

Human Capital, Values, and Attitudes of Persons Seeking Refuge in Austria in 2015

Short title: Persons Seeking Refuge in Austria in 2015

Isabella Buber-Ennser^{1*}, Judith Kohlenberger², Bernhard Rengs¹, Zakarya Al Zalak³, Anne Goujon^{1,3}, Erich Striessnig^{1,3}, Michaela Potančoková^{1,3}, Richard Gisser¹, Maria Rita Testa^{1,2}, Wolfgang Lutz^{1,2,3}

¹ Vienna Institute of Demography, Austrian Academy of Sciences
Vienna, Austria

² Department for Socioeconomics, Vienna University of Economics and Business
Vienna, Austria

³ World Population Program, International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis,
Laxenburg, Austria

* Corresponding author E-mail: Isabella.Buber@oeaw.ac.at

Abstract

Since its inception in 2010, the Arab Spring has evolved into a situation of violent conflict in many countries, leading to high levels of migration from the affected region. Given the social impact of the large number of individuals applying for asylum across Europe in 2015, it is important to study who these persons are in terms of their skills, motivations, and intentions. DiPAS (Displaced Persons in Austria Survey) aims to uncover the socio-demographic characteristics of the persons seeking refuge who arrived in Austria in 2015, mainly originating from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Particular focus is on human capital, attitudes and values. This survey, the first of its kind in Austria and possibly in Europe, was carried out among adult displaced persons, mostly residing in Vienna, yielding 514 completed interviews. Information gathered on spouses and children allows for the analysis of 972 persons living in Austria, and of further 419 partners and children abroad. Results indicate that the surveyed population comprised mainly young families with children, particularly those coming from Syria and Iraq. Their educational level is high compared with the average level in their country of origin. A vast majority of respondents are Muslims, rating their religiosity at medium levels. Judging from stated attitudes towards gender equity, interviewed men seem to have more liberal attitudes than their compatriots. The majority of respondents do not intend to return to their home countries, mostly because of the perception of permanent threat. DiPAS provides data for political decision-making and the on-going societal dialogue. Its findings can help to inform assessments about the integration potential of the displaced population into the host society. In addition, the applied methodological technique and experiences during the fieldwork provide valuable insights on sampling asylum seekers and refugees in the current European context.