

**nccr →
on the move**

National Center of Competence in Research –
The Migration-Mobility Nexus

nccr-onthemove.ch

**Anita Manatschal,
Eva G.T. Green, Marco Pecoraro
and Philippe Wanner**

**How Effective Are Integration Policy
Reforms for Asylum-Related Migrants?**

in a nutshell #19, January 2021



SWISS NATIONAL SCIENCE FOUNDATION

The National Centres of Competence in Research (NCCR)
are a research instrument of the Swiss National Science Foundation

Messages for Decision-Makers

The Swiss integration policy reform had a beneficial effect on the integration of provisionally admitted individuals with an F permit.

—
Compared to asylum seekers (N permit), who could not benefit from these measures, labor market inclusion increased for all F-permit holders.

—
Additional analyses for Sri Lankans show that the reform further improved the language skills and psychological well-being of F-permit holders relative to N-permit holders.

What is meant by ...

... integration policies

Regulate immigrants' socio-cultural, economic and political integration into society. Integration policy measures cover accordingly a wide range of instruments. In the socio-cultural realm, examples for integration policy measures include, for instance, language courses in the local language, or policies regulating family reunification. Besides laws facilitating labor market access for specific immigrant groups, economic integration measures may also comprise mentoring or specialized labor market qualification courses. In addition to these instruments, which were all included in the policy reform discussed in this policy brief, integration policy further regulates immigrants' political integration, e.g. via naturalization policies and non-citizen voting rights.

The sudden increase in asylum-related migrants in Western Europe after 2014 fostered discussions on the policy measures that countries should adopt to support their integration. Assessing the effectiveness of a broad Swiss integration policy reform (2006–2008), our research reveals comprehensive beneficial effects on labor market integration, language skills, and psychological well-being among provisionally admitted individuals targeted by the reform compared to asylum seekers, who did not profit from the reform.

Although many countries started to implement broad integration policy reforms in recent years, there is hardly any research on their effectiveness. We addressed this question and estimated the impact of a policy reform in Switzerland on economic inclusion, language skills, and psychological well-being of asylum-related migrants. Between 2006 and 2008, this comprehensive reform package was set up to foster the economic and social incorporation of provisionally admitted individuals (F permit), who often stay for a long time if not permanently in Switzerland.

The reform of Swiss integration and asylum policy

Until 2006, provisionally admitted individuals with an F permit had very limited rights with a legal situation very similar to asylum seekers waiting for a decision (N permit). For instance, they had no right to reunite their families in Switzerland, they had only reduced access to social benefits, and entering the labor market was difficult because priority was given to Swiss citizens and foreign nationals with a permanent residence status.

Between 2006 and 2008, the legal situation of provisionally admitted immigrants improved substantially. In 2006, a new decree abolished the prioritization of foreign permanent residents or Swiss workers, granting F-permit holders the same labor market access. They were also included in integration and labor market measures under the new asylum law from 2008 onward. Moreover, since 2007, family reunifications were allowed for F-permit holders after three years of residence in Switzerland. Conversely, asylum seekers (N permit), did not profit from these new policy measures.

Integration policy as a multidimensional policy field

By regulating important realms of everyday life, integration policies aim at steering immigrants' psychological and sociocultural adaptation, economic integration, and political incorporation. So far, existing research produces mixed results on whether, and if yes, which policy measures are most effective in fostering immigrants' integration.

A first group of studies analyzed broad measures of integration policy such as the *Migrant Integration Policy Index (MIPEX)*. They are often not aimed explicitly at asylum-related migrants and do not thus allow for a precise identification of policy effects for this particular group. A second set of studies focuses on the effect of single policy aspects, such as long waiting periods until an application is processed. While these studies are more precise in identifying causal effects on the specific group of asylum-related migrants, they do not take into account the impact of other integration policy aspects.

Benefits of the Swiss integration policy reform

In our study, we account for both, complexity and precision. First, by capturing the *complexity of a comprehensive integration policy reform*, which, second, targeted a *specific group, provisionally admitted immigrants*. We analyzed whether labor market outcomes, language skills and psychological well-being of F-permit holders improved significantly after the integration policy reform was implemented, compared to asylum seekers with an N permit, who did not benefit from these policy changes.

To assess the effectiveness of this reform, we used two data sources. Survey data from the Health Monitoring Program of the Swiss Migrant Population (GMM) of the years 2004 and 2010 was used to analyze the policy impact on the situation of Sri Lankans with an F permit, who represent an important share of asylum-related

—
“Our findings reveal comprehensive beneficial effects of the integration policy reform implemented between 2006 and 2008 on provisionally admitted immigrants’ psychological, linguistic and economic integration.”
 —

migrants in Switzerland, and who are the only asylum-related group that was surveyed in both GMM waves. We furthermore linked two longitudinal data sets, the

registers of foreigners and asylum seekers as well as the register of the Central Compensation Office, to obtain results on the whole asylum-related population in Switzerland between 2000 and 2013.

