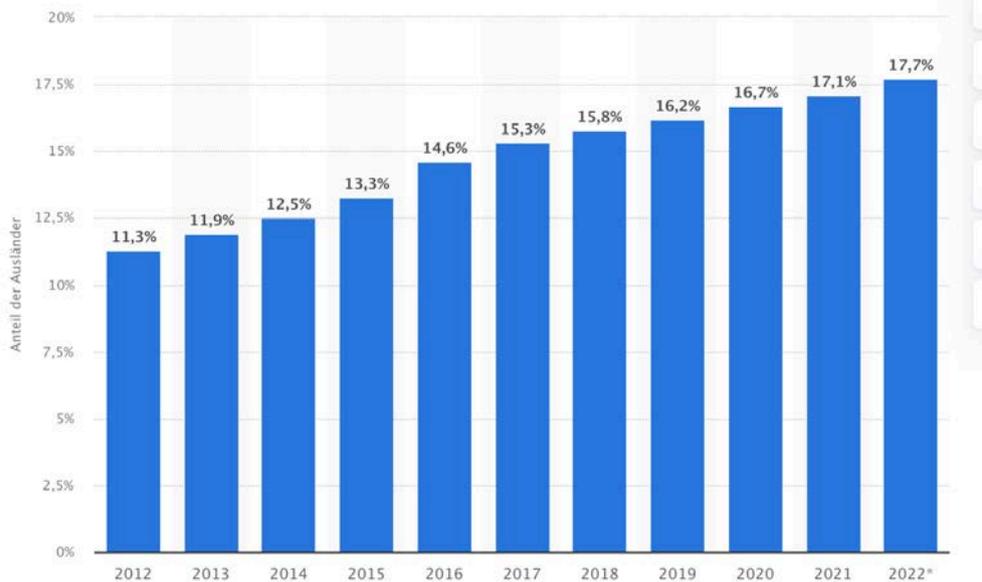
At the beginning of 2021, the foreign resident population in Austria totaled around 1.531 million persons. This corresponded to a share of 17.1% of the total population.

At the beginning of 2022, the share of foreigners in the total population in Austria was 17.7 percent, or around 1.6 million people. Due to the pandemic, both in-migration and out-migration to Austria decreased in 2020. Approximately 136,300 in-migrations were offset by 96,300 out-migrations. The resulting net immigration of around 40,000 persons, however, was only slightly below the previous year's figure (-1.4%).⁴

³ Bundeskanzleramt (2021), European Website on Integration: Statistisches Jahrbuch „Migration und Integration“ 2021: (retrieved on 26.09.2022) https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/statistisches-jahrbuch-migration-integration-2021_de

⁴ Bundeskanzleramt (2021), European Website on Integration: Statistisches Jahrbuch „Migration und Integration“ 2021: (retrieved on 26.09.2022) https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/statistisches-jahrbuch-migration-integration-2021_de





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Of the inflows from abroad, around 15,000 were accounted by returning Austrians and a further 84,500 to nationals of the EU and EFTA nationals and citizens of the United Kingdom (UK) in the year 2020. With around 19,000 Germans accounted for the largest share, followed by Romanian (17,500) and Hungarian nationals (10,100).

People from third-countries (36,800) accounted for 27% of all immigrants in the year 2020. Refugee migration from Iran (900) was far less significant than in 2015/16. There were similar numbers of immigrants from Afghanistan (1,500) as in 2019 (1,400), from Syria slightly more (3,700).

Among third-country nationals, the immigration of around 9,800 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU) was the most significant in terms of numbers in 2020.

At 14,775 cases, slightly more asylum applications were filed in Austria in 2020 than in 2019 (12.886). In Austria, the number of asylum applications was last 2010 (11,012) and 2011 (14,416) at a similar level, but was 88,340 in 2015 and 42,285 in 2016.

In 2020 most of the people seeking asylum in Austria came from Syria (5,121; 2019: 2,708), followed by people from Afghanistan (3,137; 2019: 2,979) and Morocco (745; 2019: 164). In an EU comparison of absolute numbers of asylum applications, Austria ranked 9th in 2020 (after Germany, among others, France, Spain, but also Greece and Italy), and in relation to the number of inhabitants in Austria ranked 7th (after Cyprus, Malta, Greece and others).

