



5 Access and Use of Welfare Benefits

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5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines evidence on integration of newly arrived migrants into welfare systems within Europe. We draw on the literature that analyses post-2014 migrants' access to social security and social benefits in the receiving countries, as well as the research focusing on the use of those social benefits or other material support, and how this is regulated or facilitated through policy and practice.

Themes of differential welfare access among socially weak groups (Gøsta Esping Anderson and John Myles 2009) and the interaction between welfare service providers and their clients (Lipsky 2010; Ambrosini 2017) are long-established research fields across a variety of disciplines. However, the attention to immigrant populations in such works has been less frequent. One reason for this is that looking at ethnicity or migration backgrounds often goes against the ideology of relevant institutions, and to some extent also the research on this issue (Georges Felouzis 2010). Nevertheless, a significant portion of research at the intersection of welfare and migration studies comparatively analyses the use of welfare benefits by migrants and the

receiving population. The extent of reliance on welfare among established immigrant groups and their descendants, including Turkish and Moroccan communities, have also been examined closely. This chapter does not touch upon that stream of literature because the focus of our evidence review is on newly arrived immigrants.

Welfare access of post-2014 migrants has received substantially less scholarly attention. The research has focused mainly on intra-EU mobility and the welfare rights of EU citizens, rather than on third-country nationals. According to scientific research, policies with the aim of restricting welfare use are more dominant than those aiming to facilitate welfare access among migrant groups. This is particularly the case at the national level, where the welfare use of migrants and the (perceived) associated costs are highly politicised. Subsequently, most research on welfare-related policies and practices focuses on the restrictive aspect of those, while integration practices aiming to facilitate welfare access are both rare and rarely studied.

This chapter first outlines prominent streams of research published in the past 10 years that link welfare systems and migrants' integration processes. Secondly, on the basis of this research, the evidence describing the state of migrants' integration into welfare systems will be reviewed. Then, we will outline the common policy framings of problems related to welfare and migrant integration and the solutions presented by the literature, as well as policy instruments and tools that are aimed at solving the problems, and evidence evaluating their effectiveness. We will close the chapter with the conclusions and recommendations for practitioners of integration and policy makers.

5.2 Research on welfare systems and migrant integration

The literature examining the topic of welfare in migrant integration focuses mainly on Nordic and Western countries of Europe: Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Austria.

One strand of literature explored the relationship between types of welfare state and welfare outcomes among recent immigrants. A commonly applied typology is that of Esping-Andersen, identifying three ‘ideal types’: liberal, conservative corporatist, and social democratic (Sainsbury 2012). There are also attempts to build and refine typologies more specifically for immigrant social protection regimes (Lafleur and Vintila 2020). Further literature focuses on welfare generosity and immigrant social rights, that is whether generous welfare states are more likely to exclude immigrants from access to welfare benefits, or to grant them greater access (Römer 2017; Schmitt and Teney 2019). Research examined differences between nativist and post-national approaches of social

Figure 4: Geography of studies analysed in this review
 (larger countries are more frequent)



Figure 5: Key words from the titles of the reviewed literature



protection, in which the

former is based on citizenship, while the latter on residence – common to the EU. The study of Scheibelhofer has defined three strategies: generally, selectively, and purposefully gated access to social protection, limiting access to welfare for undocumented as well as highly-mobile migrants (Scheibelhofer 2022). Research has analysed trends of immigration and welfare provision in the EU; overall, the European welfare states tend to expand with the growth of immigration, rather than shrink, proving their resilience to the globalisation of immigration flows (Fenwick 2019).

Research have been also focusing on welfare use and welfare dependency among migrants and non-migrants (Gustafsson 2013; Bruckmeier and Wiemers 2017). Studies examined non-labour-motivated mobility of EU citizens from Northern to Southern states, and analysed the interactions and outcomes of retirees and patients within the welfare system of the receiving state (Finotelli 2020). A report by the Joint Research Centre, the European Commission’s science and knowledge service, published in 2019, exploited three waves of EU-SILC data to analyse how welfare benefit receipt differs between natives and non-EU migrants (A. Conte and Mazza 2019).