Our main results are presented in Figure 1, starting with the GMM-based findings for Sri Lankan asylum-related migrants. The integration policy reform significantly improved the *employment rate* and the *household income* of Sri Lankans with an F permit relative to their peers with an N permit. Second, the reform had beneficial effects on language skills. Namely, *good knowledge in a Swiss language* improved significantly after policy reform. Third, the new integration policy has

decreased both the *feeling to have no longer a homeland* and the *feeling of loneliness*, indicators of the psychological well-being.

In a second step, we tested the above-described results for employment with the register-based data to assess the impact of the policy reform on employment for the whole population of asylum-related migrants from 2000 to 2013. The main results of this analysis are displayed in Figure 2. The left panel shows the employment estimates for asylum-related Sri Lankans, while the estimates in the right panel are derived from the entire population of asylum-related migrants in Switzerland. In line with our results based on the

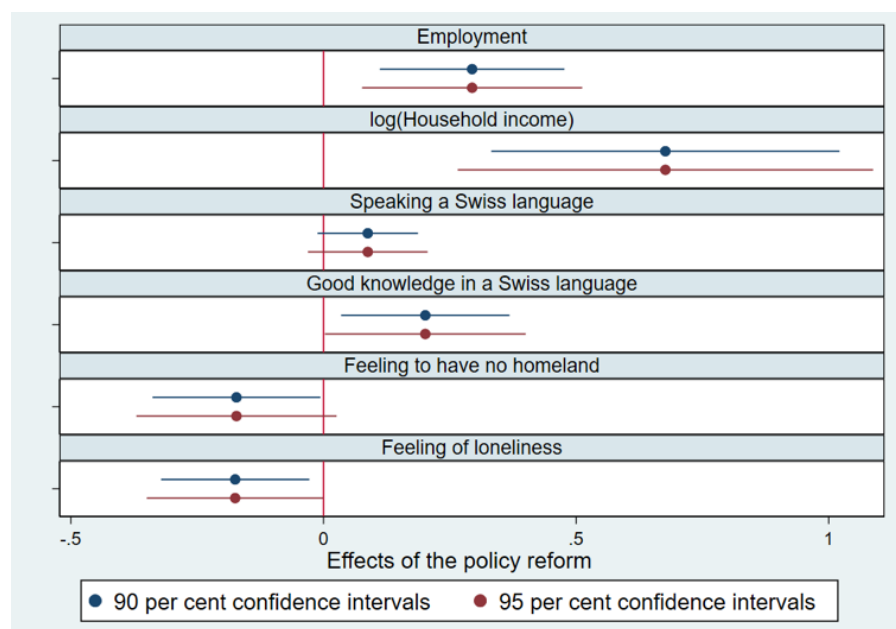


Figure 1. Effects of the reform for provisionally admitted Sri Lankans

Notes: This graph illustrates the effects of the reform on employment probability, income, language skills and psychological well-being of provisionally admitted Sri Lankans (visualized by the red and blue dots) as compared to Sri Lankan asylum seekers whose performance is indicated by the vertical red zero line. 90/95 percent confidence intervals (horizontal red and blue lines) express higher and lower degrees of uncertainty of these effects. We can only speak of a positive or negative reform effect if a confidence interval does not cross the zero line. Since “income” is not normally distributed, we use the logarithm (log) of income for the analysis. Employment, household income, knowledge of – and less clearly also speaking – a Swiss language increased while the feeling to have no homeland or to be lonely decreased for Sri Lankan F-permit holders when compared with their co-nationals with an N-permit.

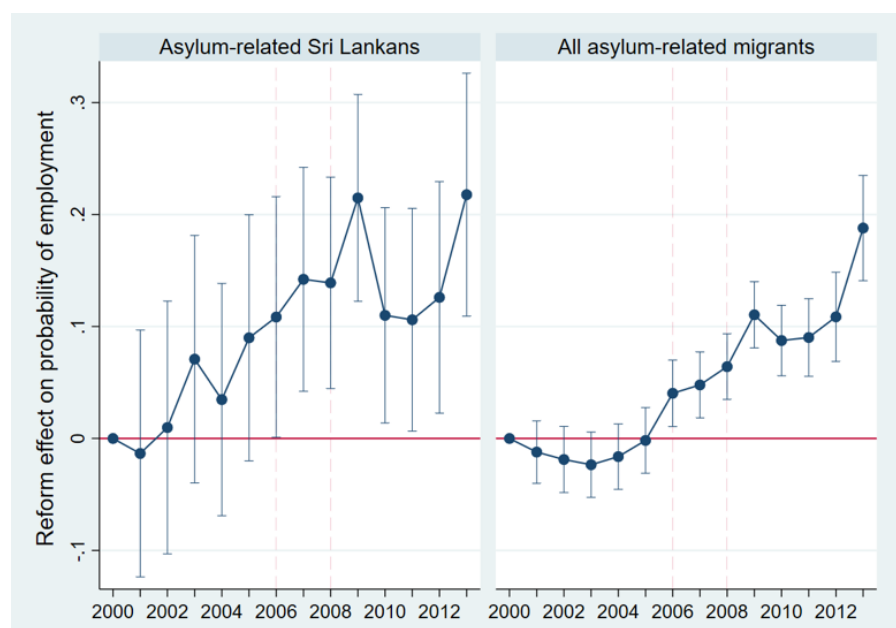


Figure 2. Employment effects of the reform for provisionally admitted Sri Lankans and all provisionally admitted migrants

Notes: The blue time trends display the impact of the integration policy reform (2006–2008) on the employment probability of provisionally admitted individuals (F permit) for the period 2000–2013 compared to asylum seekers (N-permit holders, red horizontal line). The figure on the left shows for example that the reform has a positive effect on provisionally admitted Sri Lankans from 2007 onwards. For the group of all provisionally admitted individuals (figure on the right), this positive reform effect sets already in 2006 and increases substantially in the following years.

