

Welcome !

Conference EMN Netherlands | 12 October 2026

‘**Early integration** of applicants for international protection: European and Dutch experiences in promoting employment, language learning and cultural orientation’



Immigration and Naturalisation Service
Ministry of Justice and Security

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Welcome

Bahram Sadeghi

- Moderator

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Rhodia Maas

- Director-General

Immigration and Naturalisation Service



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Arjan van Noort

- Director of Society and Integration

Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment



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Results EMN inform

'Early integration of applicants for international protection'

Jade Wirken

Jasper Gloerich

- Researchers

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Results EMN inform

'Early integration of applicants for international protection'

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Background

- EMN work programme 2025
- Proposed by EMN Poland
- **Rationale -** The Pact on Migration and Asylum (the Pact) emphasizes **integration** as an important part to a well-managed and effective migration and asylum policy. While there is extensive information on measures for the integration of beneficiaries of international protection (BIP), early integration measures are seldom systematically recorded or monitored.
- **25 contributing countries**
  - EU Member States: AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, FR, HR, HU, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK
  - EMN Observer Countries: RS, UA

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Scope and aim

Definition

Any measure and activity aimed at increasing integration prospects and self-sufficiency of applicants for international protection

Research aims

- Gathering insights into the variety of practical activities and innovative solutions regarding early integration measures
- Mapping good practices and challenges EMN Member and Observer Countries encounter

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Early integration measures

- **Language learning**
  - 21 countries; AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK; RS
- **Vocational/labour market orientation**
  - 16 countries; BE, BG, CY, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, IE, IT, LU, LV, NL, SK; RS
- **Civic/cultural orientation**
  - 21 countries; AT, BE, BG, CY, CZ, DE, EE, EL, ES, FI, HR, IT, LT, LU, LV, NL, PL, SE, SI, SK; RS

➔ **Across Europe: different approaches, common objectives**

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Language training

Common approaches

- Face-to-face and online language courses
- Language learning combined with orientation
- Voluntary or compulsory participation

Examples across Europe

- **Poland:** Physical and online language education for children and adults
- **Luxembourg:** Language learning combined with digital skills, independence and social orientation
- **Bulgaria:** Language training linked to labour market preparation
- **Spain:** Participation compulsory

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Vocational/labour market orientation

Early labour market support can include:

- Skills & work experience assessment
- Individual career guidance
- Vocational and skills training
- Internships and volunteering
- Support towards employment

Examples of different approaches

- **Rapid access** - Bulgaria & Croatia, Early labour market access + vocational training
- **Individual pathways** - Spain, competencies + work experience + educational needs
- **Early skills profiling** - Greece, labour & educational profile identified during reception

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Cultural & social orientation

Cultural orientation can include:

- Rights & responsibilities
- Healthcare & public services
- Gender equality
- Democracy & rule of law
- Everyday life & social norms

Example

- **Germany**; Empowerment courses for female applicants

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Connecting early & regular integration

Different approaches

- **Strong connection**; Early measures continue into regular integration
- **Thematic alignment**; Similar content, but no formal link
- **Limited connection**; Early and regular measures remain largely separate

➔ Overall, links between early and regular integration measures remain limited and are not systematic.

Example

- **France**; Language skills acquired during the asylum procedure can be taken into account when entering the regular integration pathway.

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Challenges (1)

Financial challenges

- BE, CZ, DE, ES, FI, FR, IE, LV, NL, SK; RS

Organisational/logistical challenges

- Limited access to childcare (LU)
- Isolated locations of accommodation centres (BE, IE, SK)
- Lack of classrooms (LU)
- Limited sharing of information during handovers due to data protection laws (NL)

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Challenges (2)

Systhemic challenges

- Applicants moving around reception centres (IE, NL)
- Exclusion of the labour market due to administrative hurdles (LT)
- Responsibilities shared across authorities (BE)