A further strand of research examines intra-EU mobility and how the supranational EU framework affects intra-EU migrants’ access to social benefits (Seeleib-Kaiser 2019; Bruzelius

2019; Vintila and Lafleur 2020). Recently, such research has looked at policy strategies that reshape and restrict access to welfare for EU citizens (Barbulescu and Favell 2020). Literature highlights that even under restrictive EU welfare laws, in some receiving states, more social rights are granted to the intra-EU migrants even if they do not fulfil the residency requirements, and that the category of ‘illegal EU migrants’ have been produced by various organizations and practitioners ‘bottom-up’ (Perna 2021; Lafleur and Mescoli 2018). Moreover, the links between welfare systems and intra-EU migrants’ mobility decisions have also been examined in recent years (de Jong and de Valk 2018; de Jong 2019; de Jong and de Valk 2020). Furthermore, relating to restrictive welfare policies, research has examined how such policies are employed as a means of migration control, and how access is restricted particularly for undocumented and irregular migrants (Karlsen 2021; Lafleur and Stanek 2017; Shutes 2016; Schoukens and Buttiens 2017; Bendixsen 2018; Leerkes 2016; Koning 2019; Ataç and Rosenberger 2019). Such literature exploring varying rights according to legal status is discussed further in the chapter, ‘Rights, legal status, and non-discrimination’.

Recently, a transnational focus on studies of welfare have emerged. The current cross-national research project, MitSoPro¹⁶ (Migration and Transnational Social Protection in (post) crisis Europe), examined the procedures, scope, and extension of welfare entitlements for third-country nationals across Europe, focusing on both receiving and sending states (Lafleur and Vintila 2020). In their literature review, they highlight that migrants’ welfare access has been studied in the field of social policy and migration research. It was argued that social policy scholars have overlooked specific barriers faced by migrants, as well as the fact that migrants maintain relations with welfare states of their origin countries and sometimes even with other welfare states where they have previously lived and worked. Migration scholars recently started using the concept of ‘transnational social protection’ to understand cross-border access to welfare (Vintila and Lafleur 2020; Levitt et al. 2017). The concepts of (Faist et al. 2015; Levitt et al. 2017) challenges clear cut distinctions between ‘here’ and ‘there’, but also between formal and informal systems of social protection, (Serra Mingot and Mazzucato 2018). Recent studies explored the ‘welfare paradox’, in which migrants are employed as agents of welfare systems (i.e., care workers), while themselves are excluded from social support systems of the receiving states (Oso and Martínez-Buján 2022, Valk 2015).

Further literature examines the role of front-line workers, also referred to as ‘street-level bureaucrats’, in welfare outcomes for immigrants (Hussénus 2021; Lipsky 2010; Trine 2019; Ambrosini 2017; Schütze 2020). These works look into the widely spread perceptions of front-line workers about the cultural otherness of immigrants and refugees, which is translated in the image of less able and backward newcomers that strive to benefit from the welfare system of socio-democratic states. Such research highlights the importance of personal discretion in the interactions with both EU and non-EU immigrant welfare claimants, even in highly regulated

¹⁶ For further information see <http://labos.ulg.ac.be/socialprotection/>

welfare allocation systems (Ratzmann and Heindlmaier 2022; Ratzmann 2022; 2021). Other research, on the contrary, highlights the struggles of welfare workers to incorporate compassion into bureaucratic duties. The research highlights unpreparedness of the street-level-bureaucrats to deal with psychological traumas experiences by refugees before or during their migration, which makes their bureaucratic duties morally challenging (Weiss Nerina and Gren Nina 2021). The notion of migrants’ deservingness as central to the practice of welfare provision in the EU has been examined by recent research (Ratzmann and Sahraoui 2021). The use of various languages or monolingualism by front-line workers has also been investigated in welfare institutions (Scheibelhofer, Holzinger, and Draxl 2021).

5.3 Integration situation (inequalities) in welfare

To describe the current state of post-2014 migrants’ integration into the welfare systems of the European states, we need to look at it from several angles. The issues of welfare access, welfare uptake, and income inequality will be discussed first, while at the end we highlight the differences among European countries. While reading the chapter, it is important to remember that refugees and asylum seekers are not the most studied group in the stream of literature that we draw upon here, and that other groups, such as EU mobile citizens and non-EU labour migrants, are more often in the focus of the welfare inequalities research.

(1) Access to Welfare

Immigration policies regulating the right to enter a country, and the intertwined rights to reside and work, lead to modes of exclusion from welfare systems. The requirement of holding a valid residence and work permit restrict social security access to several groups of migrants, such as asylum seekers in the period prior to their official recognition of their refugee status, rejected asylum seekers, and undocumented / irregular immigrants (Bendixsen 2018; Shutes 2016). Vintila and Lafleur’s edited volume “Migration and Access to Welfare Benefits in the EU: The Interplay between Residence and Nationality”, published in 2020, provides a comprehensive overview of 27 EU member states on that subject (Vintila and Lafleur 2020). However, the comparative analysis does not include specific groups of migrants who could also be defined as ‘newly arrived’: undocumented migrants, students, asylum seekers, refugees, posted workers, and seasonal workers. Nevertheless, based on this comparative analysis of welfare access for citizens and foreigners in the EU countries, it is found that the eligibility of migrants to both contributory and non-contributory benefits is restricted in most of the EU countries, particularly for third-country nationals coming from outside the EU. Such contributory benefits are based on an/the individual’s contributions to the funds during the years of gainful activity, i.e., employment. To be able to access those benefits, immigrants need to be officially employed in the receiving country for several years and their employers should pay those contributions. While most legally residing immigrants are not directly excluded from receiving contributory benefits, their employment could often be informal and unstable, which creates the indirect

