From Refugee Crisis to Job Engine:

An Analysis of German Businesses' Experience in Refugee Integration

May 2022

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Das Consulting-Unternehmen des DIW Berlin

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About the Tent Partnership for Refugees

With more and more refugees displaced for longer periods of time, businesses have a critical role to play in helping refugees integrate economically in their new host communities. The Tent Partnership for Refugees mobilizes the global business community to improve the lives and livelihoods of more than 30 million refugees who have been forcibly displaced from their home countries.

Founded by Hamdi Ulukaya the founder of Chobani – a multi-billion dollar food company in the U.S. – in 2016, we are a network of over 220 major companies committed to including refugees. Tent believes that companies can most sustainably support refugees by leveraging their core business operations – by engaging refugees as potential employees, entrepreneurs and consumers. The full list of Tent members can be found here.

Find out more at www.tent.org.

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About DIW Econ GmbH

Using a combination of sound economic theory and pragmatic empirical analysis, DIW Econ conducts research on social and economic issues on behalf of public and private stakeholders.

DIW Econ GmbH was founded in 2007 by the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW Berlin) as a wholly owned subsidiary based in Berlin to develop tailor-made analyses for its clients as part of project-related collaborations. Active worldwide, DIW Econ works closely with public-sector clients, civic organizations, and German and international companies. In this way, DIW Econ is an interface where the sector-specific knowledge of its consultants and the in-depth knowledge of economic theory and empirical methodologies – in the fields of labor market policy, social policy, regional economics and survey-based research, among others – come together.

DIW Econ follows in the long tradition and reputation of DIW Berlin. As an independent institution based in Berlin, DIW Berlin conducts basic and applied research, and consults on economic policy.

Summary and background

From refugee crisis to job engine — an analysis of German businesses' experience integrating refugees into their workforce

In spring 2022, Europe faced its largest refugee crisis since the Second World War. As of May 2022, several hundred thousand refugees from Ukraine had already made their way to Germany. The European Union (EU), including Germany, has taken unprecedented measures to facilitate the integration of people who have fled Ukraine, including by activating the Temporary Protection Directive – which will allow Ukrainians access to education, healthcare, benefits and – critically – the labor market across the EU. This is a pivotal moment for Germany as it strives to learn from its history of welcoming refugees to effectively and sustainably integrate this recently arrived group of newcomers.

In the 20th century, migration to Germany increased as a result of the First and Second World Wars, as well as the recruitment of foreign "guest workers" in the 1950s and 1960s, and the collapse of the Eastern Bloc in 1989. The largest influx of refugees into Germany prior to the wave of refugees coming from Ukraine in 2022 took place in 2015 as a result of the civil war in Syria and the spread of the so-called Islamic State in Iraq. Between 2015 and the end of 2020, around 1.9 million refugees filed asylum applications in Germany.

As this wave of refugees arrived and made a home in Germany, the German economy has experienced an ongoing labor shortage due to an aging population and low birth rates. This shortage of workers was exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, especially affecting the German and global hotel and catering industry, trade activities and air transport. This gap in the workforce is reflected, among other things, by a growing number of unfilled apprenticeship positions, which are critical to the German economy. In September 2021, nearly 40 percent of apprenticeship positions remained unfilled.

The integration of refugees into the German economy can help alleviate these labor shortages. For the foreseeable future, refugees will continue arriving in Germany with the desire to find work and integrate into German society. In addition to welcoming refugees from Ukraine, Germany is also in the process of welcoming tens of thousands of Afghans fleeing the Taliban's repressive regime which regained control of the country in August 2021. Increasingly poor climatic conditions in Africa also lead to expected migratory movements from there.

Many German companies already have experience hiring refugees. Businesses that hire refugee employees are helping these newcomers integrate within and contribute to German society as employees, taxpayers, and consumers. At the same time, companies that onboard refugee employees can enrich their workforces by gaining motivated and qualified members of staff. In practice, however, businesses sometimes perceive the process of hiring refugees as risky. Some potential risks include: the fact that refugees' professional and educational qualifications are often not directly transferable to the German concept of Berufsausbildung (vocational training); or the fact that refugees in Germany often have limited proficiency in the German language. Despite these challenges, German companies have successfully hired and integrated refugees into their workforce, while gaining valuable experience that can help German businesses navigate the arrival of a new wave of refugees.

1.9 million

Since 2015, around 1.9 million refugees have filed asylum applications, and by 2020.

1.1 million

By 2020, 1.1 million of them had been granted temporary protected status, and around 280,000 had been granted permanent protected status.

200,000

The number of protection seekers with open status and the number of rejected protection seekers were both around 200,000 in 2020.

To learn from these lessons and to educate more companies in Germany on how to successfully hire and integrate refugees, the Tent Partnership for Refugees commissioned DIW Econ to undertake a study. The study analyzes how companies' refugee hiring practices have evolved since 2015, looks at the added value that refugee employees bring to businesses that hire them and lays out recommendations for companies on how to best integrate refugees into the workforce.

To do this, DIW Econ surveyed 100 companies that have had meaningful experiences hiring refugees in Germany and conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with select companies to garner greater nuance about their experiences. Key findings include:

EVERY COMPANY CAN BENEFIT FROM HIRING REFUGEES:
Companies report a positive experience with hiring refugees regardless of company size, sector, or region. Overall, two out of three companies rate their experience with refugee employees as "very good" or "somewhat good." 88 percent of companies surveyed said that they plan on hiring more refugees in the coming year (2022).

HIRING REFUGEES BRINGS BENEFITS TO THE COMPANY:
In addition to creating positive social impact, a company's bottom line also benefits from hiring refugees. Companies report increased employee satisfaction, length of employment, creativity, productivity, and company attractiveness for current employees and customers alike.

TAPPING INTO EXISTING SUPPORT SERVICES CAN EASE A COMPANY'S BURDEN WITH REFUGEE HIRING:
Although companies experience challenges integrating refugees such as language barriers or difficulties certifying qualifications, there are a wide range of support services available to refugees and their employers. Companies that have successfully hired refugees recommend using services that are informed by and tailored to companies' needs as well as the experiences of refugees.

As Germany prepares to welcome refugees from Ukraine, Afghanistan, and other parts of the world, this report serves as an actionable blueprint for companies that wish to integrate refugees into their workforce. While the lessons should be adapted according to the context, the findings and recommendations lay out a template that explains why and how German companies should continue to hire refugees for the benefit of their business and the whole of society.

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1.

Background and methodology

1.1 FORMS OF PROTECTION IN GERMANY

In Germany, the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) reviews each asylum application in accordance with the German Asylum Act to determine if one of the four categories of protection – **refugee protection, asylum, subsidiary protection, or deportation prohibition** – applies to each individual applying for asylum (also known as a "protection seeker").

To be recognized as a **refugee**, a person must demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution in their home country based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. In Germany, refugee status is granted by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees following international determinations outlined in the UN 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol. Refugees are protected under international law and must not be deported or returned to situations where their lives and freedom can be jeopardized.

The second category of protection determined by the German government is **asylum**. The right to asylum is not as extensive as refugee protection, because it only considers the State as a potential violator of rights as a matter of principle.

The third category is **subsidiary protection**. Individuals are entitled to subsidiary protection if they establish significant reasons for the presumption that they face severe harm in their country of origin and are unable to seek protection in their country as a result of that danger.

Finally, in cases where a person is not eligible for asylum, refugee protection, or subsidiary protection, a **ban on deportation** can be issued if returning to the country of origin would violate the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR); or if the person's life, limbs, or freedom would be seriously endangered if they returned to their home country.

It is important to note that the four forms of protection in Germany have peculiarities in relation to the definitions commonly used in other countries. According to the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, in Germany, the term "refugee" will be only used to refer to individuals who, at the end of their asylum proceedings, were granted refugee protection in accordance with the Geneva Refugee Convention. *For ease, in its English language translation, this report refers to all four categories of "protection seekers" as "refugees".*

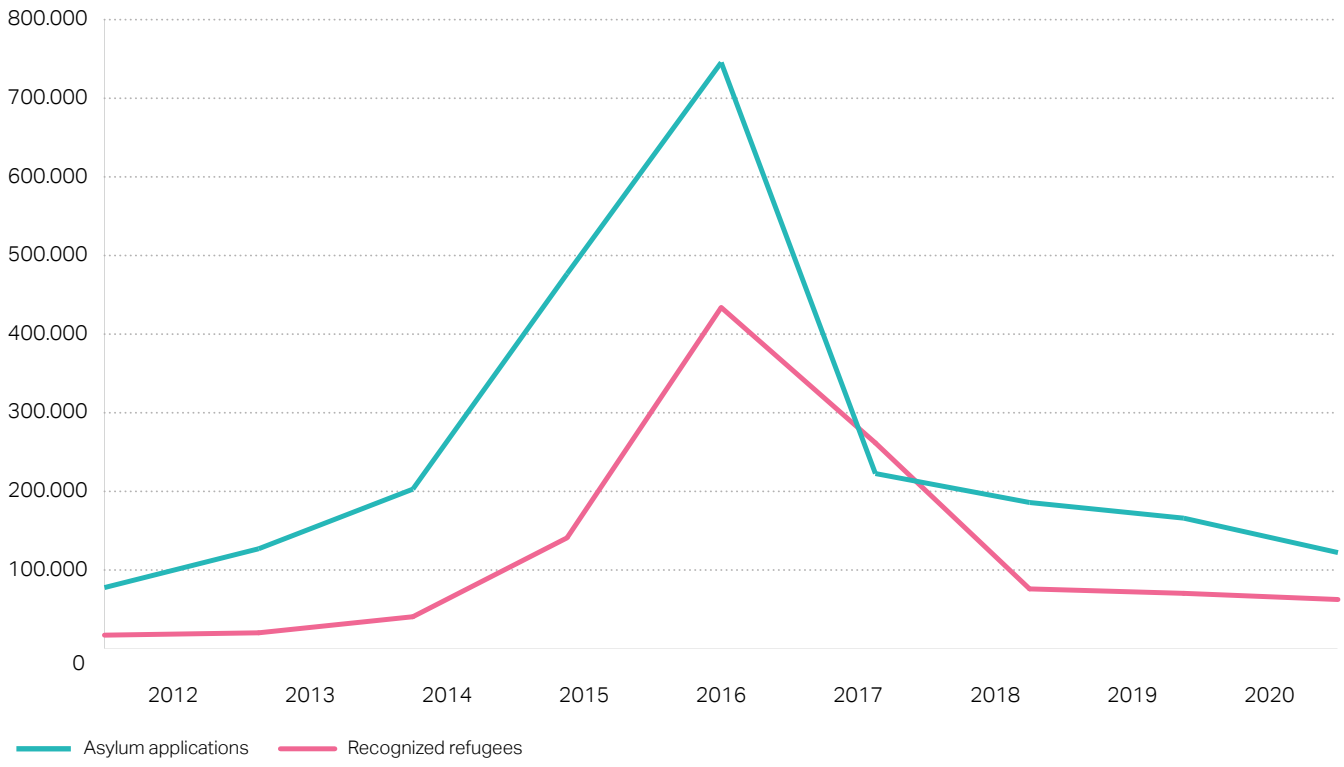
Whether a refugee is allowed to work in Germany is linked to whether they receive a residence permit in the country. People who have been granted refugee protection, entitlement to asylum, or subsidiary protection receive a residence permit of up to three years. In the case of a deportation ban, the relevant applicable immigration authority decides on whether to issue a work permit for each individual case. A residence permit does not automatically constitute permission to work, but the right to work is often granted alongside it. If this is not the case, a work permit must also be obtained.[1]

