

Response to *Refugee Country Reports*

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I read with great interest the Refugee Country Reports. Nowadays we receive a lot of information regarding refugees via mass media, very often coverage is very negative, lacking arguments or analytical information. Thus it was interesting to review the analysis of EU countries facing the largest streams of refugees as Sweden, Germany; or Balkan region countries -Croatia and Romania that are less accustomed to the large amounts of migrants and which are considered as transit countries for refugees to their target countries in EU. Turkey - the country which is the main corridor for refugees to enter EU. It was interesting to get acquainted with USA situation as well; unfortunately in LT we don't receive much information on USA cases. Different context of the countries, background, history, geographical situation, economy level and etc. influences the scale of migration and the nature and complexity of problems they face. Common EU policy copes with the macro level problem and tries to manage the crisis, but each country has to decide and choose their own way how to behave in such situation.

Recommendations written in executive summary are very general and could be presented in more actionable way. I strongly agree that community building can affect and help for better integration of refugees. Refugees live in community, thus successful integration into a new and often unfamiliar environment, will determine either the newcomers their new country of residence will consider as home or not. In the section about community building several possible tools were listed, such as sponsorship of regional festivals, cultural workshops, cultural celebrations, and the formal use of social media to propagate diverse cultural information. These initiatives can be implemented by the community activists or NGOs, but what you would recommend for the local governments, politicians? What specific role do you see for them, what they do now (does it works?) and what you would recommend them to do to improve? Most of proposed initiatives require additional funds, it might be problematic to find the money, because very often local government especially of new EU countries has insufficient resources for fulfilling their ordinary functions, not to mention additional allocations for special refugees' integration programs, providing shelters, accommodation, sanitation and etc. The local government could play a significant role in coordination of different shareholders at central and local level, encouraging community representatives and NGOs, media to work together solving the problems, setting clear procedures and institutional structures for taking care of migrants after they enter community.

Training program for immigrants and training programs for public administrators are very effective tools and might help changing attitudes and especially to immigrants better understand new surroundings, learn new language, local cultural history and etc. Even if not all immigrants are IT literate, however, online training programs might be useful only for skilled immigrants. Although training programs might be successful only in those cases when newcomers are motivated to be integrated into communities and want stay in the country. What to do in such cases when they are not willing to be integrated and when the only motive for them to stay in the country is economic benefit? What to do if the entrance and stay in the country is just the transit stop in order to get to more developed countries as Germany, Sweden or UK in Europe? How to cope with

newcomers who have criminal background, those who seek for the crack in the legal framework and provisions to make a profit and leave the country soon after care is given and etc?

The findings of the report confirm that each country has a different situation, diverse provisions and apply different policies. In your recommendations about Croatia you mentioned that Croatia should take a more proactive and consistent role in changing the cultural dynamic evident in Croatia in order to make refugee integration smoother and rooted in Croatian practices. What exactly do you mean? How it should be implemented? As we know Croatia as other Balkan countries is targeting mostly in solving the problem with providing temporary aid to increased numbers of refugees, as not many migrants want to stay in this country. It would be interesting to find out how the measures such as closing border crossings in an effort to keep the number of refugees that enter at a number they can effectively handle is evaluated by the students? Is it ok for the country to build the fence and close the borders and thus way to solve its problems? If yes, then what to do for those countries as Turkey, Greece, Italy, Romania or Bulgaria which geographical situation determined that they are those countries which are the first reached and effected by refugees on their way to more prosperous EU countries? Or Germany, Sweden, Netherlands or UK? Is such tools as offering bonuses (Norway case) for the migrants who agrees to leave the country is moral and can be considered as solidary in the context of all EU? You propose that by increasing local government units' fiscal autonomy, local officials can use these additional resources to rebuild its economic status, continue provide public and private services to citizens and tourists and inevitable generate income to provide basic services to the growing number of refugees in need. In some cases maybe yes, but it depends on the economic development and potential of certain area. In some cases it can be even worse situation.

The other group of EU countries are those who are the main targets for asylum seekers and are considered as more welcoming countries: Germany, Sweden, and etc. They face a little bit different problems and should develop different strategies how to cope with them. Apart from immediate concerns such as accommodation and processing challenges, those countries also needs to focus on how to incorporate these newcomers into the labour market and other aspects of the cultural, social, and economic environment in a proactive and equitable manner. Since the beginning of 2015, Germany has taken in over 1 million humanitarian migrants, which is the largest proportion that has been accepted by any nation in the EU. Germany is No. 1 country in EU by receiving the largest amounts of refugees by volume; Sweden takes the most refugees per capita of their country size. While the initial euphoria of the open door policy (that could help to solve their lack of workforce problem) was supported by many Germans, the realities of integration are now causing concern and frustration. The enormous increase of migrants put increased pressure on the institutional processes that handled refugee registration and introduction. So what to do when the numbers of migrants exceed all forecasts and even for such developed country as Germany (which has a history and long term experience of immigration) it becomes a burden rather than benefit?

Germany has to cope not only with institutional capacities, but also with public perception which recently becomes more and more negative after crimes committed by migrants and widely covered by media by both true and untrue news stories not only in Germany, but in all EU. Even such strong personality as Chancellor Angela Merkel had to adjust to new situation which influenced some changes to immigration and asylum policies in recent months. Shortening the period of waiting for asylum seekers and accelerating the processing of asylum applications is the main target of the country at the moment. What to do with those half of million migrants waiting for the decision half a year or even more? Integration is a recognized challenge, as immigrants have a

lower participation rate in the labour force, as well as a lower level of educational attainment when compared to non-immigrants. The Integration via innovation and entrepreneurship tools are very interesting and helpful to improve communities understanding and perception of refugees; it can be borrowed and implemented by other countries as well.

The presented countries have also different experience and traditions in dealing with immigration processes, e.g .Turkey can be considered as a very hospitable country which very long even haven't had passed any migration regulating acts. For Turks immigration processes are very natural and is considered as integral part of their life. Naturally, the problems they face differs from other countries problems thus the policies and solutions they choose are more oriented to assimilation-integration processes than to multiculturalism.