potential for exclusion from those types of welfare benefit (Vintila and Lafleur 2020). With regards to non-contributory benefits, there is more evidence of direct exclusion of migrants, especially those coming from outside the EU. Those types of benefits aim to prevent poverty and destitution among vulnerable groups or in specific periods of their life (for instance by child rearing or old age). Access to those kinds of benefits is contingent on certain periods of gainful employment and often periods of residency in the receiving country. Overall, the length of residency and possession of the right documentation (i.e., long-term residence permits) are the main qualifying conditions for migrants to access social benefits in the EU (Vintila and Lafleur 2020).

Beyond the legal provisions regarding access to welfare systems, front-line welfare workers also could facilitate or restrict the granting of benefits for migrants. Research evidence shows the existence of an ethnic bias in the provision of social benefits for immigrants.

A study in Sweden delved into welfare workers' attitudes towards immigrants and how this impacted their service. Investigations into these workers' experiences when encountering migrant users of welfare determined that workers who held pre-existing negative attitudes towards immigrants found encounters with them 'more difficult', claiming this was due to language and cultural differences. This study confirmed the previously theorised idea that welfare workers' preconceived negative attitudes towards immigrants can harm their delivery of welfare services. Additionally, a Danish study has revealed that some welfare workers hold negative stereotypes upon their refugee welfare recipients, many carrying the view that the culture of immigrants is inferior to that of the Danish. In both Denmark and Sweden, there is clear stereotyping and devaluation of those of immigrant status by some individual welfare workers, undermining the image of a welfare state that is supposed to be egalitarian (Schütze 2020; Trine 2019).

Moreover, evidence confirms that for some groups of migrants, i.e., older people, refugees, and illiterate people, it is even harder to claim benefits they are entitled to due to difficulties with administrative tasks, poor command of the country's language, or lack of necessary documentation (Hunter 2018).

Welfare uptake and income levels are closely intertwined; evidence notes a general socio-economic inequality between newly arrived migrants and receiving populations, which seems to explain most of the differences in welfare dependency. According to the JCR report based on EU-SILC data, non-EU immigrants have lower chances of receiving contributory benefits. However, with respect to non-contributory benefits, the picture is different, as most countries show a greater welfare dependency of non-EU immigrants compared to natives. Controlling for observable socio-demographic characteristics between natives and immigrants significantly reduces the gap in probabilities for almost all countries in the analysis. This finding suggests that differences in such characteristics as age, gender, family size, and the level of education explain

the differences in welfare uptake between the migrants and natives. Socio-demographic characteristics play an essential role in conditioning the uptake of both contributory and non-contributory benefits. Migrants and natives with the same socio-demographic characteristics are likely to receive social benefits equally often in nearly all EU countries (A. Conte and Mazza 2019). A 2017 simulation study conducted on German data also broadly confirms those findings, concluding that higher welfare use among migrants can be explained by their higher risk of welfare dependence. A lower income status, which foreign born individuals are more prone to, leads to a higher risk. When such income inequality is accounted for, there is no difference between migrants and natives (Bruckmeier and Wiemers 2017).

It is important to note that a utilitarian attitude towards the use of welfare benefits by migrants is rejected by evidence. Recent studies on expectations of migrants towards the public welfare system show that economic support to young adults is perceived as a right acquired through labour market participation, and that expectation of being supported are greater among younger families, while the care needs of elderly family members are not expected to be addressed by the state (Albertini and Semprebon 2018). Moreover, take-up of welfare has many negative consequences for migrants, which in literature is called ‘exclusion through inclusion’ (Karlsen 2021). Even though immigrants may be included in the welfare systems, they are also punished by making use of it. For instance, for many groups self-sufficiency is seen as one of the conditions for the extension or renewal of residence permits. Additionally, applications for family reunification can be negatively affected by welfare take-up of the applicant. Researchers also point at a rather wide technique of ‘earned citizenship’, by which the receiving states require the EU migrants to fulfil economic, social, and cultural conditions of membership to allow their use of the welfare system (Kramer 2016).