—
“Comprehensive integration policy reform packages, which address simultaneously different aspects of immigrant integration, are a particularly efficient tool for fostering inclusion of asylum-related migrants.”
—

GMM data, the likelihood of employment begins to significantly increase from 2006 onwards for provisionally admitted individuals, and this increase remains significant and positive in the following years.

Implications for integration policymaking

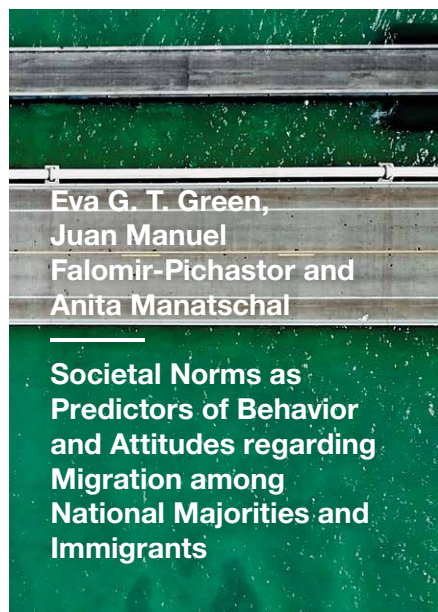
Summing up, our findings reveal comprehensive beneficial effects of the integration policy reform implemented between 2006 and 2008 on provisionally admitted immigrants' psychological, linguistic and economic integration, corroborating thereby its effectiveness. Real-world experience and scientific evidence highlight that integration processes are interdependent: language skills, psychological well-being and social connections benefit for instance labor market integration, and vice versa. Our study confirms this view, showing that comprehensive integration policy reform packages, which address simultaneously different aspects of immigrant integration, are a particularly efficient tool for fostering inclusion of asylum-related migrants.

Further Reading

Hainmueller, Jens, Dominik Hangartner, and Duncan Lawrence. **“When Lives Are Put on Hold: Lengthy Asylum Processes Decrease Employment Among Refugees”**. *Science Advances* 2:8, (2016), e1600432.

Pecoraro, Marco, Anita Manatschal, Eva G.T. Green, and Philippe Wanner. **“Does Integration Policy Improve Labour Market, Sociocultural and Psychological Adaptation of Asylum-Related Immigrants? Evidence from Sri Lankans in Switzerland.”** IRENE working paper 19:08 (2019).

Slotwinski, Michaela, Alois Stutzer, and Roman Uhlig (2019). **“Are Asylum Seekers More Likely to Work With More Inclusive Labor Market Access Regulations?”**, *Swiss Journal of Economics and Statistics* 155:17 (2019), 1–15.



Societal Norms as Predictors of Behavior and Attitudes regarding Migration among National Majorities and Immigrants

Eva G. T. Green, Juan M. Falomir-Pichastor and Anita Manatschal,
Universities of Lausanne, of Geneva, and of Neuchâtel

The project investigates how and under which circumstances societal norms of inclusion or exclusion affect attitudes and behavior related to migration among national majorities and immigrants.

Explaining and Interpreting Migration Flows and Stocks **Philippe Wanner, University of Geneva**

This project aims to better documenting the transformation of contemporary patterns of mobility and migration towards and from Switzerland.

in a nutshell #19 is a collaboration of these two nccr – on the move projects and based on the IRENE Working Paper 19:08 (2019).

Contact for in a nutshell #19: Anita Manatschal, Assistant Professor in Migration Policy Analysis University of Neuchâtel and project leader nccr – on the move,
anita.manatschal@unine.ch

The nccr – on the move is the National Center of Competence in Research (NCCR) for migration and mobility studies. It aims to enhance the understanding of contemporary phenomena related to migration and mobility in Switzerland and beyond. Connecting disciplines, the NCCR brings together research from the social sciences, economics and law. Managed from the University of Neuchâtel, the network comprises 17 research projects at eleven universities in Switzerland: The Universities of Basel, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, Lucerne, Neuchâtel, Zurich, ETH Zurich, the Graduate Institute Geneva, the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland, and the University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Northwestern Switzerland.

“in a nutshell” provides answers to current questions on migration and mobility – based on research findings, which have been elaborated within the nccr – on the move. The authors assume responsibility for their analyses and arguments.

Contact for the series: Aldina Camenisch, Knowledge Transfer Officer, aldina.camenisch@nccr-onthemove.ch