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**Integration through Active
Labor Market Policies**

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For disadvantaged immigrants it is pivotal that they master a successful professional (re-)insertion in order to successfully integrate in the host country. In fact, stable and suitable jobs – in terms of educational adequacy – allow immigrants to sustain their own livelihood and to simultaneously build a social network, which includes contacts to the native population. Such contacts are a prerequisite for a successful social integration. Thus, labor market participation besides being the foundation of social participation has also been shown to be essential in preventing welfare dependency and guaranteeing psychological and physical wellbeing.

The project investigates how active labor market policies (ALMPs) can contribute to (re-)integrating unemployed individuals with a migration background into the labor market. ALMPs are of particular relevance in this transition because such measures complement passive welfare state benefits either by fostering human capital such as skills, experience, and re-training, or by setting incentive structures such as counseling, monitoring, and sanctions (Bonoli 2010; Barbier and Ludwig-Mayerhofer 2004). In the literature it is still debated how efficient the different approaches are and in the domain of migration, particularly, this issue is highly understudied. Accordingly, we seek to contribute to the literature by addressing this research gap and exploring whether and how ALMPs contribute to the labor market integration process. In more detail, we are interested in studying how labor market integration differs between natives and immigrants as well as among different groups of immigrants. Thereby, we focus specifically on disadvantaged immigrants who are particularly likely to face difficulties finding an employment. These difficulties are mainly due to the concomitance of multiple vulnerabilities such as their migration background and a low socioeconomic status.

Research Questions

In our research, we plan to analyze the different steps of the labor market reintegration process, thereby exploring whether immigrants face particular difficulties compared to natives. Moreover, we explore whether and how multiple disadvantages influence each other (intersectionality). In addition to migrant status, gender, socioeconomic background and education will be the main independent variables in our studies.

Labor Market Access Bias

In a first phase of our research project we inquire whether the access to particular ALMPs is negatively or positively biased depending on the socioeconomic and/or the immigration background of the unemployed. The research question, which guides the first stage of our research project draws on the findings of the meta-analysis carried out by Bonoli and Liechti (2014). The authors studied the allocation of ALMP-access depending on the socioeconomic profile of the unemployed. They found that in many countries older people and often also low skilled individuals are generally underrepresented in ALMP programs whereas immigrants are underrepresented in

training programs. In the light of these findings, we test whether this is the case in Switzerland as well and, if yes how this could be explained. To this aim we analyze Swiss registry data on unemployment, which is provided by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs. This data will allow us to analyze the length of the unemployment spells and the activation measures followed by all unemployed in Switzerland during the last ten years.

Efficacy of Active Labor Market Policies

In a second step, we evaluate the efficacy of ALMPs in supporting a successful labor market reinsertion of immigrants. Thereby, the most interesting question is not only whether immigrants are less likely to find a job or whether the duration of their unemployment spell is longer than for natives. We are also interested in analyzing what kind of job immigrants obtain. In fact, for reasons of economic efficacy but also of the immigrants' self-esteem and successful social integration it is relevant to know whether immigrants tend to obtain disadvantaged jobs; disadvantaged in terms of remuneration, working-hours, dangerousness, employment condition, and others. In particular, we are interested in studying whether particular ALMPs are more promising in helping immigrants to find a job that matches their educational background and the type of work he/she was trained for in his/her country of origin.

Hiring Practices

Third, we analyze the role that employers play in integrating immigrants into the labor market. In fact, successful professional integration is not only dependent on the quality of the supply but is also closely linked to hiring practices by the employers (Dahinden et al. 2004). Since we are particularly interested in analyzing the situation of disadvantaged immigrants such as immigrants with a low social background and immigrants with longish unemployment experiences, we plan to conduct a survey experiment targeting employers in the Swiss hotel sector. By means of a short online questionnaire we intend to capture information on whether and under what conditions hotels hire disadvantaged immigrants.

Steps Ahead

In a final step we plan to contextualize some of our main findings by embedding them in a comparative research design to uncover Swiss specificities with respect to the efficacy of ALMPs. The aim of our project is to develop knowledge that can contribute to better understand the process of labor market entry for individuals with migration background.

Publication

- Auer, Daniel, Bonoli, Giuliano, and Flavia Fossati. *It's Discrimination, Stupid: Labour Market (Re-) Entry Difficulties among Different Immigrant Groups in Switzerland*. Working Paper. Neuchatel: nccr – on the move, 2015.

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