(2) Variation across EU Member States

Literature highlights that access to welfare is extremely varied across EU Member States (Schmitt and Teney 2019; Römer 2017; Lafleur and Vintila 2020; Sainsbury 2012; European Migration Network 2014). Schmitt and Teney (2018) have argued that generous welfare states facing larger immigration flows tend to provide immigrants with more inclusive access, however they also found some evidence of welfare chauvinism in cases where there was a backlash to multiculturalist policies (Schmitt and Teney 2019). The study of Kramer and Heindlmaier comparatively analysed administration of social assistance in Germany, Austria, and the Netherlands, and developed a typology of three different ways of providing welfare access to EU mobile citizens: the form, signal, and delegation models (Kramer and Heindlmaier 2021). The MitSoPro project provides a comprehensive overview of the rules excluding and including migrants into receiving welfare systems, ordered per country (Vintila and Lafleur 2020). They hypothesised that there must be noticeable differences between countries of continuous immigration and the countries of emigration, where there are few residing foreigners and a lot of their own nationals living abroad. Moreover, the composition of immigrant populations in

terms of origin (EU vs non-EU), welfare state models, the amount of welfare expenditure on social protection, and politicisation of immigration were also thought to be important factors shaping the degree of welfare integration of immigrants (Vintila and Lafleur 2020). Indeed, it was found that the welfare systems differ between Eastern, Central, Nordic, Western, and Mediterranean countries. These groups of countries differ from each other in terms of degree of social security, areas of priority (i.e. unemployment or old-age pensions), and the generosity of support for both non-migrant citizens and migrants. When it comes to differences between these groups, the project found that most EU states follow common patterns despite their differences. Namely, they provide better access to welfare benefits for those residing on their territory, especially if those migrants are EU mobile citizens. This highlights the harmonising role of the EU regulations on equality and non-discrimination for the EU mobile citizens. At the same time, there is more difference in terms of welfare support for third country nationals among the EU member states, and often more restrictive requirements for non-contributory welfare benefits. However, the editors of the volume did not explain whether those patterns of difference confirm the influence of some factors.

For refugees, welfare access also differs from country to country. A report of European Parliamentary Research Service of 2015 on selected member states has concluded that recognized refugees enjoy the same rights to social benefits as nationals of receiving countries, although in some states free movement restrictions apply for those who receive benefit support (Poptcheva and Stuchlik 2015). We have not found studies more recent with a comprehensive overview of variations in welfare support available to this category of migrants. A report of AIDA gives short overview of financial support available to refugees with a status, if they do not have sufficient means to rent accommodation. The financial support is available in Slovenia, Poland for a period of 1 or 1,5 years, in Greece it is available to a limited number of people and only for 3 months, while no financial support is available in Hungary and Romania after AMIF funding was terminated in 2018 (Mouzourakis, Pollet, and Ott 2019). Another study analysing welfare provisions for refugees in Scandinavian countries, highlighted that while these countries have rather generous and universalist approach to welfare benefits access, there have been differences in the way these policies changed in the times of refugee crisis. In Sweden there were no changes in refugees' rights to social benefits, but some financial sanctions were introduced in the cases when refugees do not participate in labour market activities. In Norway only introduction of residence times requirement to obtaining cash benefits for small children has been added, with all other rights remaining the same as for citizens. While Denmark undertook several restrictive changes since 2015: lowering integration benefits by 50%, restricting access to social pensions and introducing the same rules for refugees to be eligible for child benefits as for citizens, which made it harder (Hernes 2018). TRAFIG working papers also provide important insight into general lack of sufficient welfare benefit access to migrants in protracted displacement situations in Greece, and Italy. Asylum seekers in camps, and also recognized refugees are not supported enough by welfare systems of these Southern European countries, which puts these people into socio-economic marginalisation and deprivation (Roman et al.

2021) Also, for non-removed but rejected asylum seekers (NRAS) welfare provisions differ across European countries, according to the studies presented in a special issue on the topic (Ataç and Rosenberger 2019). In those countries where NRAS have access to housing after the rejection of their application they de facto receive additional services, which positively distinguishes this group from other types undocumented migrants, who are excluded from most welfare services (Ataç and Rosenberger 2019).

