Petra M. Eggenhofer-Rehart, Markus Latzke, Katharina Pernkopf, Dominik Zellhofer, Wolfgang Mayrhofer and Johannes Steyrer (Vienna University of Economics and Business)

**Is the career capital of refugees welcome? Afghan and Syrian refugee job seekers in Austria**

This study explores how refugees relocate, acquire, and convert cultural, social, and economic capital when entering the Austrian labor market. Drawing on Bourdieu’s theory of practice, we conducted 35 semi-structured interviews with Afghan and Syrian refugee job seekers in the winter of 2016/2017. We use these interviews to investigate how the value of the capital forms changes when they move to a culturally distant field, and what strategies they use to develop their career capital portfolio. Findings reveal that (a) all capital forms are strongly devaluated; (b) refugees striving to use their cultural capital encounter unfamiliar labor market rules, occupational identity threats, and status loss; (c) acquisition and conversion of new capital require both the intricate interplay of capital forms and the refugees’ proactivity. The paper concludes with a discussion of theoretical contributions and practical implications for refugee labor market integration.