1. Cf. German Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (Bundesministerium des Inneren und für Heimat) (2020)

1.2 FIGURES AND DATA ON REFUGEES IN GERMANY 2015-2020

Between 2015 and the end of 2020, around 1.9 million applications for asylum had been submitted in Germany, of which 477,000 were filed in 2015 and 746,000 in 2016 alone.[2] As of the end of 2020, approximately 1.86 million protection seekers in Germany were registered in the Central Register of Foreigners *(Ausländerzentralregister, or AZR)*.[3] Figure 1-1 illustrates the surge in asylum applications filed in 2015 and the number of recognized refugees annually since 2012.[4]

▲ **Figure 1-1** | Number of asylum applications and recognized refugees in Germany between 2012 and 2020



Sources: BAMF (2021) (own presentation).

2. Cf. Statistics via Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) (2020)
3. Cf. Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt) (2021)
4. The total recognized asylum applications between 2012 and 2020 exceeds the number of all asylum applications during this period. This is possibly due to open applications that had already been submitted prior to 2012.

29.8 years
The average age of refugees by the end of 2020 was 29.8 years, down slightly from an average age of 34.1 years in 2015.

67%
The majority of protection seekers (67 percent) are younger than 35 years.

38%
of them are female

62%
of them are male

Of all recognized protection seekers, around 1.4 million hold recognized protection status. In terms of regional distribution within Germany, the city-state of Bremen has the largest percentage of protection seekers at 4 percent of the population. This is followed by Hamburg, Berlin, the Saarland, and North Rhine–Westphalia, each with 3 percent.[5]

The average age of refugees at the end of 2020 was 29.8 years of age, a slight decrease from 34.1 in 2015.[6] The majority of refugees (67 percent) are younger than 35 years of age. Sixty-two percent are male and 38 percent are female.[7]

On average, refugees in Germany have lower education levels than other immigrants. For example, 35 percent of refugees who arrived in Germany between 2013 and 2016 did not attend school or earn qualifications comparable to the completion of elementary school. By comparison, this was true for only 2 percent of the non-refugee population in Germany.[8] Refugees who come from countries that have been affected by war and political persecution for long periods of time have particularly low education levels.[9] Refugees who come from countries where the cause of flight was more recent may face interruptions in their education. In addition, ethnic or religious minorities who are refugees may have lower levels of education due to discrimination in their country of origin.[10]

5. Cf. Statistics via Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) (2020)
6. Cf. Federal Statistical Office of Germany (Statistisches Bundesamt) (2021a)
7. Cf. Statistics via Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) (2020)
8. Cf. Kristen et al. (2020)
9. Cf. Stoewe (2017)
10. Cf. Brückner et al. (2016)

1.3 CHALLENGES FOR REFUGEES WHEN INTEGRATING INTO THE GERMAN LABOR MARKET

After fleeing their country of origin, refugees face various challenges that have a negative impact on their integration into the labor market. For example, refugees usually have limited proficiency in the local language. Additionally, educational opportunities in their country of origin or other countries during their journey to their host country were likely brief, intermittent, or completely lacking. Even if refugees did have access to education opportunities before arriving in their new host country, they may be unable to present credentials or proof of their qualifications. Refugees also often lack or have limited access to social or professional networks when they arrive in a host country.[11]

During the peak of the refugee crisis in 2015, the German government adapted or created a number of federal programs to support the integration of refugees into the workforce. Since 2016, a national program called "Vocational German Language Support" *(Berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung)* has provided targeted language training to refugees as they start working in Germany. In addition, resources called "Welcome Guides" offer companies information on how to fill vacant roles by hiring refugees. Since 2016, a program called "Vocational Guidance for Refugees" has helped to integrate refugees in trade jobs while providing soft skills training and language courses.

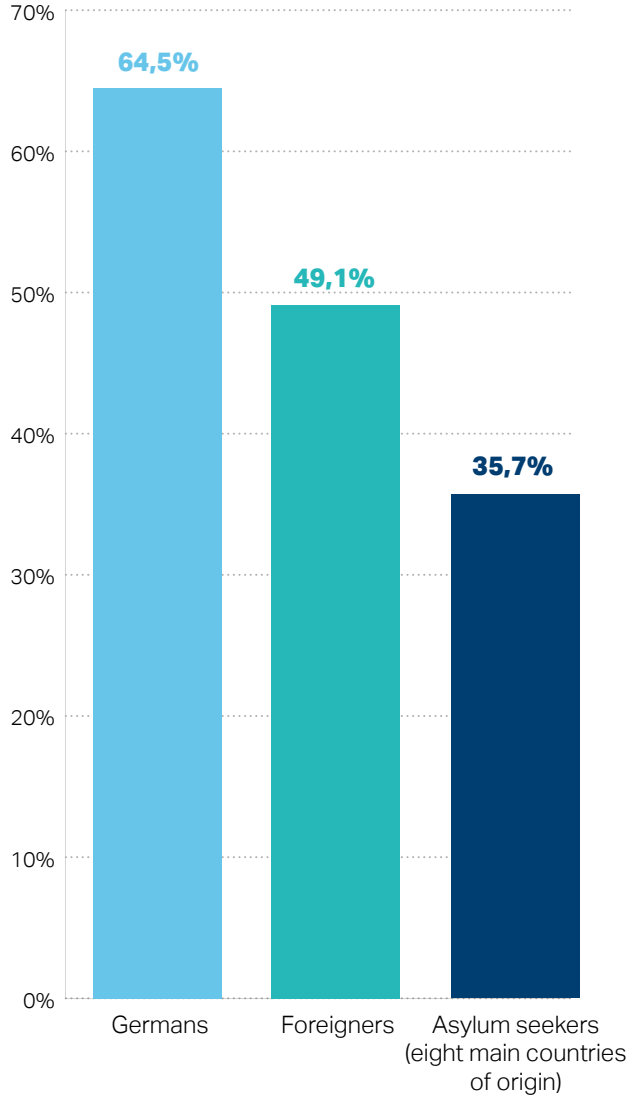
In addition, companies have been able to tap into a suite of support services to help them hire refugees as part of programs that were already in existence prior to 2015, such as "Customized Consultants" *(Passgenaue Berater)*, "Assistance during Training" *(Ausbildungsbegleitende Hilfen)*, "Entry-Level Qualification" *(Einstiegsqualifizierung)*, "WeGebAU" (a continuing education program for lower-skilled and older workers), "NETWORK of Companies Integrating Refugees" *(NETZWERK Unternehmen integrieren Flüchtlinge)*, or through employment agencies and job centers.

Thanks to the efforts of private and public stakeholders, an increasing proportion of refugees have successfully integrated into the German labor market since 2015. In November 2021, 36 percent of asylum seekers from the top eight countries of origin were employed in jobs subject to social insurance contributions (which means that they are permanent staff and their employer is subject to social insurance taxes, a substantial increase from 18 percent of asylum seekers in 2015).[12]

While German companies are recognized as global leaders in the integration of refugees into the labor market, there is still work to be done. Refugees have a higher unemployment rate than other immigrants and a significantly higher unemployment rate than

11. Cf. Economist Impact (2021)

▲ **Figure 1-2** | German labor force participation rate in 2020 comparing refugees from the eight most prevalent countries of origin, foreigners, and Germans



Source: German Federal Employment Agency (2020) (own presentation).

German nationals. In November 2021, there was a 36 percent employment rate among asylum seekers. By comparison, there was a65 percent employment rate among German citizens anda 49 percent employment rate among all foreigners, as illustrated in Figure 1-2.[13]

The unemployment rate differs substantially depending on gender and country of origin. Refugee women in particular have a higher unemployment rate than refugee men even several years after arrival. On average, in the EU, refugee women's unemployment rate was 12 percentage points higher than that of refugee men.[14] There are also large differences in unemployment rates among different countries of origin. For example, 17 percent of refugees from Eritrea and Pakistan were unemployed in November 2021, compared to 27 percent of Afghan refugees and 37 percent of Syrian refugees.[15] By comparison, only 5 percent of German nationals were unemployed in the same time period.

The divergence between the labor force participation rate of refugees and German nationals shows that refugees in Germany represent an untapped source of talent for companies.

12. The eight countries with the highest number of asylum applications in 2015 and 2016 were Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, and Syria.
13. Cf. Statistics via Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit) (2020)
14. Cf. Bevelander & Irastorza (2020)
15. Cf. German Federal Employment Agency (2022), Table 1.4 The figures refer to the labor force for employment subject to social insurance contributions and marginal employment as well as the unemployed.

1.4 THE EXPERIENCE OF COMPANIES WITH REFUGEE EMPLOYEES

Many companies recruited refugees for the first time in 2015 at the peak of refugee arrivals in Germany. The 2015 crisis presented a new set of challenges for companies when it came to integrating refugees into the workforce; in response, they developed innovative solutions to mitigate these hurdles.