5.4 Framing interventions and policy objectives

According to evidence, the problem of migrant integration in relation to welfare systems is mainly formulated in terms of welfare ‘abuse’ or its undesirable incentive for immigration. For instance, the “Welfare magnet hypothesis” (Borjas 1999) is widely spread among receiving countries. It is based on the belief that generous welfare systems attract immigrants who seek to rely on benefits as their main source of income. The political debate frames immigrants as a potential “burden” for the host welfare system and legitimizes their exclusion from the social support available for the non-migrant residents¹⁷ (Giulietti 2014). Politicisation of migrants’ access to welfare leads to restrictive social policy towards migrants (Lafleur and Stanek 2017).

Related to these framings are the narratives of “welfare tourism” and “welfare shopping” within the EU, which mainly target the EU mobile citizens from member states with lower levels of welfare generosity. This problem framing assumes that some EU mobile citizens choose to emigrate from their countries to claim welfare support on various grounds (child-care or unemployment) in the countries with the higher welfare provisions. Those framings lead to stricter welfare provisions for EU immigrants in some states (i.e., for Southern Europeans in Belgium) (Lafleur and Stanek 2017).

In general, immigrants are perceived as less deserving of welfare benefits than non-migrating citizens (Reeskens and van der Meer 2019), and this idea of undeservingness is closely linked to the construction of a foreigner as ‘the other’; the stranger that does not originally belong to the territorially bound nation-state. Othering legitimizes that the state and the collective of its citizens is not responsible to provide a safety net for the ‘other’ – the migrant. Moreover, the construction of the other is infused with the presumption of immigrants’ inclination for free-riding behaviour or laziness. It is translated into the idea that generous welfare benefits would disincentivize immigrants’ employment. This, in turn, leads to the argument that the reduction of welfare benefits would improve labour market integration (Arendt 2020; Andersen, Dustmann, and Landersø 2019).

All in all, these framings point at the problem defined in the use of welfare resources by the people deemed undeserving for that support. And the state’s efforts are aimed at prevention or

¹⁷ Barbulescu and Favell, ‘Commentary’.

restriction of that use. On top of that, welfare generosity is defined as a problem that presumably leads to another problem: a lack of labour market integration of migrants, which in turn could again lead to increased welfare dependency. Therefore, the objective to disrupt this ‘vicious circle’ is pursued through reduction of welfare support.

Another framing of the problem is linked to the state’s attempts to control the presence of foreigners on their territory. Irregular migrants are not supposed to stay in the countries, as their presence on a state’s territory is deemed undesirable, and, thus, constitutes a problem. Their exclusion from welfare systems is meant to incentivise return and solve the problem of their irregular stay. Some states even adopt regulations that allow undocumented migrants to access some benefits, under the condition that they cooperate in returning to their countries of origin (Rosenberger and Koppes 2018).

Rarely does evidence point at another kind of framing regarding welfare system integration. Particularly on the local level of governance, the problem is seen in poverty and delinquency linked to a lack of opportunities for self-subsistence. Hence, the facilitation of welfare access for immigrants is seen as a policy objective which could potentially solve this problem (Ataç, Schütze, and Reitter 2020; Bauder and Gonzalez 2018).

5.5 Overview of commonly used instruments and tools

in welfare system integration

As discussed in the previous section, there are two main types of policy objectives with regards to membership of immigrants in the welfare systems of receiving states: one aimed at their exclusion, another at inclusion.

Regarding the instruments aiming at the restriction of migrants’ access and use of welfare benefits, literature discusses the regulatory and legal measures to achieve this. Section 3 mentions several of them. One common instrument is the introduction of legal conditions of eligibility related to the time of residence and official employment in the country for some migrant groups. Germany restricts welfare rights for the newly arrived EU citizens, who are not eligible for job-seekers allowance and social assistance if they have not been living and working in the country for at least 5 years (Barbulescu and Favell 2020). A similar approach is taken in Denmark, where migrants can claim unemployment benefits only after 7 years of residence (Vintila and Lafleur 2020). This effectively means that newly arrived migrants are excluded from receiving this kind of social support.

Another regulatory measure is related to the condition of active job search as a requirement in order to receive welfare support. For example, in Germany, a Hartz IV reform was passed in

2003, obliging the recipients to have regular meetings with Job-centre advisors and demonstrate the proof of active job search. These measures aim to encourage recipients to find a job to support themselves, preventing a complacent dependence on the welfare state. Another measure that is both regulatory and economic in nature is the reduction of the amount of welfare provided for refugees, discussed in two Danish studies (Arendt 2020; Andersen, Dustmann, and Landersø 2019). There is a variety of other policy instruments designed to bring immigrants into employment, which can be understood as a tool to reduce the use of social benefits among immigrants. Those measures are discussed in detail in the chapter on Labour Market integration (this volume) and they may be considered as the most salient tool in ‘welfare management’.