External challenges

- Fluctuations in the number of applicants (AT, DE, EE, ES,PL)
- Competing priorities/lack of interest from applicants (BG, EL, HR, LU)
- Differences in literacy levels (PL)
- Mental health challenges (BE, FR, IE, LU, LV, SI)
- Hostilities from local community (IE)

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Good practices

- **Rapid implementation of early inclusion measures**
  - Early access to a dedicated social worker **(LT)**
  - Rapid inclusion in mainstream school systems **(FR, HR)**
- **Provision of information (BE, IE)**
- **Civic and cultural integration (DE)**
- **Cooperation with civil society and local communities (LT, SE, FR, NL)**

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Questions?

www.EMNNetherlands.nl

EMN European Migration Network

www.ec.europa.eu/emn

EMNMigration

european-migration-network

EMN Netherlands: emn@ind.nl.

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Case studies across Europe

Different approaches to early integration

GERMANY. Daniel Dwars, Head of Division 81C / Management and quality assurance of project work, integration through sports
- German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

SPAIN. Bárbara Peláez Calles, Senior civil servant, Directorate-General for Humanitarian Assistance and the International Protection Reception Systems
- Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration

AUSTRIA. Julia Schmidlechner, Head of Coordination Team
- Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)

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Early integration of applicants for international protection in Germany

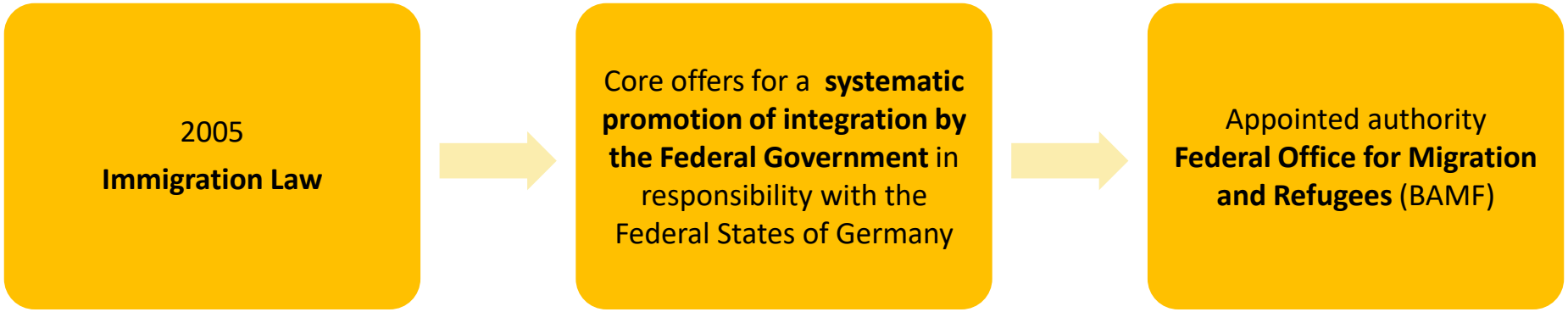
Daniel Dwars
Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

Conference EMN Netherlands
Early integration of applicants for international protection: European and Dutch experiences in promoting employment, language learning and cultural orientation
12 October 2026 | The Hague

The integration work of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

- Extensive tasks in integration in addition to asylum proceedings for the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees since 2005
- Cooperative Federalism - Involvement of all levels of government and society
  - The Federal Office: central actor on the federal level
  - German federal states: responsible for practical implementation and state-level measures
  - Municipalities: operational level funded by the federal and state level
  - Society: Non-governmental organizations as partners



For more than 20 years, BAMF has been shaping the framework for cohabitation in Germany and has been setting uniform standards nationwide.

The pillars of integration work

INTEGRATION FROM A SINGLE SOURCE

Arrival and Orientation

- Migration counseling (MBE)
- First orientation measures

(§ 45 S.1 AufenthG.)