The study surveyed 100 companies that have hired refugees since 2015. The survey evaluated their experiences in hiring refugees and the impact that hiring had on these companies, with the aim of sharing learnings with other businesses that are interested in hiring refugees. The study also conducted in-depth interviews with two additional companies to produce detailed case studies on their refugee hiring initiatives. Before we analyze the survey responses in Chapters 2 and 3, this section provides more detail on the 100 participating companies.

1.4.1 Breakdown of the companies surveyed

The study surveyed one hundred midsize (50 to 249 employees) and large (250+ employees) companies, with midsize companies employing an average of 120 people and large companies employing an average of 5,310 people.[16]

Midsize companies made up around 50 percent of the companies surveyed, with large companies making up the other 50 percent. Around 50 percent each of midsize and large companies were included.

Midsize companies had to have employed at least five refugees in the past five years, whereas large companies had to have employed at least ten refugees in the past five years, according to the requirements set for the company panel.

The survey was conducted with an executive-level individual at the company who has had significant involvement in employee hiring. The interviews were conducted mostly online (90 percent) or by telephone (10 percent) and collected, among other things, information about:

- The hiring date and type of employment relationship,
- The hiring process and experiences with the hiring strategy,
- Barriers to recruitment and the use of support programs, and
- The impact hiring refugees had on the company

The majority of these companies generate annual revenues of between 10 million and 50 million euros (38 percent), followed by companies with revenues between 2 million and 10 million euros (29 percent).[17] On average, 19 percent of total revenues are generated outside Germany, of which around 40 percent are generated in EU countries.[18]

16. Response to the question, "Approximately how many employees does your company employ in total?"
17. Response to the question, "Approximately how much revenue does your company generate per year?"
18. Responses to the questions "What percentage of company revenues are generated abroad or with foreign companies?" and "What percentage of total foreign revenues are generated in other EU countries?"

The companies surveyed are representative of the corporate landscape in Germany and operate in a wide range of industries in the commercial, services, trade,logistics, public, and other sectors.[19] The companies surveyed are headquartered in all German states with the exception of Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania. 42 percent of all employees at the companies surveyed are female, and 20 percent are migrants.[20]

1.4.2 Employment of refugees

In December 2021, a total of 4,196 refugees were working for the companies surveyed, with 883 working at midsize companies and 3,313 at large companies. This corresponded to 1.6 percent of all employees, although the proportion of refugees per company depended on the company size and varied substantially. Some companies employed refugees almost exclusively and there were other companies where refugees made up only a small percentage of the total workforce. A total of 2,670 refugee employees worked in jobs subject to social insurance contributions, and 1,526 worked in internships, apprenticeships, *minijobs* (part-time jobs with no social insurance contributions), and *midijobs* (higher-paying, part-time jobs with social insurance contributions).[21]

Three-quarters of the companies hired refugees for the first time between 2015 and 2021. Around half of these refugees were hired into full-time positions, another 31 percent into part-time positions, and around one-fifth into forms of employment not subject to social insurance contributions.[22] The first time most companies hired refugees was at the start of the Syrian refugee crisis. While the share of first-time refugee hires increased between 2014 and 2016, this has been on the decline ever since. While 26 percent hired refugees for the first time in 2016, only 5 percent of companies did so for the first time between 2019 and 2021.[23]

Refugee employees have different types of forms of protection. Around half of companies employed refugees with at least two different types of protection. Most companies employed people who had been granted refugee or asylum status (79 percent) followed by companies that employed people with ongoing asylum proceedings (40 percent) and subsidiary protection status (35 percent). Seventeen percent of companies employed persons with a national deportation ban.[24]

19. The category "others" here combines agriculture, forestry and fishing; energy; arts, entertainment and recreation; and "other." Response to the question, "In which industry does your company operate? *[classification per NACE 2]"*
20. Responses to the questions "What is the approximate proportion of women in your workforce?" and "What is the approximate proportion of people with an immigrant background in your workforce?"
21. Response to the question, "How many of the employees currently employed at your company (employees subject to social insurance contributions and others) are refugees?" *Midijobs* are jobs in which employees earn an annualized average of more than 450 euros and less than 1,300 euros per month. In *Minijobs*, employees earn up to 450 euros per month.
22. Responses to the questions "How many refugees in total has your company hired into jobs subject to social security contributions since 2015? Please count all hires, regardless of whether these refugees are still working for you!" and the question "How many refugees has your company hired into positions (other than employment subject to social insurance), such as internships, apprenticeships, Minijobs, Midijobs, etc.? This does not include freelance employees. Again, please count all hires, regardless of whether these refugees are still working for you."
23. Response to the question, "In which year did your company hire refugees for the first time?"
24. Response to the question, "Which legal status applied to refugees hired into jobs subject to social insurance contributions at the time they were hired?"

2.

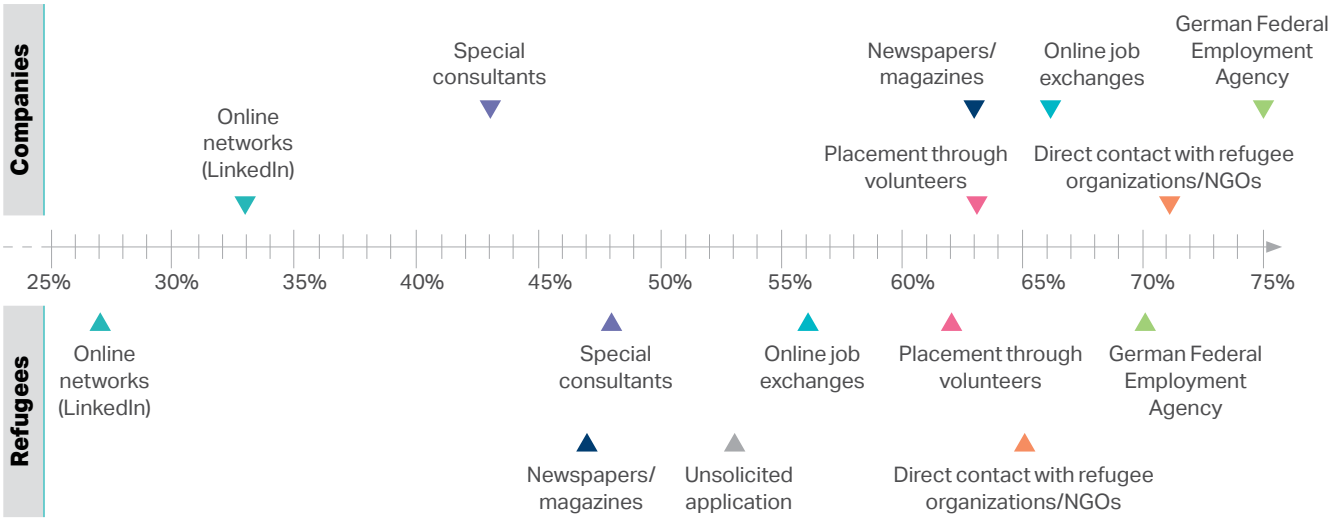
Hiring refugees at German companies

Participating companies were surveyed on the various ways they connect with refugee job candidates to better understand the benefits and challenges of different recruitment channels.

2.1 RECRUITMENT CHANNELS

A comparison of the recruitment channels used by refugee job seekers and companies seeking refugee employees revealed that refugees and employers used similar channels in the hiring process.[25] The most frequently used recruitment channel for companies and refugees alike is submitting an application through the German Federal Employment Agency;. 75 percent of companies used the Federal Employment Agency in the recruitment process, and 70 percent of companies were contacted by refugees through this channel.

Figure 2-1 | Channels used by companies and refugees for the application process



Source: Responses to the questions "How often have you approached refugees as potential applicants through the following channels?" and "How often have refugees contacted your company via the following channels?" (own data)

25. Responses to the questions "How often have you approached refugees as potential applicants through the following channels?" and "How often have refugees contacted your company via the following channels?" The responses "frequently" and "occasionally" were included.

MOST USED CHANNELS

75%
Federal Employment Agency

71%
NGOs

66%
Online job exchanges

In addition to the Federal Employment Agency, the most frequently used recruitment channels for companies included direct contact with refugee organizations or NGOs that help refugees with accommodation and job placement (71 percent), online job platforms (66 percent), and job matching by volunteers that help refugees find jobs (63 percent). These channels are also predominantly used by protection seekers: in addition to the Federal Employment Agency, refugees seek jobs with the help of volunteers (62 percent), through direct contact with refugee organizations or NGOs (65 percent), and through online job platforms (56 percent).

Companies can greatly benefit from collaborating with refugee organizations, NGOs, and volunteers, whereas these all can act as points of contact for refugees, companies, and other organizations, and are crucial for connecting these various groups to one another. They have a wealth of experience with advertising jobs for refugee candidates, selecting suitable candidates, and hiring refugees. They can

also play an important role after recruitment, as they often offer support that can help refugees successfully integrate into the workplace.

Fewer than half of the companies surveyed recruited refugees (or were contacted by refugees) through the following channels:

- Special advisors who help integrate refugees into the workforce[26]
- Job postings via online networks such as LinkedIn[27]

Networks such as LinkedIn are the least-used medium to successfully approach refugees. While personal connections and social networks are generally a good way for refugees to connect with potential employers, refugees may have limited access to these networks in their new host country.[28, 29]

Job advertisements in newspapers and magazines were the channel with the largest divergence in terms of usage by companies compared to usage by refugees. While 63 percent of companies advertised jobs in newspapers and magazines, only 47 percent of companies were contacted by refugees in response to those job postings.

Some companies also met candidates through recommendations from other refugee or non refugee employees, or they tried to recruit refugees locally. For example, some companies visited local refugee shelters to share information about job opportunities, and refugees could apply immediately afterward. In addition, around half the companies were contacted by refugees through unsolicited applications.

Companies can draw on their general recruitment experience and adapt existing hiring processes to implement the right recruitment strategy for refugee candidates.[30] Only advertisements in newspapers and magazines were used less as a recruitment channel by refugees than by companies, so companies should focus on alternative options when trying to reach refugees specifically. Companies can also expand their candidate pool with the help of NGOs that work directly with refugees, volunteer advisors and company-specific recruiting programs to increase the chances of finding the right candidate.