(1) Regulatory and economic instruments facilitating welfare access and use

Recognised refugees and holders of other forms of humanitarian protection are the group among newly arrived migrants that are usually eligible to receive some welfare support during the first years, however, the amount of subsidies is uneven across EU countries. The NIEM Humanitarian Protection Report provides a comparative analysis of the legal protection and how EU states deal with Humanitarian Protection Holders (HPH) (C. Conte 2021). In terms of legal access to social security for HPH, Greece has the most social security and benefits, which is above that of nationals, due to the availability of benefits targeted only to refugees. The benefits that refugees are eligible for are equal to that of nationals in Sweden and Spain. However, in the Czech Republic there is more restrictions on the types of welfare support available for migrants under humanitarian protection (such as no old age benefits). These restrictions on the regulatory level are even more pronounced in the Netherlands and Poland, yet the largest lack of welfare support for HPH immigrants can be found in Hungary and Lithuania, with only homelessness care services available for these groups.

This report also highlights the administrative barriers and lack of information to social benefits and the informational tools available that can assist the HPHs. For example, despite Greece having generous legal provision of welfare benefits on paper, there is a tremendous lack of information on how to access them, and many administrative barriers to actually enable refugees to access those social security entitlements. A similar situation is also observed in Hungary. The Czech Republic, Italy, and the Netherlands have less administrative barriers to social benefit access and provide resources facilitating HPHs to access it, such as face-to-face meetings (C. Conte 2021).

The access of asylum seekers to social protection who have not received the decision of their status is rather limited in the EU, but some states have accepted directives in the recent years to support migrants in the process of their asylum. For instance, the German constitutional court ruled in July of 2012 that the level of financial support provided under Asylum Seekers’ Benefits Act was unconstitutional and should be raised to be equal to Hartz IV. Rejected asylum seekers

who cannot return receive Duldung status that allowed receiving of social benefits under this Act, although they may have lower levels of support (Jonathan Price and Sarah Spencer 2014). Another legal research paper examines welfare access for the tolerated irregular migrants in Austria, through the EU Charter of the Fundamental Rights (Hinterberger and Klammer 2020).

(2) Information instruments

In several EU member states, translation and interpretation services are employed that facilitate access of immigrants to welfare benefit services. For instance, the City of Helsinki provides a website regarding moving to Finland, explaining how to access to social security, and information about health care, housing, education, and other specific information for migrants from EU or non-EU countries. This website is available in 12 different languages which reduces the language barrier for immigrants to connect to Finnish state institutions. Another example of an informational measures are the forms that immigrants can use to apply for social security. Estonia, Finland, Hungary, and other countries offer these forms in multiple languages. However, the provision of such interpretation and translation services is not always evenly provided for all migrant groups. In Latvia, only victims of human trafficking can access interpretation facilities. In Ireland, interpretation services are limited to areas with many immigrant clients. Non-governmental non-profit organizations also often act as interpretation service providers instead of the state, for instance, in the Czech Republic, Luxembourg, and Poland (European Migration Network 2014).

(3) Participatory instruments

Non-governmental, civil society organizations often provide welfare support for migration in the cases when state institutions and state policies exclude them from welfare policies. NGOs provide basic shelter, food, and some guidance for destitute migrants¹⁸. However, while states provide funding to NGOs, the amount of this funding has decreased over the years, while the number of beneficiaries has increased (Jonathan Price and Sarah Spencer 2014). That leads many NGOs to direct their efforts to acquire other streams of funding, at a cost of actual service provision to migrants. Such situation allows for the system of humanitarian exceptionalism, allowing the state to maintain legitimacy as a humanitarian actor, while simultaneously playing a role in the construction of the precarious situations in which some migrants find themselves (Bendixsen 2018). On the local level, some cities, for instance Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Vienna, enable rejected but not deported asylum seekers to access limited welfare support through NGOs. That way migrants who are not eligible for mainstream welfare, are still supported against falling into destitution, ‘under the radar’ of public and political contestation (Ataç, Schütze, and Reitter 2020).

¹⁸ (Jonathan Price and Sarah Spencer 2014; James 2021)

Although this cannot be categorized as a specific policy tool, the role of employees in the formal structures of welfare provision has also been researched (Ratzmann and Heindlmaier 2022). The studies show that street-level-bureaucrats could act as informal facilitators of welfare access for migrants. Individual discretion allows welfare workers to take decisions about granting or refusing welfare support based on their compassion towards those in need. This does not mean that they directly violate the rules, but rather they can bend or interpret the rules in the favour of migrant. This is demonstrated by the example of those front-line workers that help migrants to fill in the applications correctly or log in their health complaints as ‘urgent and severe’, if that allows people to get access to medical care (Ambrosini 2017). Other researchers point out that sometimes the informality of arrangements between migrants and street-level-bureaucrats is mutually beneficial, however takes place within the system of power imbalances. For example, turning a blind eye on informal employment of undocumented migrants in the sector of elderly care, serves both the migrant and the state; helping an asylum lawyer to determine a nationality of other applicants could mean a favourable decision for the helping asylum applicants.