Projects and Impulses

- Promotion of social cohesion & intercultural engagement
- Further development of the understanding of integration
- Coordination of the promotion of integration

(§ 45 S. 2 AufenthG)

Language Acquisition

- Integration course (§ 43 AufenthG)
- Vocational language course (§ 45a AufenthG)

Research

In-house research center

(§ 75 Nr. 4 AufenthG)

Integration from a single source – with suitable offers for individual starting positions

Arrival and Orientation

Migration Counselling for Adult Immigrants (MBE)



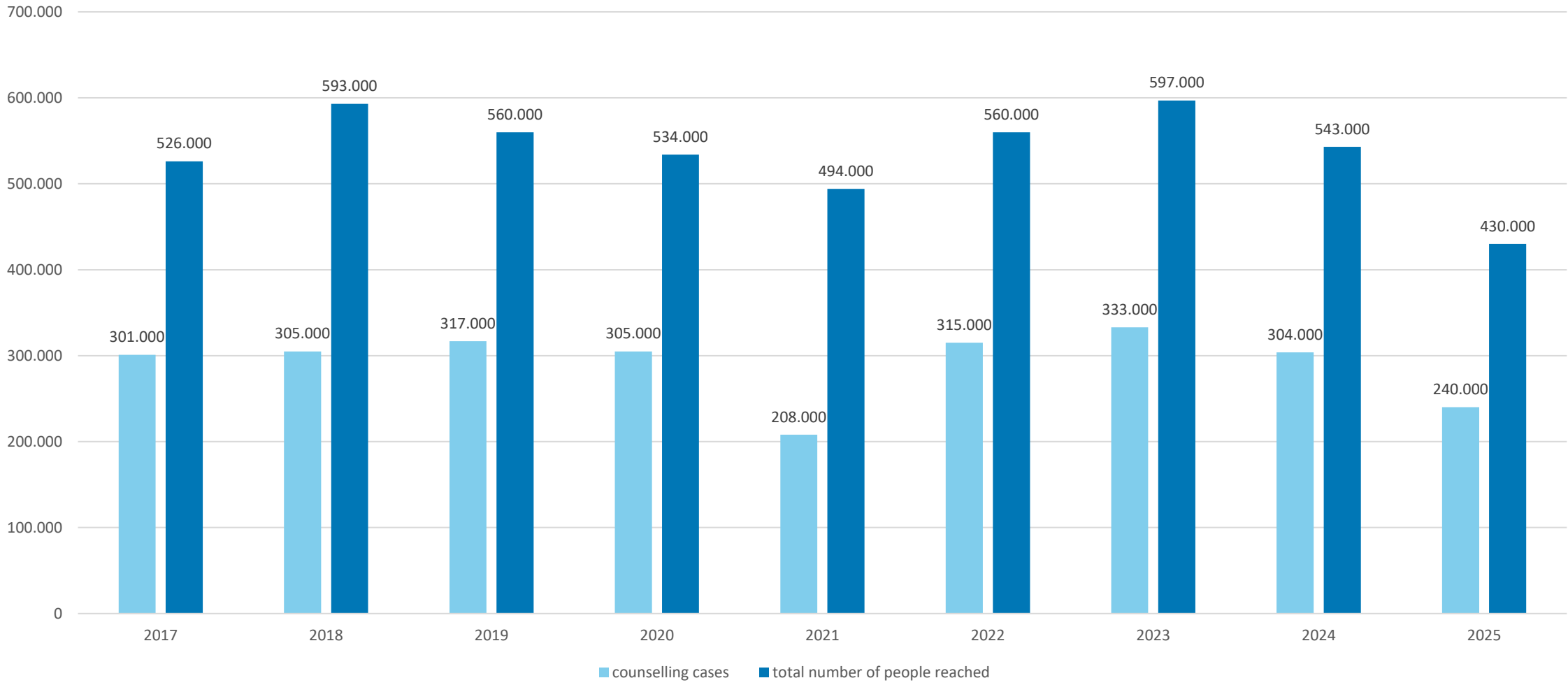
Counselling service for adults

- Comprehensive counselling service for immigrants over the age of 27, funded by the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the Federal Office
- Counselling is provided by German non-statutory welfare organisations