26. 43 percent among companies and 48 percent among refugees.
27. 33 percent among companies and 27 percent among refugees.
28. Cf. Brückner et al. (2019).
29. Cf. Brell et al. (2020) and Salzwedel (2018).
30. Cf. also Berger & Dietz (2016) provide an overview of the diverse offerings.

2.2 DIFFERENT EMPLOYMENT STATUSES

Once a suitable refugee candidate was found, most companies hired refugees into a job subject to social insurance contributions (88 percent), followed by internships (85 percent), and apprenticeships (75 percent).[31] When evaluating the different forms of employment refugees were hired for, the survey rated jobs subject to social insurance contributions as the most beneficial for the company. Apprenticeships were rated second-most useful, followed by *minijobs* and *midijobs*, assisted training, and internships. Entry-level training that prepares apprentices for training and job shadowing, or trial work, were rated comparatively lower but still positively.

Compared to new hires in short-term jobs, the one-off recruitment and training costs for employees who are subject to social security contributions was relatively low. At the same time, employees subject to social insurance contributions can bring value to the company over the medium- to long-term as they develop knowledge and experience in the role and company. Additionally, the contributions to social insurance benefit both the state and the employee; employees are covered against unemployment or sickness-related absences, and employee contributions help the state collect funds that prop up the social security system.

Refugees in full- and part-time jobs subject to social insurance contributions tend to enable companies to have a long-term work relationship, with lower recruiting costs and turnover. However, trial work, internships, or *minijobs* can also be suitable types of employment for companies, and even lead to more long-term jobs subject to social security contributions. Through these different short-term employment types, companies can trial the employment relationship and figure out which adjustments are necessary to keep the refugee as a permanent employee.[32] During these more temporary forms of employment, information about the company culture and job roles can also be conveyed to short-term refugee employees. Finally, apprenticeships can help companies recruit long-term employees who are specialized in the company's areas of operation.

31. Response to the question, "Which of the following employment relationships with refugees have you already entered into? *[If already entered into]* On average, how would you rate the employment relationships you have entered into in terms of benefits to your company?"
32. Cf. The Friendly Nation Initiative & Migration Council of Australia (2019)

2.3 CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

When asked about the challenges to refugee hiring and integration, companies cited a number of challenges including language barriers, difficulty validating credentials and qualifications, and bureaucratic and organizational issues.[33]

Despite these challenges, companies are satisfied with the support services offered which helped employers address these obstacles.[34] Companies in Germany have access to a range of support measures developed by the public sector, third-party organizations like NGOs, or even within the company, which can be tailored to the individual needs of companies and their refugee employees. Official government support services play an increasingly important role during the recruitment and hiring process, whereas services offered by companies or external organizations are important once refugees have been hired.[35]

The following sections identify the specific challenges that companies experience when hiring refugees and present the companies' approaches to solving them.

2.3.1 General support services

Among the best-known public support services are those offered through employer services at employment agencies and job centers in Germany. Ninety percent of companies were familiar with these and 88 percent used these services. Eighty-three percent of companies were aware of their "integration subsidy" (financial assistance from the government for employers that hire refugees) and 77 percent used this subsidy.

There are other government services that help employers recruit and integrate refugees. While companies were less familiar with these other government services, those companies that did use them rated these services highly. Public support services provided by special advisers such as integration guides, special advisers, welcome guides, or social workers, as well as programs such as "preparatory entry qualifications" *(ausbildungsvorbereitende Einstiegsqualifizierung)* and "assisted training" *(assistierte Ausbildung)* were rated particularly highly. More than 90 percent of companies surveyed were satisfied with these support services.[36] It is a good idea for companies hiring refugees for the first time to learn about lesser-known public support services and to make use of these if necessary. About half of the companies surveyed knew about "assisted training", although it was rated second in effectiveness. Through assisted training, both the companies and the refugee trainees are supported by the Federal Employment Agency. This support helps reduce the administrative workload for employers.[37]

33. Responses to the questions "What are typical hurdles in recruiting and integrating refugees at your company?" and "Which of the following hurdles have created problems for you in recruiting, hiring, and integrating refugees at your company? Please rate each of the following hurdles."
34. Response to the question "Which of the following support services to recruit and integrate refugees are you aware of? [If already aware] Have you already used any? *[If already used]* How do you rate these offerings?"
35. Cf. Interviews as well as Köhler & Ettl (2019)
36. Values 1 and 2 on a scale from 1 (very satisfied) to 4 (dissatisfied) are rated as satisfactory.
37. For more information, see Federal Employment Agency (2021a).

2.3.2 Additional company-specific support services

While companies cited some challenges related to the hiring of refugees, the challenges were largely matched with solutions that helped businesses overcome these obstacles. In the words of one company, there are "no hurdles, only tasks."[38] In addition to public support services, supplementary support services are those provided by the companies themselves or by external organizations and advisors.[39] Figure 2-2 compares the greatest challenges with the most frequently used solutions.

▲ **Figure 2-2** | Comparison of challenges and solutions

Rank	Challenge		Approach to solution		Rank
1	Lack of language skills	76%	Extra occupational language courses	74%	2
2	Lack of qualifications for the desired job	58%	Continued education/training	67%	3
3	Lack of qualification certificates	57%	Qualification analysis (in the form of short "trial work")	80%	1
4	Problems with the recognition/comparability of knowledge acquired abroad	56%			

Source: Responses to the questions "Which of the following hurdles have caused you problems in recruiting, hiring and training refugees at your company?" and "Which of the following additional measures in the recruitment and employment of refugees have you already used? [If already taken] How would you rate the measures used on average?" (own presentation).

Note: Challenges are rated as such if companies faced them "frequently" or "very frequently."

MOST FREQUENTLY CITED CHALLENGES AND MOST FREQUENTLY USED SOLUTIONS:

For most companies (76 percent), a lack of language skills was often or very often a problem when recruiting, hiring, and training refugees (other studies have corroborated this finding).[40] According to employers, this was particularly challenging for refugee trainees taking theoretical or written tests, whereas refugees performed better when tested on practical tasks. When refugees are initially assigned to less complex tasks relative to their qualification while they are learning the local language, they are able to perform more complicated tasks quickly and successfully over the medium-term.[41]

38. Response to the question, "What are typical hurdles and problems in hiring and integrating refugees at your company?"
39. Response to the question, "Which of the following supplementary measures in the hiring and employment of refugees have you already taken? *[If already taken]* How would you rate the measures taken, on average?"
40. Cf. e.g. Pierenkemper & Heuer (2020), Flake et al. (2017) and Geis et al. (2016)
41. See also Brücker et al. (2019)

To help reduce language barriers, around three-quarters of the companies surveyed offered language training, which was rated favorably as a best practice.[42] Companies have developed solutions tailored to their needs; some companies provided support to refugee employees so they could communicate with authorities to obtain work permits, while others cooperated with external partners to teach refugee employees language skills relevant to the company's day-to-day operations.

Fifty-eight percent of companies cited a lack of qualifications for the role as a challenge to refugee hiring. Around 35 percent of refugees who came to Germany between 2013 and 2016 had acquired a level of education in their country of origin that was equivalent at most to a German elementary school education.[43] In response, around two-thirds of companies offered continuing education and internal training for refugees; this was also rated positively as a best practice.[44]

A majority of the companies surveyed said that a lack of proof and issues with the recognition and comparability of degrees obtained abroad were a hurdle in the refugee hiring process. To avoid having to rely on proof of qualification, 80 percent of companies tested applicants' qualifications through a short-term work trial. This approach – the most widely used of all the best practices mentioned – was rated as the third-best option among the measures surveyed. A work trial ensured that candidates were qualified for the desired position and helped assess teamwork, attitude, and language skills before a company offered a longer-term employment contract.[45]

TOP-RATED BEST PRACTICES:

Of all the measures to support refugees during the hiring and integration process, companies rated the "buddy program" the highest, and two-thirds of companies surveyed said they had already implemented a buddy program. A buddy program provides support for refugees by matching them with a fellow employee who can help them navigate their new workplace, help them understand workplace dynamics, and sometimes help them learn job tasks. If refugees are assigned a buddy with a similar position at the company, the buddy can effectively relay advice on job functions to the refugee employee and help them navigate company processes. This exchange helps lower the threshold for asking questions when the refugee employees start their new role. Companies also reported that buddy programs improved interactions between refugees and non-refugees, which in turn helped reduce language barriers. Existing research highlights that the qualities of the buddy are crucial for success: for example, if a multilingual person or someone with similar experiences – such as country of origin, educational or professional background, or native language – is chosen as a buddy, it can increase the success of the program.[46]

42. Response to the question, "Which of the following additional measures in the hiring and employment of refugees have you already used? *[If already taken]* How would you rate the measures used , on average?" The measures were rated 1.74 or 1.81, respectively (rating scale from 1 "very satisfied" to 4 "dissatisfied").
43. Cf. Geis et al. (2016)
44. The measure was rated 1.81 by the companies surveyed (rating scale from 1 "very satisfied" to 4 "dissatisfied").
45. Response to the question, "What would you recommend to other companies that want to hire refugees?"
46. Cf. The Friendly Nation Initiative & Migration Council of Australia (2019), p. 37

Transportation support was rated positively among companies. Since refugees rely primarily on public transportation, commuting can become a challenge for them – especially in rural areas or if they have irregular working hours.[47] In addition to transportation to the workplace, refugees also need a way to get to integration courses, language courses, or government agencies. Companies can arrange carpools to help refugee employees who do not have access to public transportation to get to work.

LESS FREQUENTLY USED MEASURES:

Both midsize and large companies deploy diversity training and childcare support less frequently, with less than half of the companies surveyed using these measures despite their high rating in terms of efficiency.

Depending on companies' individual needs, lesser-used measures can also be effective. For example, if companies want to increase the number of refugee women in their workforce specifically, they should keep in mind that women often bear a disproportionate burden of childcare. Refugee women sometimes have no other option but to remain unemployed,[48] however, companies can reduce this barrier by providing childcare options.