Among foreign nationals in Austria, Germans continue to be by far the largest group. On January 1, 2021 almost 209,000 Germans were living in Austria, followed by 132,000 Romanian nationals. These are ahead of Serbian (122,000) and Turkish nationals (118,000). In 5th place is Bosnia and Herzegovina (97,000). Ranked sixth to tenth are nationals of Hungary, Croatia, Poland, Syria and Slovakia. In terms of numbers nationals from Afghanistan, Italy, Bulgaria, Russia, Kosovo and Northern Macedonia are also strongly represented in Austria.

The results and discussions of the guideline-oriented interviews with relevant actors involved in social inclusion and integration work in Graz/Austria as well as those with individual

interviewees are described in the following report. Furthermore, scope for action and recommendations are dealt with in this study, as is the issue of political and social responsibility for combating discrimination and facilitating access to information and services in Austria (chapters 2 and 3).

The main conclusions of the report are summarized in Chapter 4.

The results of the study shall help the project partners to develop a concept for the training and capacity building courses targeting service providers and civil society organisations. Furthermore, pilot practices co-designed and tested with the objective to improve a specific basic service and facilitate the access for third-country nationals will be designed and implemented on the basis of the research results.



3. Methodology

The guideline-based interview (Atteslander, 2000) was chosen as the survey technique. This form of questioning methodology, which focuses on the personal perspective of the interviewee, enables the researcher to ask central questions at the appropriate moment and, if necessary, to ask further questions. The open questions of the guide allow the interviewees to formulate the answers completely independently (Ebster, Stalzer 2013).

The selection of the interview partners was carried out in two steps: first, the Migrant Advisory Council, as the political representation of interests for migrants in Graz and thus the most relevant organization in this field, provided information of the most relevant and interested NGOs, public authorities and third country nationals in Graz. Those were contacted with the request for an interview. Following the interviews, the interviewees were asked to give recommendations for further interesting and relevant persons and/or organizations. This is how the total amount of the interviews resulted.

The author points out that, due to the procedure used, this is not a completely random sample of people.

The respondents were between 28 and 55 years of age with varying degrees of professional experience. A balance between genders, age or other social indicators was taken into consideration.

The individual interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, on average about 90 minutes per interview. Before the interview began, the interviewed were informed about the objectives of the survey and the content of the declaration of consent, which includes data protection aspects: consent to the recording of the interview, information about the transcription of the interview, anonymization, and the information that no personal information and/or materials will be passed on to third parties. The focus group interviews lasted in average about 120 minutes. All interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees for the purpose of later



transcription and analysis. Furthermore, the respondents were informed that a report of the most important results will be published.

Great importance was attached to maintaining confidentiality and explained to the interviewees that they should only answer the questions they wanted to answer.

The interview guide, which was based on the results of an extensive international research of relevant literature, covers the topics of access to health-, education-, labor market and housing sector for third-country nationals in Austria.

The qualitative research in the form of a focus groups provided an in-depth analysis of the state of needs situation with regard to the availability and quality of information and access to public services for third-country nationals.

The focus group discussion answered questions like:

- What kind of jobs are accessible third-country nationals and how easy/difficult is it for them to find a job?
- Do state authorities / NGOs help them in accessing jobs? If yes, in which ways?
- How do they perceive the medical system?
- What forms of health care are available to third-country nationals?
- Do state authorities /NGOs help them in accessing the medical system? If yes, in which ways?
- Do they have access to the educational system in the same way as Austrian citizens?
- How does diploma recognition work for third-country nationals?
- How do they perceive the housing system?
- What kind of housing options do exist for third-country nationals?
- Do they get information to access in these sectors? If yes, where do they get information?

The content analysis of the interviews was based on the qualitative content analysis of Mayring (2010).



4. Results and Discussions

As mentioned in the introduction, approx. 1.5 million people (about 17,7%) living in Austria do not own the Austrian Citizenship – out of which a quarter of million people are born in Austria. The largest groups of “foreigners” as of 01.01.2021 are nationals from Germany (208.732), followed by Romania (131.824), Serbia (121.990), Turkey (117.580), Bosnia (96.990), Hungary (91.395), Croatia (89.007), Poland (65.604), Syria (55.372), Slovakia (45.362) and Afghanistan (44.002) (Statistik Austria, 1.1.2021).

About one quarter of the population living in Austria (approx. 2.14 million) are people with a migration biography or have a so called “migration background” (defined as both parents are born in a foreign country) – 40% of which are from EU and EFTA states, 26% from former Yugoslavia (without Croatia and Slovenia), 12,6% from Turkey, 6% from Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq (ibid., p 28).