Range of tasks

- Targeted and timely initiation and support of the integration process for adult immigrants according to socio-educational standards
- Assessment of the individual support needs of those seeking advice by full-time migration counselors, development of an individual support plan, holistic integration approach focused on the resources of the immigrants
- Supplementation of individual counseling services with social group work for the target group-specific dissemination of information
- Networking within the local community
- Contribution to the intercultural opening of mainstream services

Number of migration counseling cases (MBE)



Roadmap Courses

- Primarily aimed at asylum seekers in Germany. If necessary, beneficiaries of protection may also attend the course.
- Consists of 15 teaching units, each lasting 45 minutes.
- Provides useful information for the everyday routines and life in Germany and is held in the native language of the participants.



"The Roadmap Course taught me some interesting facts about life in Germany. I also learned many things that will help me integrate into German society."

– Valeria, Roadmap Course participant

"Many questions are not asked anywhere else – and that's what we're here for."

– Abdikadir, Roadmap Course teacher

Low-threshold orientation services



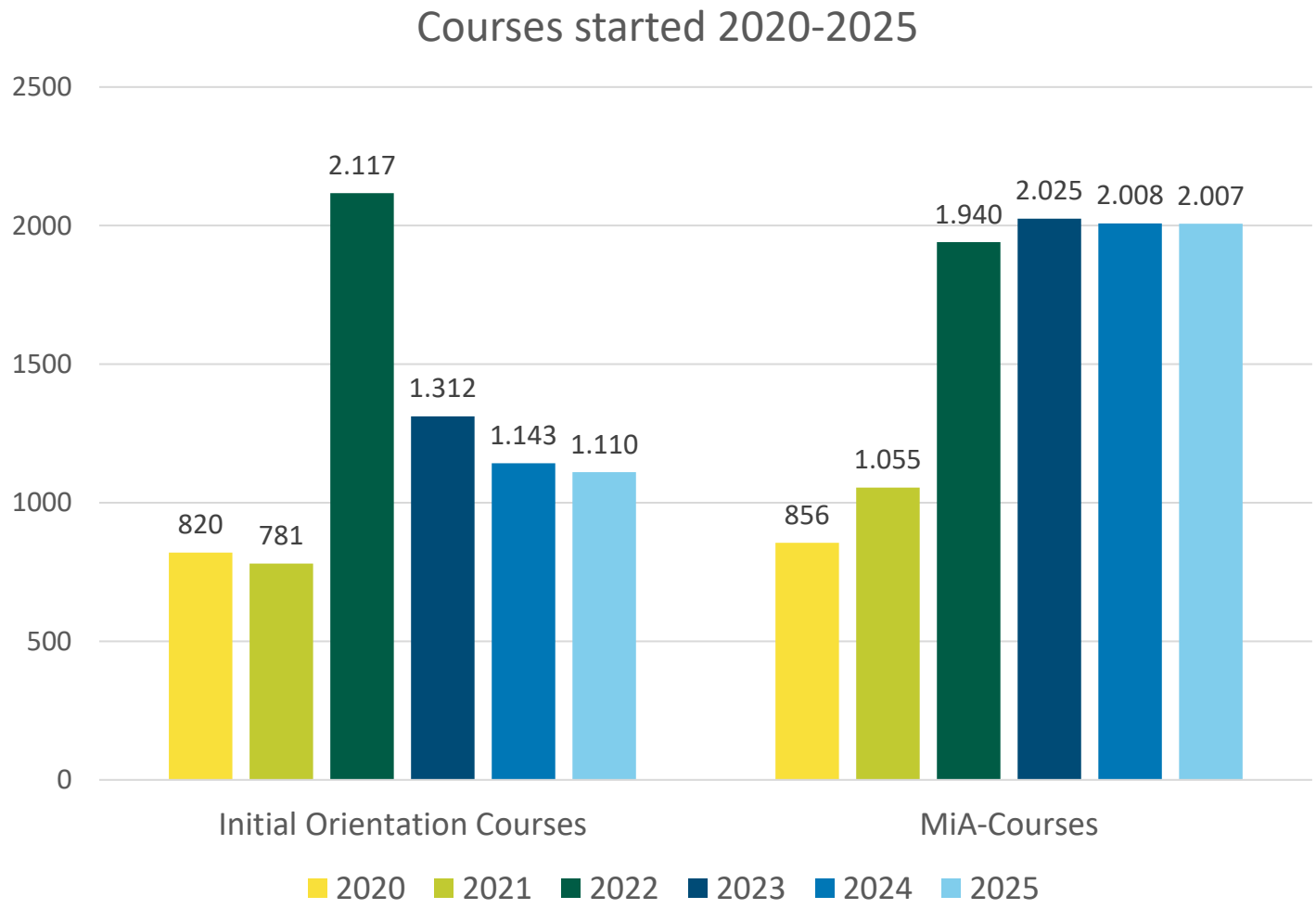
Initial Orientation Courses (EOK):