"For companies, it is advisable to identify the needs of refugee employees and the processes that need to be adapted and to combine various support services in line with these needs." ▲

In conclusion, companies should not be deterred by challenges they might face in the refugee hiring process; to overcome these obstacles, employers should take advantage of support services available to them through government programs, external organizations, and internal company programs. Companies should identify the needs of refugee employees, the elements of the company's processes that need to be adapted, and combine various support services in line with these needs. Often, this includes buddy programs, language training, and short-term trials. Companies should get detailed information about existing support programs, find creative solutions and try diverse offerings: even less-common measures were rated positively by the companies surveyed.

47. Cf. Geis (2017) and Rösch et al. (2020)
48. Cf. Brückner et al. (2020)

3.

The business case for hiring refugees

Corporate social responsibility is often the main driver for companies interested in hiring refugees. However, many employers also recognize that beyond the positive social impact of integrating refugees into the workforce, hiring refugees can also bring about business benefits. This section analyzes the survey responses of companies that were asked about the business impact of refugee hiring. This chapter starts off by analyzing the effects of refugee hiring from companies' perspective; it presents an assessment of refugee employees' attitude in the workplace; it looks at whether companies would hire refugees again in the future; and it concludes with recommendations to other companies interested in hiring refugees. Additionally, two major German companies that have hired refugees also offered in-depth insights on their specific hiring initiatives through qualitative interviews. Their stories are laid out in two case studies at the end of this section that draw on the specific challenges, solutions, and results of each refugee hiring program.

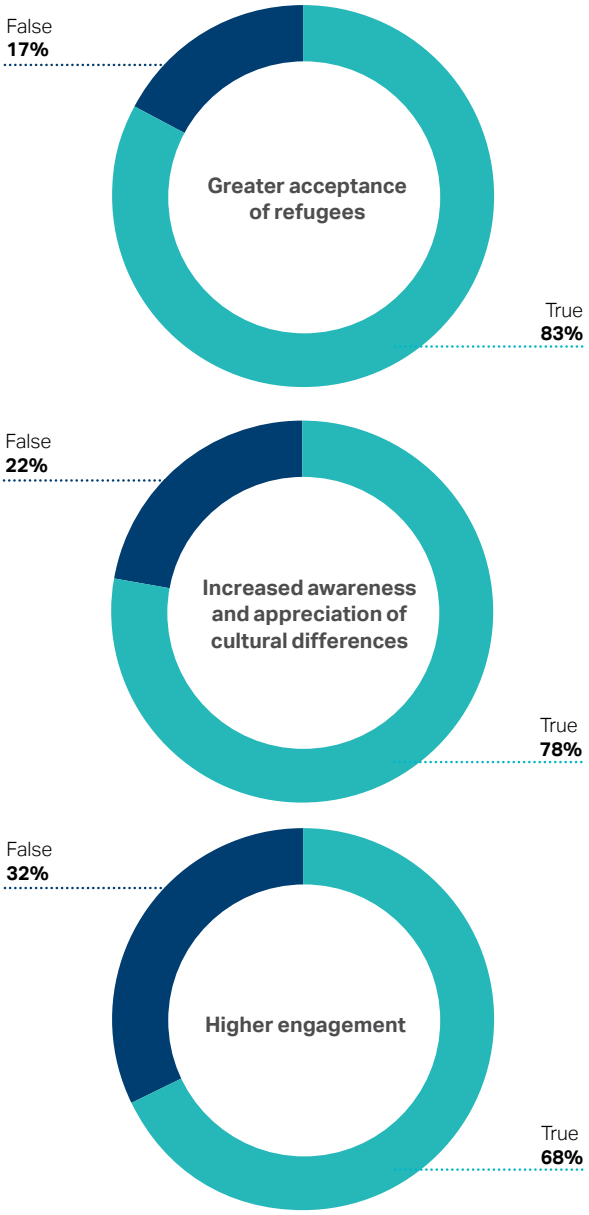
3.1.1 Business benefits of hiring refugees

EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

Hiring refugees contributes to higher employee satisfaction in various ways. For 83 percent of companies, hiring refugees led to greater acceptance of refugees in the workforce. For 78 percent of companies, it led to increased awareness and appreciation of cultural differences among employees, and for 68 percent it led to increased employee engagement.

Past studies show that non-refugees who work alongside refugee colleagues attach greater meaning to their work.[49] Non-refugee employees who work alongside refugee colleagues feel they are able to contribute to a social cause in their daily lives. Non-refugee employees are incorporated into the integration of their refugees colleagues in different ways, for example, by helping their refugee colleagues learn and practice German, participating in buddy programs, or partaking in social gatherings like potlucks or cooking events that allow employees to learn about each other's cultural backgrounds through cuisine. When non-refugee employees participate in these initiatives with refugee colleagues, it can lead to higher employee satisfaction, better cooperation and increased employee loyalty.

▲ **Figure 3-1** | Impact of refugee hiring on employee satisfaction



Source: Response to the question, "Please rate from 1 (fully applies) to 4 (does not apply at all) the extent to which the following statements apply to your experience of integrating refugees within your company" (own data).

49. Cf. The Friendly Nation Initiative & Migration Council of Australia (2019) and Breaking Barriers (2018)

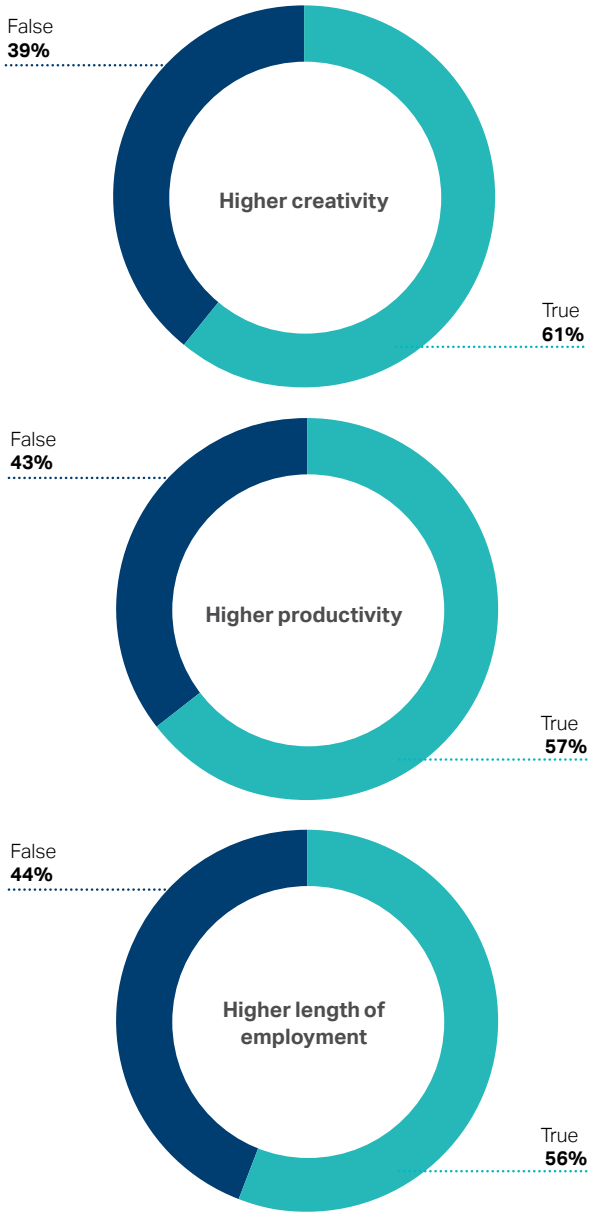
RETENTION, CREATIVITY, AND PRODUCTIVITY

As a direct consequence of increased employee satisfaction, 56 percent of companies experienced higher employee retention. As a result, companies benefited from reduced hiring and training costs.[50]

Sixty-one percent of companies also reported increased creativity within the workforce as a result of hiring refugees. This can be attributed to the fact that most refugees speak multiple languages and bring diverse perspectives, different cultural backgrounds, and professional experiences to their work. Refugee employees may question procedures and workplace processes more than non-refugee employees and may therefore suggest innovative solutions to problems.[51]

Fifty-seven percent of companies said that they benefited from increased productivity as a result of hiring refugees. With a more diverse workforce, new perspectives can optimize decision-making processes leading to increased productivity.[52] Diversity also increases innovation in the workplace, which in turn is reflected through higher productivity and better outcomes.[53]

▲ **Figure 3-2** | Impact of refugee hiring on company success



Source: Response to the question, "Please rate from 1 (fully applies) to 4 (does not apply at all) the extent to which the following statements apply to your experience of integrating refugees in your company" (own data).

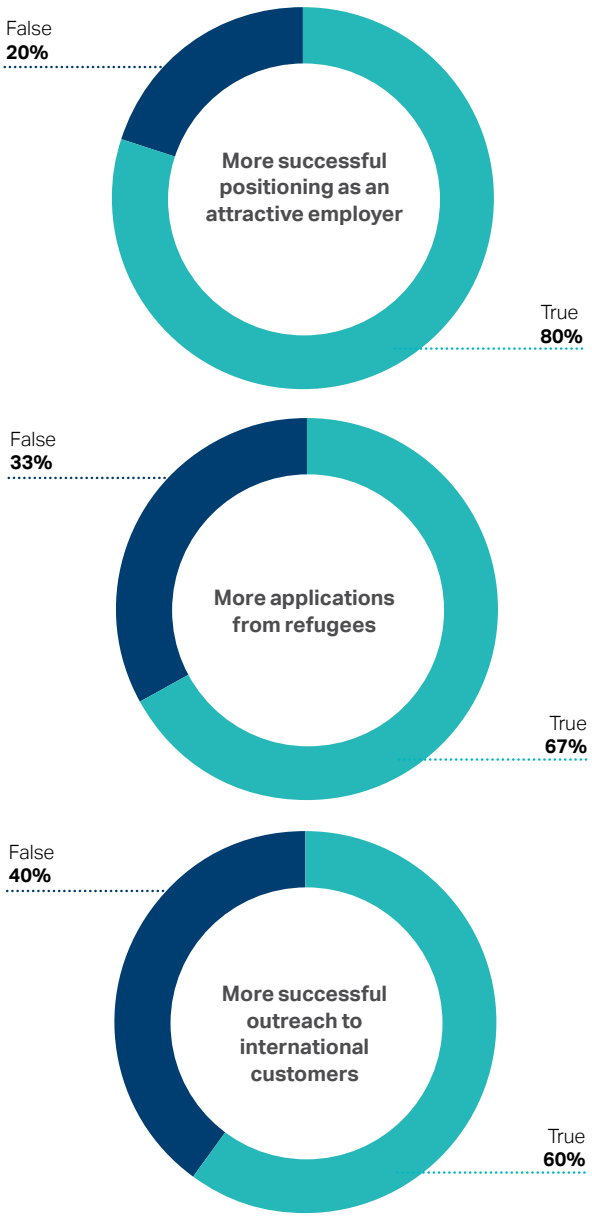
50. Cf. German Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Climate Action (Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft und Klimaschutz) (2021)
51. Cf. Legrain (2016)
52. Cf. Breaking Barriers (2018)
53. Cf. The Friendly Nation Initiative & Migration Council of Australia (2019)