5.6 Effectiveness and Outcomes of instruments and tools in welfare system

The effectiveness of the instruments and measures discussed above can only be assessed from the perspective of the policy objectives. A measure is effective if it fulfils the intended goal. From the several policy problem framings identified above, we can distinguish 3 kinds of policy objectives in relation to migrants and welfare systems of receiving states:

- (1) Objective (exclusion from the welfare system) <= Framing (because of welfare magnet/ welfare tourism hypotheses and because migrants have not contributed as much as citizens)
- (2) Objective (decrease of welfare amounts) <= Framing (because generous welfare leads to welfare dependency, disincentivises employment)
- (3) Objective (inclusion into welfare system) <= Framing (because lack of social security leads to more societal problems; and because of humanitarian reasons, compassion)

Policy objective	How is this objective framed?
Exclusion from the welfare system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The welfare magnet/ welfare tourism hypothesis - Migrants have not contributed as much as citizens
Decreasing welfare amounts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Generous welfare leads to welfare dependency - Generous welfare disincentivises employment
Inclusion into the welfare system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of social security leads to more societal problems - Humanitarian reasons, such as compassion

We have not identified specifically evaluative studies that assess effectiveness of the listed policy instruments. However, the overall impression from the evidence review is that regulatory instruments (laws and directives) successfully reach the goal of excluding the (underserving) groups of newly arrived migrants from accessing welfare systems. The only way that effectiveness of this exclusion is undermined is through the voluntary organizations and NGOs, providing support to those officially excluded. However, whether such exclusion leads to reduction in numbers of immigrants entering the country is questionable. The study of Giulietti rejects the welfare-magnet hypotheses, refuting the core assumption that underlies the framing of this policy problem (Giulietti 2014). The study found that the unemployment rates and low wages in sending countries have an effect on migration decisions that is ten times greater than that of welfare benefits in receiving countries, refuting the idea that generous welfare is such a large incentive for migrants to arrive to the EU. Also, for intra-EU migrants, the life course events were found to play a much more significant role in their mobility decisions, while the generosity of the welfare state in the destination country was not even considered (de Jong and de Valk 2018). Thus, generosity and availability of welfare benefits do not significantly affect the number of immigrants seeking to enter the country. Another evaluation study of Rosenberger and Koppes examined the effectiveness of granting social benefits to undocumented migrants, upon the condition to cooperate in returning to their countries. The study did not provide solid evidence that such an instrument is effective in provoking people to leave the country of immigration. The authors hypothesize that such policies are more likely to incentivize rejected asylum seekers to go underground and hide from authorities (Rosenberger and Koppes 2018). Therefore, it can be implied that regulations restricting access to welfare do not work as a tool of immigration control.

Another outcome that does not seem to be achieved by the instruments restricting access to welfare is the balancing out of the immigrants' and citizens' contributions to the welfare system. One of the problem framings was that immigrants contribute less than citizens, and therefore their rights to welfare should be limited. The evidence so far seems to dismantle the widely spread belief that immigrants are a burden to welfare systems of Europe. For instance, the OECD's 2021 report shows that in all countries, immigrants contribute more in taxes and other

contributions than the governments spend on their social protection, health and education (Damas de Matos 2021). The payment of taxes and social contributions is only possible for migrants in the cases of legal and official employment. As discussed in the chapter on labour market integration (this report), this is not the case for those groups of migrants that are excluded from such access by their legal status or discrimination. Therefore, it is clear that those newly arrived migrants whose access to employment is restricted are the ones that make use of welfare benefits if eligible. Therefore, the problem, as framed, does not correspond to reality. The only outcome that is effectively achieved by such policies is that the receiving states economically benefit from the migrants, while saving in direct costs to sustain the welfare of those in need. Despite this, as we will demonstrate later, such saving on initial welfare leads to more expenditure in other areas, due to the adverse effects that a lack of welfare support has on the vulnerable groups.

With regards to the welfare dependency theory, evidence demonstrates that the immigrant populations in the majority of EU countries generally use welfare less or equal to that of native populations. The countries where this is not the case include Sweden, Denmark, and, to a lesser extent, France and Germany. Interestingly, while migrants' use of welfare benefits is generally lower than native populations across the EU, their likelihood of living in poverty is higher (Giulietti 2014).