The courses are intended for those seeking protection as an introductory and guidance service. If there are free vacancies in a course, other people can also attend, for instance beneficiaries of protection or EU Immigrants.



MiA Courses for Female Migrants:

Low-threshold empowerment programs for women, by women, designed to bridge the gap to further integration services.



Labour market integration of refugees – Germany’s “Job Turbo”

The job turbo has 4 goals in mind

The aim is to **improve the labour market integration of refugees** through a joint effort by all stakeholders working closely together



Prevention of **long-term unemployment** among refugees



Securing labour and skilled workers for companies and the economy



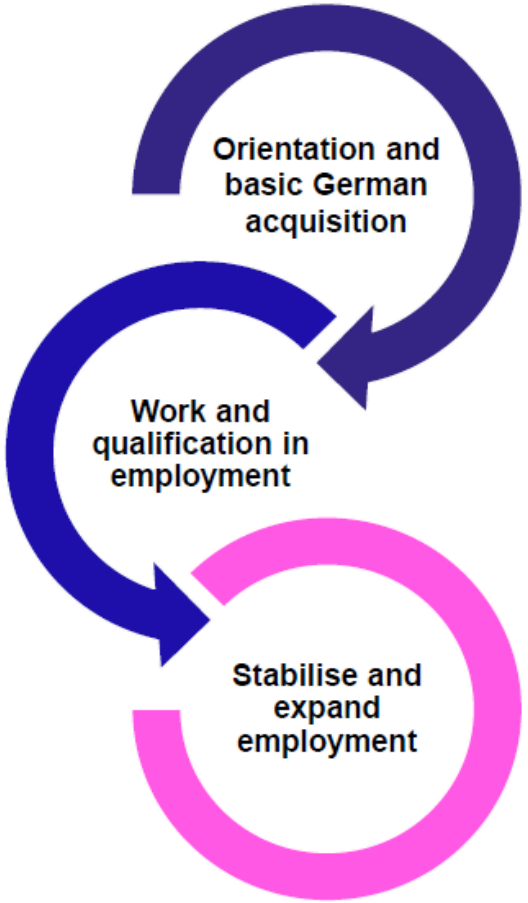
Enabling a self-determined future and **participation** in society for refugees



Contribution to **securing social peace** and **social cohesion**

JOB-TURBO

The Job Turbo is intended to help refugees find stable employment more quickly and sustainably using the 3-phase model



1st phase: Orientation and basic German acquisition

- **Arrival, orientation** and **early language acquisition**
- **Specialists and experts** who can also work **without knowledge of German** (e.g. in the IT sector) are **placed immediately**

2nd phase: Work and qualification in employment

- **Entry into** the **training and labour market,** possibly through **in-service (language) support opportunities**
- Offering **support and activation programmes**
- **Applicant days**, **internships** and the **opportunity to work on a trial basis**
- If agreements are not honoured, **the necessary cooperation -** as provided for by law - is required for integration. In the event of breaches of duty, the benefit reduction system of SGB II applies
- Recognition procedure for foreign qualifications, childcare