EMPLOYER ATTRACTIVENESS FOR FUTURE EMPLOYEES AND BRAND ATTRACTIVENESS FOR CONSUMERS

In addition to increased creativity, productivity, and retention, the majority of the companies surveyed said that they were able to better position themselves as appealing employers by hiring refugees. In fact, 67 percent of companies said they had a higher number of applications from other refugee candidates after hiring refugees. Additionally, companies that hire refugees are more attractive to consumers and can broaden their customer base when hiring refugees. 60 percent of companies said they operated more successfully in international markets as a result of hiring refugees. Refugee employees can increase linguistic and cultural diversity in the workplace and help the company get exposure to international contacts. For example, if a company is looking to serve a certain customer base that speaks the same language as the refugee employees at a company, the business could be better positioned to reach that market.

Hiring refugees enables the company's workforce to reflect a more diverse customer base, which contributes to customer loyalty.[54] Regardless of their own background, the majority of customers respond favorably to businesses that hire and support the integration of refugees. In fact, consumers are more likely to buy from brands that support refugees.[55]

▲ **Figure 3-3** | Impact of refugee hiring on company attractiveness



Source: Response to the question, "Please rate from 1 (fully applies) to 4 (does not apply at all) the extent to which the following statements apply to your experience of integrating refugees in your company" (own data).

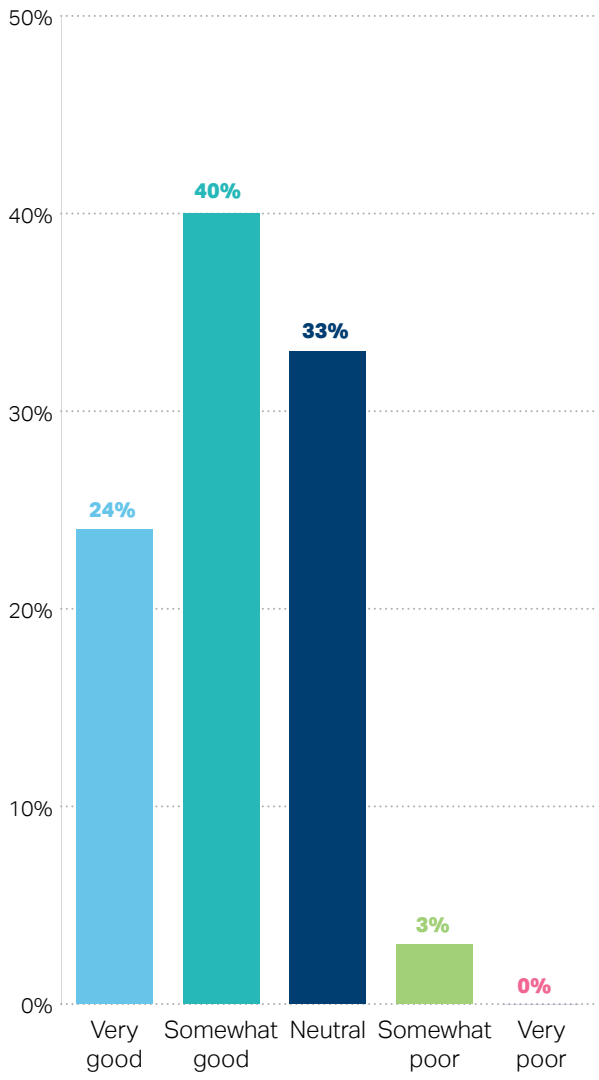
54. Response to the question, "What are typical hurdles and problems in hiring and integrating refugees at your company?"
55. Cf. Erdem et al. (2019) und Pierenkemper & Heuer (2020)

3.1.2 Evaluating the experience of hiring refugees

In the context of these business benefits, it is perhaps unsurprising that the majority of the companies surveyed rated the overall experience of hiring refugees positively. Overall, 24 percent rated it as "very good" and 40 percent as "rather good." A third had "partially good" and "partially bad" experiences. Only 3 percent of the companies stated that hiring refugees was a "rather bad" experience. Among other reasons, this small percentage of companies that had a "rather bad" experience stated that their expectations in terms of the outcomes of hiring refugees were not met. Not a single company rated the hiring of refugees as a "bad" experience.[56]

It is interesting to note that overall satisfaction with the experience of hiring refugees did not vary significantly across company size, years of experience hiring refugees, or the number of refugees working at the company. There is only a slight correlation between industry and type of employment.

▲ **Figure 3-4** | Rating refugee hiring



Source: Responses to the question, "Overall, how would you rate your experience with refugee employees at the company, from 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad)?" (own data).

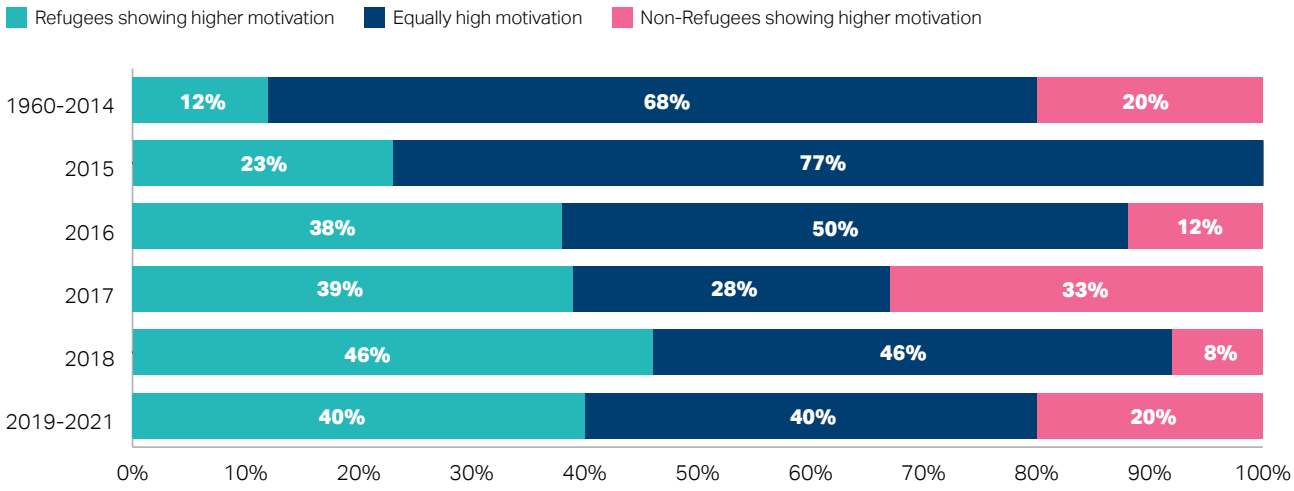
56. Response to the question, "Overall, how would you rate your experience with refugee employees at the company, from 1 (very good) to 5 (very bad)?"

3.1.3 Motivation of refugees vs. non-refugee employees

Refugees can reinvigorate the workplace and improve morale through their motivation. One-third of companies said that refugees were more motivated than non-refugee employees while 53 percent rated refugees' motivation as the same as non-refugee employees.[57] Regardless of company size or location, participating companies rated refugees' motivation and commitment highly.[58] The fact that motivation is exceptionally high, especially among younger refugees, means that companies can expect employees to learn quickly, even if their professional or educational qualifications were limited when they first started a role.[59]

Companies that recruited refugees for the first time in recent years rated refugees' motivation particularly highly. As illustrated in Figure 3-5, companies that have been recruiting refugees since 2015 benefitted the most from refugees' high level of motivation.

▲ **Figure 3-5** | Motivation of refugee and non-refugee employees by period of initial refugee recruitment



Source: Responses to the question, "Compared to 'non-refugees' in a similar position, who shows greater motivation at work?" (own data).