The effectiveness of economic policy tools, such as reducing the amount of welfare support for refugees, has been evaluated in two recent studies. While the reduction per se is effectively achieved through the legal directives, the societal outcome of incentivising employment among refugees is not totally positive. Some research confirms that a reduction in benefits leads to an increase in employment percentages or a modest reduction in welfare-benefit dependency. Arendt's study, conducted in Denmark in 2015, argues that the welfare benefit reduction more than doubles the share of males who are employed 10 months after their arrival. However, wages that they receive on their jobs are lower. Among women, however, he found no labour market response to benefit reduction. Among the negative consequences, that he claims to be understudied, the study confirms the increase in health care utilization, crime charges, and crime levels following benefit reductions (Arendt 2020).

Another evaluation study of Andersen and colleagues confirms the found trends in a quasi-experimental study of Denmark's Start Aid welfare reform in 2002. This reform is, of course, not related to the post-2014 migrant arrivals, but the study still yields important implications for the questions we ask in this review. This reform initially led to an increasing in employment and earnings but decreased total income for refugees. Moreover, employment response faded over time, and it also led to the exit of the female labour force. Just like was found in the study of Arendt, the adverse effects of this measure were also visible. Reform led to an increase in property crime (such as shop lifting) and also negatively affected children, leading to worse participation in preschool, poorer performances in language tests, and rise in youth crime

(Andersen, Dustmann, and Landersø 2019). In sum, the evidence mentioned above serves to justify the third type of policy objectives aiming at provision of welfare for newly arrived migrants in order to prevent adverse effects of integration and poverty on the long run.

It is important to highlight that the role of gender and gender-based judgements of front-line workers also play a role in assessing the welfare claims. The vignette study of Husenius in Sweden shows that female case workers are more likely to grant welfare support to women with Swedish names on the application form than to Arabic female names, and the least probably to claims associated with Arabic male names (Hussénus 2021).

Some evidence indicates that provision of interpretation services in welfare service institutions are not always effective. A study in Ireland showed that even though this service was made available on paper, it was not used in practice. There is both a lack of awareness and access of the interpretation services for the clients who have language support needs. Not a single client who was questioned stated that they had been offered interpretation access, and 27% stated that they had requested an interpreter and not been given one. Instead, personal contacts of immigrants provided help with interpretation. Another issue that makes the access to services ineffective is the complexity of the system, and lack of support to explain to migrant beneficiaries how they can navigate it (Crosscare Information and Advocacy Services 2018).

5.7 Conclusion

This review focused on access to and use of welfare benefits by newly arrived (non-EU) immigrants. This topic has been covered broadly in the literature, focusing amongst others on differences between countries with various welfare state regimes and increasingly also about the evolution of transnational forms of welfare provision and on the role of street-level bureaucrats in providing access to welfare. Key concerns in the literature involve limitations in access to welfare, fears of welfare dependency, and the causes and consequences of significant differences between countries in terms of welfare policies.

In terms of policy practices, this review discussed various practices for restricting migrants' access and use of welfare benefits, such as requirements concerning time of residence before access to benefits or conditionalities in terms of labour market participation. A variety of practices was identified for how to facilitate welfare access and use. This includes regulatory and economic instruments, such as access to social protection. In this regard, very significant differences were found between European countries. Another type of practice concerns information instruments. Various countries have positive examples in place in terms of active information services to facilitate access to available welfare protection. Finally, we also identified participatory instruments where, often, at a local level, NGOs and volunteers play a key role in welfare provision.

The literature is very critical of the so-called ‘welfare magnet hypothesis’. It also suggests that, rather than policies, unemployment rates and low wages play a far more important role in migration decision making. Furthermore, on average, immigrant populations seem to be using equal or even less welfare than when compared to the native population. However, regulatory instruments seem generally quite effective in excluding newly arrived migrants from welfare. Such policies may also have an inadvertent negative effect in terms of enhancing unemployment, which again can also increase welfare dependency. This indicates that there is a need for a more long-term and broad perspective on the relation between access to welfare and integration.

In view of sustainability of practices in the area of welfare integration, this review report suggests that it is important to have a more evidence-based and structural approach to welfare integration. Evidence-based because frames, such as on welfare dependency and short-term welfare exclusion, are critically reviewed. And structural in that policies take a broader view, not only on inclusion or exclusion of welfare benefits, but on welfare and integration, including the potential of participation. In this view, the significant differences between countries can also be a resource to compare and learn from how practices can work out.

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