Phase 3: Stabilise and expand employment

- **Building on initial experience** with the German labour market **Further development** of **skilled workers** and **stabilisation of employment**
- **Utilisation of existing funding instruments** (employer benefits, promotion of employees)

Job turbo approach, especially at the **transition** from **phase 1 to phase 2**

JOB-TURBO

Effects of the Job Turbo

- The Job-Turbo marked a clear departure from this traditional “qualification-first” approach. Instead, it adopted a pragmatic middle path: encouraging refugees to enter the labor market immediately upon completing basic language training, even without full credential recognition or advanced language certification.
- The Job-Turbo significantly increased both caseworker-refugee contact and job placements:
  - ✓ Contact between caseworkers and Ukrainian refugee clients rose by 15 percentage points, representing roughly **490,000 additional counseling interactions**
  - ✓ monthly exit-to-job rate among **Ukrainian refugees** increased by 1.8 percentage points — **a 113 percent increase**
  - ✓ For refugees from eight **other major origin countries**—including Afghanistan, Syria, Iraq, and Eritrea—the program also generated meaningful gains, increasing monthly exit-to-job rates by 1 percentage point **(a 28 percent increase**)
- The findings suggest that early and active employment support can generate **substantial and sustained gains in refugee labor market integration**.

“Our study demonstrates that Germany’s Job-Turbo has significantly accelerated refugee labor market integration. The key challenge going forward is to extend these gains to refugee groups facing persistent structural barriers.”

JENS HAINMUELLER / Professor and Faculty Co-Director, Immigration Policy Lab, Stanford University







Case studies across Europe

Different approaches to early integration

GERMANY. Daniel Dwars, Head of Division 81C / Management and quality assurance of project work, integration through sports
- German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)

SPAIN. Bárbara Peláez Calles, Senior civil servant, Directorate-General for Humanitarian Assistance and the International Protection Reception Systems
- Spanish Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration

AUSTRIA. Julia Schmidlechner, Head of Coordination Team
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DISTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES IN SPAIN
ASYLUM AND RECEPTION

ASYLUM PROCEDURE

Ministry of the Interior

Border control

Documentation management

International Protection Procedure

Decides about the International Protection Applications.

RECEPTION SYSTEM

Ministry of Inclusion, Social Security Security and Migrations

Directorate-General for Humanitarian Assistance and the International Protection Reception System

Manages the reception and integration support program for for asylum-seekers without sufficient economic resources to cover resources to cover their needs or the needs of their family family members.

This reception program is managed by the Ministry in collaboration with specialized NGOs.

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The reception system and early integration

01

Initial assessment & referral

Identify needs, vulnerabilities and the most suitable resource.

Integration actions can start from the earliest contact.

02

Reception

Accommodation and individualized support: language, civic orientation, social support and employment guidance.

03

Autonomy

After protection is granted: consolidate skills and move towards an independent life.