57. Response to the question, "Compared to 'non-refugees' in similar positions, who shows higher motivation?"
58. Cf. Pierenkemper & Heuer (2020) and The Friendly Nation Initiative & Migration Council of Australia (2019)
59. Cf. Salzwedel (2018) und Berger & Dietz (2016)

3.1.4 Future recruitment

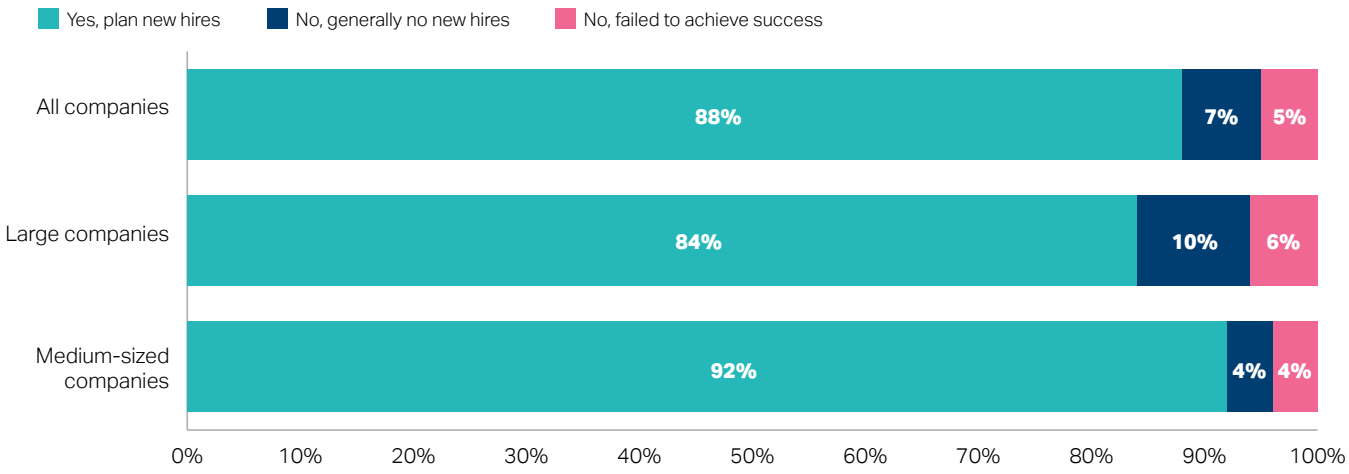
Perhaps the most important finding from the survey is that a significant majority (88 percent) of companies would like to hire more refugees in the coming year.[60] The better the companies rated their experiences with refugees, the more likely they were to plan to hire more refugees in the coming year. Studies also confirm that companies that already employ refugees are much more likely to hire additional refugees in the future.[61]

The fact that such a high percentage of companies surveyed were planning to hire more refugees is quite remarkable given that not all companies typically hire new employees each year. For example, only one in two companies planned to hire new employees in 2020, given the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.[62] It is also interesting to note that, while companies tended to hire proportionally to size of their workforce, midsize companies had an outsized positive response to whether they would hire more refugees – 92 percent of midsize companies compared to 84 percent of large companies said they were planning to hire more refugees in the coming year.

Refugee workers are especially important to large companies, who need to recruit a higher number of employees to fill open roles. In the context of increased demand for labor, refugees will play an important role for these companies.[63] One company said it would already be unable to meet its demand for workers without hiring refugees. As more senior workers retire, the company will likely turn to refugee candidates to fill these positions.

60. Response to the question, "Do you plan to hire more refugees in the next 12 months?"
61. Cf. Geis et al. (2016)
62. Cf. Krill (2020)
63. Cf. Geis et al. (2016)

▲ **Figure 3-6** | Planned new hires of refugees by company size



Source: Responses to the question, "Do you plan to hire more refugees in the next 12 months?" (own data).

Companies across all sectors and industries are likely to hire more refugees in the next year. In each sector, at least 83 percent of the companies want to hire more refugees. This was especially true for the public sector (100 percent), trade and logistics sector (93 percent), and services sector (90 percent) and is consistent with the fact that, in previous years, the retail, hospitality, and automotive services sectors were already turning to refugees to fill open roles.[64]

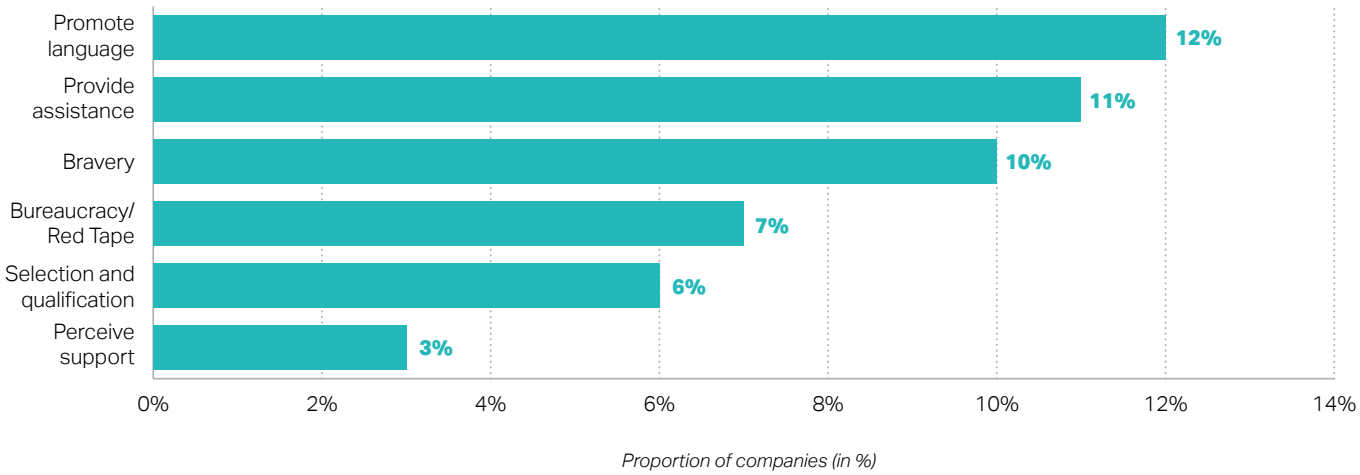
The majority of companies that did not plan to hire more refugees in the coming year did not plan to hire any new employees at all, partly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Only 5 percent of companies did not plan to hire more refugees in the future, citing that hiring refugees was not successful or that it took too much effort.[65]

3.1.5 Conclusions and recommendations

The overarching conclusion garnered from the survey is that, overall, companies have had very positive experiences with refugee hiring. Companies stand to gain a range of business benefits when they hire refugees, including higher employee retention, and a more creative, productive, and engaged workforce. Refugee employees have "...a deep desire to work and change for the better," and this motivation can help reduce the obstacles refugees face, such as language barriers and limited qualifications. Refugee employees help companies improve their market positioning as an attractive employer, broaden their customer base, and enhance consumer loyalty. Given these business benefits and the added value refugees bring to the workforce, it should come as no surprise

64. Cf. DGB (2019)
65. Response to question, *"[If the answer to question ("Do you plan to hire more refugees in the next 12 months?") is "Probably not" or "Definitely not"]* Please explain why:"

▲ **Figure 3-7** | Recommendations for action



Source: Open-ended responses to the question, "What would you recommend to other companies looking to hire refugees?" (own data).

that a majority of companies were looking to hire more refugee employees.

Companies are positive about hiring refugees, regardless of company size, industry, or region. When asked for recommendations for other companies, businesses called for openness, empathy, patience, and willingness to give refugee hiring a chance.[66] Figure 3-7 summarizes the recommendations that companies shared for other employers wishing to hire refugees. To facilitate integration in the workplace, 12 percent mentioned promoting language skills. Seven percent suggested that companies should not be deterred by bureaucratic hurdles, whereas six percent recommend asking specific questions about the qualifications of refugees during the hiring process.

Companies recommended the use of state and municipal assistance, language training, and the development of buddy programs for refugees.

Companies also said refugee employees should have a basic level of language proficiency (or implement language workarounds like translating written material into a refugees' local language or using visual tools that don't require language proficiency) so that they could take part in safety training.

Companies also emphasized the need to train non-refugee employees on how they can prepare for and make the workplace more inclusive for refugee employees.

66. Response to the question, "What would you recommend to other companies that want to hire refugees?"

Companies also recommended that employers identify their specific needs and assess what type of employment, whether its a full-time role, apprenticeship, mini- or midi-job could be most effective for both the company and the refugee employee.

Figure 3-8 includes examples of open-ended responses from companies that were asked about recommendations for other businesses interested in hiring refugees.

A sufficient level of language proficiency was said to be required at the very beginning of the employment relationship – for example, to properly conduct safety training. The training of non-refugee employees on how to interact with refugee employees was also emphasized.

▲ **Figure 3-8** | Selected responses to the question, "What would you recommend to other companies that want to hire refugees?"

Source: Responses to the question, "What would you recommend to other companies looking to hire refugees?" (own data).

3.2 CASE STUDIES

The following case studies highlight the refugee hiring initiatives at two major companies in Germany. The companies participated in detailed qualitative interviews to gain a better understanding of the unique challenges, successes, and results of refugee hiring initiatives in two different workplaces.

3.2.1 Deutsche Post DHL Group

Deutsche Post DHL Group

Deutsche Post DHL Group (DHL) is a global leader in logistics services, headquartered in Bonn, Germany. As one of the largest private employers worldwide, the company employs around 570,000 people and operates in over 220 countries and territories. Since the end of 2015, almost 16,800 refugees have signed an apprenticeship or employment contract, and around 1,200 refugees have joined the company as interns. DHL believes that "integration can only be achieved if all stakeholders come together, including businesses".

For DHL, a central component of hiring refugees is allowing the refugee and company to get to know each other. This is, for example, possible through an internship program where a refugee employee can learn about the company, meet colleagues to expand their professional network, and gain new skills. At the same time, the company can test out working with the refugee employee and assess whether a full-time job is right for both the refugee employee and the company. The internship program gives refugees a chance even if they have limited language proficiency or limited qualifications.

Through internships, the company can also determine if the refugee employee needs additional support and what kind of support would be helpful in a full-time role.. At the same time, refugee interns can use this short-term employment to assess whether the company is a good fit for them, and what role would best fit their skills and interests. Once a refugee is hired, DHL relies on support from individuals at the company, including a buddy program that sets up new refugee employees with more experienced employees. As a result of this individualized support and their own hard work, some refugee employees have already been promoted to team leader positions. The company also recommends that any conflicts that arise due to language barriers or other obstacles are solved through an open dialogue. This approach leads to a more cooperative and open workplace.

Overall, DHL sees refugee hiring "as a win-win." The company has succeeded in creating meaningful job opportunities for refugees and simultaneously bolstering the company's workforce by hiring a significant number of refugee employees. DHL believes integration is society's duty, and seeks to do its part as a member of the business community while also reaping the benefits of a stronger workforce.

96. Zur Methode von leitfragengestützten Interviews, siehe bspw. Böring & Dortz (2016)
97. Zitat aus dem Interview mit der Deutsche Post DHL Group
98. Zitat aus dem Interview mit der Deutsche Post DHL Group

3.2.2 Gegenbauer

Gegenbauer

Gegenbauer is a facility services company headquartered in Berlin with approximately 18,000 employees from over 100 countries. Founded in 1925, Gegenbauer has operations in the cleaning, security, technical, environmental, and administrative sectors. Gegenbauer has a long history of hiring foreign workers, starting in the 20th century when the company hired many Turkish employees when many foreigners emigrated to Germany with "guest worker" visas.