Gender distribution

Among all persons living but not born in Austria, 51,1% are female and 48,9% are male (1.1.2020). In 2019, one third of all asylum applications were submitted by women, whereas 47% of all positive asylum decisions in the same year were issued to women (ÖIF 2020), mainly from Afghanistan (1.800), Syria (1.200) and Somalia (470). More women (54,5%) than men were naturalized (ibid.). Interestingly, 45,4% of women with migration background have a high school or university degree, compared to 37,9% of women without migration background. 11,8% of women with non-Austrian citizenship were unemployed, whereas 6% of Austrian women did not have a formal, paid employment in 2019 (ibid.).

Third-country nationals (TCNs)

Third-country nationals are persons who are neither EU nor EEA citizens and who need a



residence title for Austria if they want to stay in Austria for more than six months. There are different residence titles. For stays up to a maximum of six months, third-country nationals do not have to apply for a residence title, but for a visa. Stays of up to 90 days within 180 days are also possible without a visa for certain third-country nationals.

Currently, more than 22 million third- country nationals live in the European Union, which is more than 4% of the European Union's population, and about half of them have been living in an EU state for more than 10 years.

In Austria, people from third-countries (36,800) accounted for 27% of all immigrants in the year 2020. Refugee migration from Iran (900) was far less significant than in 2015/16. There were similar numbers of immigrants from Afghanistan (1,500) as in 2019 (1,400), from Syria slightly more (3,700).

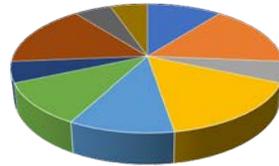
Among third-country nationals in Austria, the immigration of around 9,800 nationals of the former Yugoslavia (outside the EU) was the most significant in terms of numbers in 2020.

Participants of the in-depth-interviews with individuals and focus groups in the framework of the needs assessment

The needs assessment was carried out with third-country nationals of various nationalities, different genders, different legal statuses, different age groups and period of residence / lifetime in Austria.

Although statistical charting is typically used in quantitative rather than qualitative studies because it gives the impression that a large majority of the TCNs in this case are of this or that opinion - which is not true in a qualitative study - the numbers of people interviewed in the needs assessment are also presented as charts to give the survey visual power.

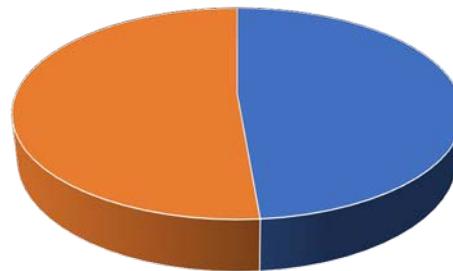
The nationalities of the persons interviewed in the context of this Needs Assessment



- Syria
- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Lybia
- Iraq
- Iran
- Bosnia and Herzegowina
- Neu Zealand
- Nigeria
- Sierra Leone

The **gender ratio** of those interviewed as part of the present needs assessment was as follows:

The genders of the persons interviewed within the framework of this needs assessment



- Female
- Male
- Divers / Non-Binary

Age of interviewees within the framework of the present needs assessment:

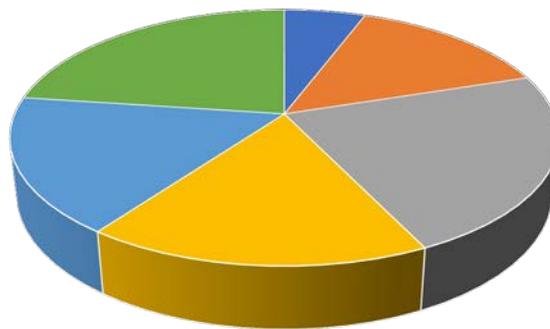
Age of interviewees within the framework of the present needs assessment



■ 28 years old ■ 32 years old ■ 36 years old ■ 37 years old ■ 40 years old
■ 42 years old ■ 45 years old ■ 48 years old ■ 55 years old

The **length of stay in the country of residence** of the person interviewed in the present needs assessment was:

The length of stay in the country of residence of the person interviewed in this needs assessment was



■ 3 years ■ 4 years ■ 6 years ■ 7 years ■ 10 years ■ More than 10 years

A large proportion of the respondents agreed on and emphasized the transformative power of civil society.

Some of the people interviewed miss a holistic view of the person transported by the media and public services.

“The impression is often created that only people with a migration background are responsible for all problems.” (IP3) For example, one of the interviewees said: "In Austria, there is a very strong focus on deficits. For example, not knowing German "perfectly" is often seen as a major deficiency. But what is “perfect German” actually? And what do I need it for? I also wonder: How can war-refugees have the necessary mental health as a prerequisite for the German course? And why is a "perfect German" expected from everyone?” (IP6)

Access to education and health care was rated positively by the respondents, although the disparate differences in resources and access between EU nationals and third-country nationals were emphasized here. The respective residence status would play an important role in access to the health care, labor market and housing market, especially because these things are often connected.