In order to service its growing number of orders, Gegenbauer needs to expand its workforce. This demand for workers has been further exacerbated in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Hiring refugees was a natural step for the company, in keeping with the company's tradition of including foreign workers.

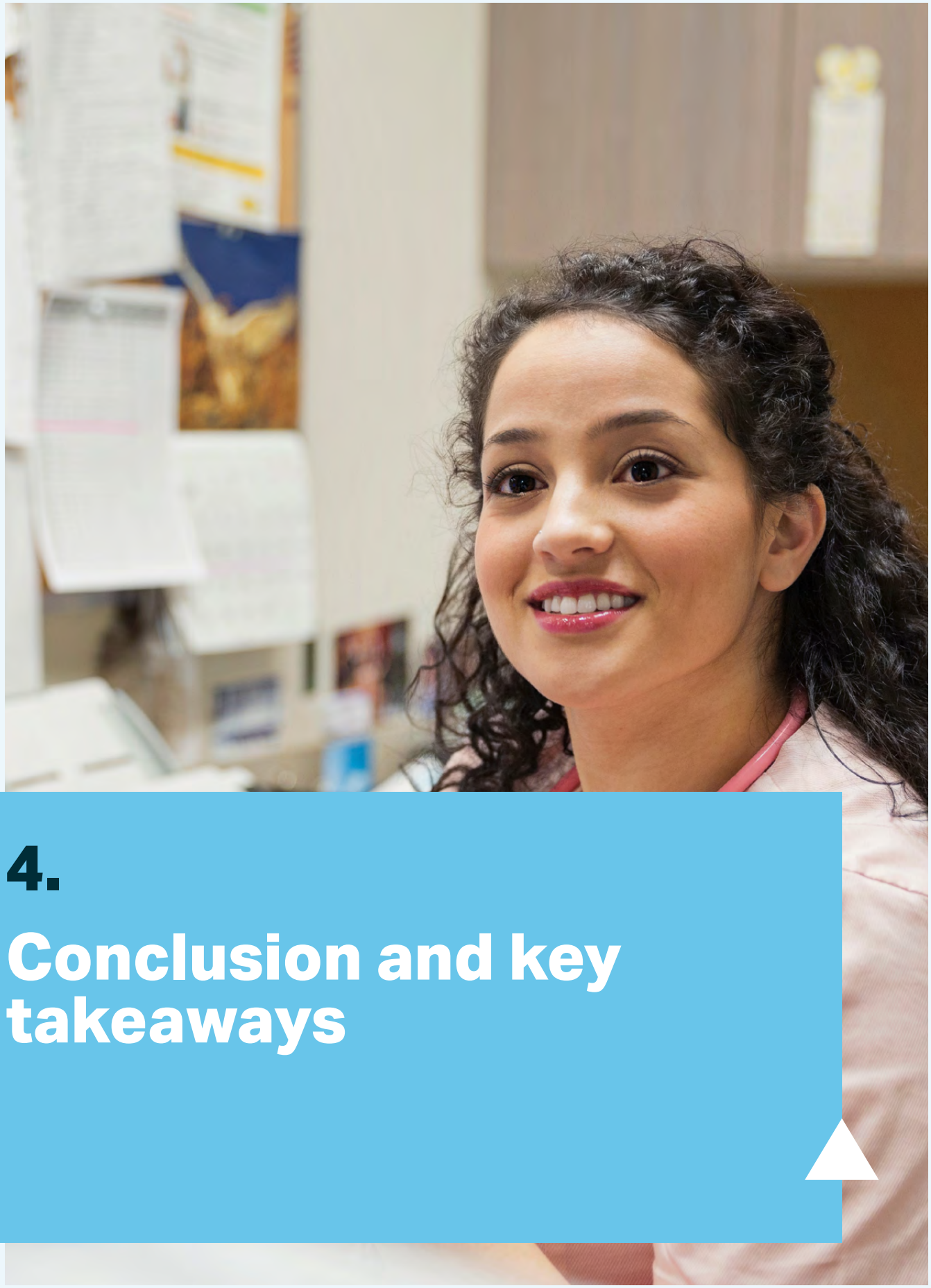
In Gegenbauer's view, the right way to hire is to "let people arrive slowly and learn on the job." Once refugees have learned how to navigate the workplace culture and local language, they can take advantage of further in-house training to become skilled workers or team leaders.

Gegenbauer said that refugees are highly motivated workers, but acknowledged that, once refugees are hired, language training is key to not only excel in the practical aspects of the work but also the theoretical areas. Gegenbaur teaches refugees German through an app instead of regular language courses, so that refugee employees can learn the language on a flexible schedule This app was developed through a collaboration between Gegenbauer and the app developer LinguaTV to meet the company's specific language needs. Supported by instructors, users can learn words that are relevant to work and everyday life and practice conversations together. The fact that non-refugee employees can also practice English on the app strengthens the company's ability to serve non-German-speaking customers. In addition, refugees and non-refugees can practice their language skills in small groups at regularly scheduled conversations called "Table Talks" which also help establish relationships among employees.

Gegenbauer recommends that other companies make use of the services and training offered by external organizations like NGOs. Getting support from expert organizations can help prepare HR teams, managers, and other colleagues so they can effectively integrate refugee employees. Gegenbauer also recommends creating a specific position at the company for an employee responsible for assisting refugees with onboarding. This person can support refugee employees in a variety of ways, for example, by offering language training, or helping them prepare for appointments with the German immigration authorities or landlords.

In the coming years, Gegenbauer plans to hire more refugees, especially as the company faces a worker shortage. Gegenbauer is currently developing a training program that will help refugees gain skills on the job; this training will create a new role between area assistant and area specialist to help Gegenbauer secure a talented, skilled workforce, which in turn will support the company's long-term profitability.

99. Zitat aus dem Interview mit Gegenbauer



4.

Conclusion and key takeaways

As Germany prepares to welcome a new wave of refugees in 2022, the experiences of German businesses that have already hired refugees in recent years are an important blueprint for economic integration. Through the challenges that companies faced and the solutions they implemented to effectively hire and integrate refugee employees, this analysis aims to help more German businesses take the initiative - with even better results.

Businesses should recognize the value that each refugee can bring to their workforce when given the opportunity. Companies that hire refugees stand to gain better market positioning, greater overall employee satisfaction, higher retention rates, increased productivity, and greater creativity.

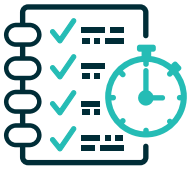
As a final message, we offer some key takeaways from the findings of this research to provide practical guidance to companies that plan to hire refugees. These actionable takeaways are organized by each phase in the talent acquisition cycle, including recruitment, hiring, and onboarding.

4.1 RECRUITMENT

Company decision-makers might have reservations about recruiting refugees for the first time. The experience of other companies shows that these concerns are usually unfounded.

EVERY COMPANY CAN BENEFIT:

Regardless of sector, region or size, companies had positive experiences hiring refugees. Every company can benefit from motivated, loyal, and qualified workers.



PLANNING PAYS OFF:

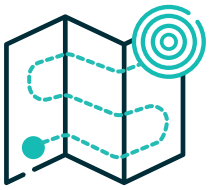
While challenges during recruiting are inevitable, companies can find support and solutions to help overcome these obstacles. "By planning early, companies can best prepare for challenges and incorporate the experiences of others. Before hiring, companies should define the target group of potential employees, necessary qualifications, and expected obstacles they will encounter, and plan accordingly.

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PERFECT JOB LISTING:

Companies use various recruitment channels to reach refugee job candidates. Generally, they can use the same hiring channels for refugees that they would use for non-refugees, but there are also channels that are especially useful for refugee recruitment, including the German Federal Employment Agency, direct contact with refugee organizations, and online job platforms. Companies can also rely on creative solutions to find refugee candidates, such as on-site job fairs or presentations at refugee housing sites.

4.2 HIRING

Once a company makes the decision to hire a refugee, it should have a plan for an effective onboarding process, to set the refugee employee up for success.



ALIGN COMPANY NEEDS WITH THE TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT OFFER:

The type of employment offered to refugee candidates should align with the company's needs. For example, if companies are looking to retain employees over the long-term, they should plan to offer them a full-time position. If the company is looking to assign the refugee employee to a job that requires specific expertise, they should offer them a training position. The company can also hire refugees through short-term programs like internships and minijobs, which can help the company assess skills and potential, while giving the refugee a chance to test out a role and learn about the company.

DON'T BE DETERRED:

Obstacles in the hiring process are inevitable, but companies can choose appropriate measures to overcome them. While companies rely on close cooperation with employment agencies and job centers during recruitment, after hiring they primarily rely on private third-party services and in-company measures. To develop suitable hiring and onboarding programs, it is helpful to exchange ideas with other companies and NGOs.

FOSTERING COOPERATION IN THE WORKPLACE TO ENHANCE INTEGRATION:

Non-refugee employees can contribute significantly to the integration of refugees in the workforce, for example, by serving as a buddy to refugee colleagues. Effective preparation through diversity training, can also better prepare non-refugee colleagues and help make the workplace more inclusive for all. Work events that bring refugee and non-refugee employees together can help employees learn about and value cultural differences and promote inclusion and belonging.

4.3 INTEGRATION AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Once the new employee has been hired, various measures are available to expand and the tailor the integration process.

MORE IS MORE:
There is a wide range of support services available to help companies based on their individual needs. Support services provide added value when incorporated into the company's hiring and integration processes. It is essential to communicate with refugee employees to identify needs, address problems, and adapt support services. This applies during hiring, onboarding, and well after the integration phase is over.

LANGUAGE IS KEY:
Companies should identify what is the minimum level of language proficiency that an employee needs to properly collaborate and perform tasks. Even after hiring, language training and workaround solutions are key to integration. Companies can rely on their own language training programs, or work with external organizations to create language courses, apps, and develop language practice initiatives to help refugee employees deepen their language skills.

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT:
Each refugee employee has a unique situation, and the company should tailor its support to these needs. For example, companies can arrange carpools for refugees that may not have access to a car or public transit, and set up childcare options to support refugee women with children. Buddy programs can help refugee employees navigate the new workplace.

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