The greatest challenges to access to education, health care and especially the labor market were mentioned when it comes to the different residence titles. Asylum seekers, contrary to people with permanent residence titles, are only allowed to work in Austria under certain conditions, and are required to show an employment permit. Before an employment permit can be issued, the Employment Service Austria checks in each individual case whether nationals, EEA citizens or “advanced integrated foreigners” are registered who are willing and qualified to take up the job in question and if that is the case, this job cannot be claimed by a person whose asylum application is in process.

In addition, some of the interviewees reported about perceived differences in treatment in the housing and labor markets based on external characteristics, such as skin color or visible religious signs, such as the headscarf (Hijab). As one of the interviewees pointed out: “Even though I have Austrian citizenship and speak perfect German, I have a very different experience

in Austria as a woman on the job market and in the housing market, but also with public authorities, when I wear a hijab than a woman who looks exactly like me, has Austrian citizenship, and is a woman.” (IP9)

Some of the people interviewed miss a holistic view of the person, transported through media or through public services. For example, one of the interviewees said: "In Austria, there is a very strong focus on deficits. For example, not knowing German "perfectly" is often seen as a major deficiency. But what is “perfect German” actually? And what do I need it for? I also wonder: How can war-refugees have the necessary mental health as a prerequisite for the German courses? And why is a "perfect German" expected from everyone?" (IP6)

The interviewees emphasized the need to fight discrimination and to promote labor force participation, not only as an economic necessity, but as a fundamental prerequisite for equal opportunities.

The people surveyed pointed out, that work is also a source of identity and thus, there should be equal opportunities in the labor market. At about the same time as the interviews were conducted, a new law was passed in Austria in this regard. The Austrian government has put together a package of laws to facilitate access to the Austrian labor market for non-EU citizens. and on 06.07.2022 National Council gave the green light for this amendment. Among other things, it introduces relaxed conditions for obtaining the “Red-White-Red Card” and permanent access to the labor market for regular seasonal workers. In addition, approval procedures are to be accelerated and start-ups facilitated by reduced share capital requirements. Likewise, a passage in the law that currently only allows private and non-profit employment agencies to place third-country nationals to a very limited extent will be deleted without replacement.⁵

⁵ Parliament Republic of Austria Parliamentary Correspondence No. 831 from 06.07.2022 (retrieved on 5.10.2022) https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/PR/JAHR_2022/PK0831/index.shtml



Some of the women interviewed complained about the lack of childcare and support with care work, which became particularly clear during the Corona period, while some of the male interviewees, whose asylum procedures have not yet been completed, criticized the "idle sitting around".

What the majority of the TCNs interviewed agreed on is the fact that the handling of language course, office, health, education and so on together is very difficult and requires a lot of time and effort. For example, combining care work and payed work is challenging for the majority of the Austrian population too, but traumatization and other psychological illnesses often make things more difficult for people who have fled the country.

With regard to the flow of information, the respondents noted that there is sufficient information in the areas of health, labor market, education and housing market, but often this information is provided in a way that is too confusing and in a difficult, so-called "official language", and much more, it would be difficult getting the right information out of this flood of information. Furthermore the information is often not provided via the channels used by TCNs. Therefore they are never reached by the information provided.

In this regard, one of the interviewees said: "I think e-platforms are great because you can reach a lot of people if it's easy to use and low-threshold. For example, I can easily click on a topic. Nowadays, everyone has a cell phone. If I can look in there at home, I don't need to be ashamed to look in there, post something or read something! It's much easier than meetings. I have inhibitions there. Who is there? How can I express myself? The confidence and language may not be there. The e-platform would have to work on all languages, so that I can ask or post something in my language and receive information in my language." (R4) "However, another interviewee added that: "sharing information - it needs also personal contact, e-platforms only do not help in the local context. Issue raising and round tables very good." (R6)

The nostrification procedure was also mentioned by the interview partners as being particularly challenging and lengthy in Austria. Nostrification is the recognition of a foreign degree as equivalent to a domestic bachelor's, master's, diploma or doctoral degree.⁶

Since the recognition of non-EU/EEA degrees, such as teaching degrees for example is complicated and lengthy, candidates for recognition try to switch to other pedagogical professions - e.g. native language teaching, adult education, child care occupations. Employment is assumed to occur more quickly, even with post-qualification. However, these occupations are not guaranteed and not formally possible for all (e.g., no formal recognition for teachers with third-country qualifications by state authorities in after-school care).

5. Conclusion

The challenges for third-country nationals in the area of accessing to the housing market, health care, education and the housing market are on the one hand similar to that of the majority population (e.g. in terms of question of (unpaid) care work) and on the other hand they differ because in the second case the experiences of fleeing, moving to a new country, possible language barriers, social security and lack of financial resources make resources more difficult to be available.

The policy recommendations are therefore: lower-threshold access to information, more affordable living space, nationwide childcare, jobs that grant economic independence and a fairer division of care work.

Furthermore, raising awareness in the areas of discrimination and exclusion mechanisms for public service providers would be highly recommended.

⁶ Beratungszentrum für Migrantinnen und Migranten (2022): Informationsblatt: Lehramt aus Drittstaaten: Nostrifizierung in Österreich (retrieved on 09.09.2022) https://media.anlaufstelle-erkennung.at/Lehramt_aus_Drittstaaten_Anerkennung_%C3%96sterreich_J%C3%A4hner2021.pdf

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Statistik Austria: <https://www.statistik.at/>



Appendixes

Appendix: Interview Guiding Questions

Needs and barriers regarding employment, health, education, housing

Introductory statement

Before the interview began, the **interviewees were informed about the ASAP project**: (Third-country nationals & their access to various services/benefits in the Austrian society, such as education, health system, housing market, labor market. Services in our society (education, health system, housing market, labor market): possibilities/things that work good/difficulties, hurdles and maybe solutions in these areas)

Before the interview began, the interviewed were also informed about the objectives of the survey and the content of the declaration of consent, which includes data protection aspects: consent to the recording of the interview, information about the transcription of the interview, anonymization, and the information that no personal information and/or materials will be passed on to third parties.

Great importance was attached to maintaining confidentiality and explained to the interviewees that they should only answer the questions they wanted to answer.

All interviews were recorded with the consent of the interviewees for the purpose of later transcription and analysis. Furthermore, the respondents were informed that a report of the most important results will be published.





Education	
Leading questions	Further questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you perceive the education system in Austria? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have access to the educational system in the same way as Austrian citizens? (Is there free access to the education system for third-country nationals?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you receive help from government agencies/ NGOs to access the education system? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If so, how? Are interpreting services available? Services in your native language?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know how diploma recognition in Austria works for third-country nationals? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you tell us about your experiences in the education sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In case of positive experiences? Which? In case of negative experiences? Which? Have you complained?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any suggestions for solutions/improvements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would have helped you? What would you need?

Employment	
Leading questions	Further questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Where can you get information about employment in the country you are in? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you perceive the labor market? Do you find it easy/difficult to find a job? If easy: why? If difficult: why? What types of jobs are accessible to you?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you receive any help in accessing to jobs? Do government agencies/NGOs help you to access jobs? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do government agencies/NGOs help you to access jobs? Is training offered? Are services accessible in languages you can understand?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can the salaries offered provide you with financial independence? 	





<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can you tell us about positive/negative experiences regarding employment? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In case of positive experiences? Which? In case of negative experiences? Barriers Which? Have you complained?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any suggestions for solutions/improvements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would have helped you? What could be improved?
Health	
Leading questions	Further questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have access to (free) medical care in your country of residence? 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How do you perceive the medical system in Austria? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have the feeling, that the medical system is prepared to meet your needs? If yes, in which way? If no, in which way?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do government agencies/NGOs help you in accessing the medical system? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If yes: how? Is there any support, e.g. interpreting services?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your experience with the health care system in Austria? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive experiences? In case of any: which? Negative experiences? In case of any, which? (Barriers?)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have any suggestions for solutions/improvements? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What would you need? What could be improved?
Housing	
Leading questions	Further questions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did you find your current housing situation? Easy/difficult? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What made it easy/difficult?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you have knowledge about the housing market in Austria? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is social housing accessible to you? Are you dependent on it? Is the renting of private apartments accessible to you?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you receive any help in this sector? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In case if yes: from whom? Do government agencies/NGOs help you accessing housing? Are there special services for third-country nationals? In case, if yes: Do you know where to get information?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is your experience with the housing sector in Austria? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Positive/negative experiences?





ACCESSING SERVICES,
SHARING APPROACHES AND PRACTICES



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you have any suggestions for solutions/improvements?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would you need? What could be improved?
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