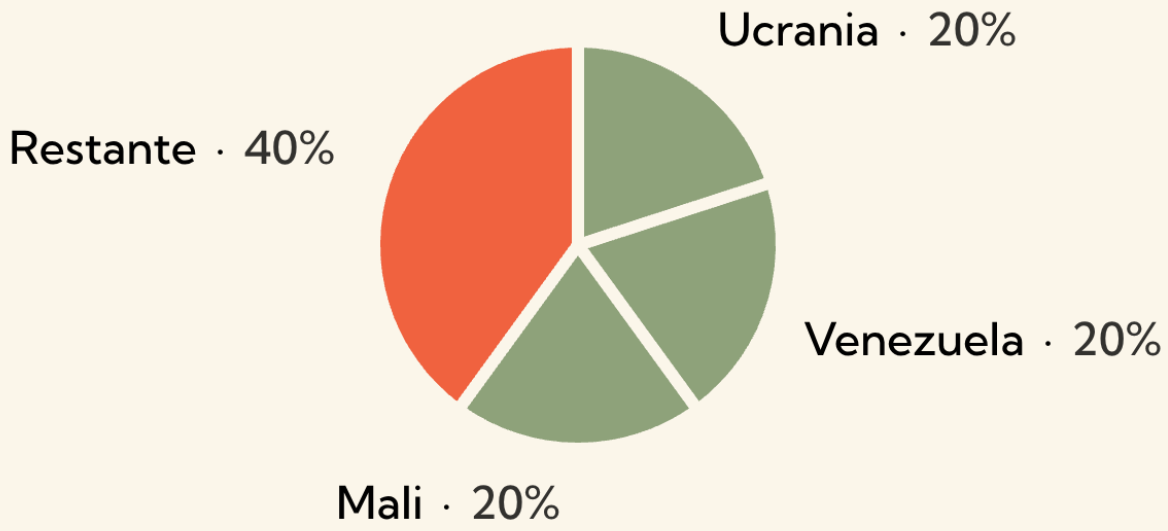
EARLY INTEGRATION

We do not wait for the final asylum decision to start building language, skills and autonomy.

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THE SPANISH CONTEXT

- Strategic geographical position at Europe's south-western border.
- Very high diversity of nationalities.
- Some arrivals already speak Spanish, while others arrive with no Spanish at all.



Up to 125 different nationalities

Excluding **Venezuela**, **Ukraine**, and **Mali**, the remaining nationalities each account for less than 3% of the reception system.

Shared structural challenges: Employment and access to housing affect society as a whole.

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Integration: the overall picture

Language learning

Initial levels of Spanish are compulsory and part of the reception itinerary.

Access to Employment

Skills assessment, vocational training, socio-labour guidance, job-search support and individualized employment pathways.

Participation in the activities established within the integration pathway is an important part of the process. Repeated unjustified absences may have disciplinary consecuences.

Language and employment should move forward together

Language facilitates entry into work - Work then reinforces language through daily interaction.

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A SHARED RESPONSIBILITY TO ACHIEVE ACHIEVE AUTONOMY

Individualized itineraries and removal of barriers

Work-life balance, transportation, childcare and other measures to adapt to individual circumstances

---

Active participation of the person

Mandatory actions, with consequences for repeated and unjustified non-compliance.

Broader integration than just language and employment.

Final goal: autonomy and an independent life project.

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Early integration of applicants for international protection: The Austrian Approach

Julia Schmidlechner

ÖIF ÖSTERREICHISCHER INTEGRATIONS FONDS



1. Starting Point

- **Early language learning matters**: The earlier people start learning German, the better their integration prospects
- **Targeted early integration**: Austria provides low-threshold opportunities for language learning and orientation during the asylum procedure
- **Strategic use of resources**: More comprehensive integration support follows once international protection is granted

ÖIF

2. Current Integration Measures for Asylum Seekers

The Austrian Approach: Language learning combined with orientation

- Basic Rules Course
- Language learning:
  - ÖIF Language Portal and Alpha Portal / literacy portal (online)
  - Access to German courses for applicants with a high likelihood of recognition
  - Some Austrian federal states also offer in-person German courses
- ÖIF Women's Centers provide multilingual counselling and support on education, health, legal matters and protection from violence

ÖIF

Basic Rules Course

- Mandatory orientation course for asylum seekers in federal reception centres
- The course covers five thematic modules
  - Culture and social norms
  - Rights and responsibilities
  - Democracy, the rule of law and fundamental freedoms
  - Gender equality
  - Raising awareness of different forms of antisemitism
- Refusal to participate may lead to reductions in basic care benefits

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The Language Portal of the Austrian Integration Fund

- Low-Barrier Learning – Anytime, Anywhere
- Free and easily accessible online
- Videos and live online classes
- Largest German learning platform
- More than 3.6 million page views in 2025
- Web address: www.sprachportal.at

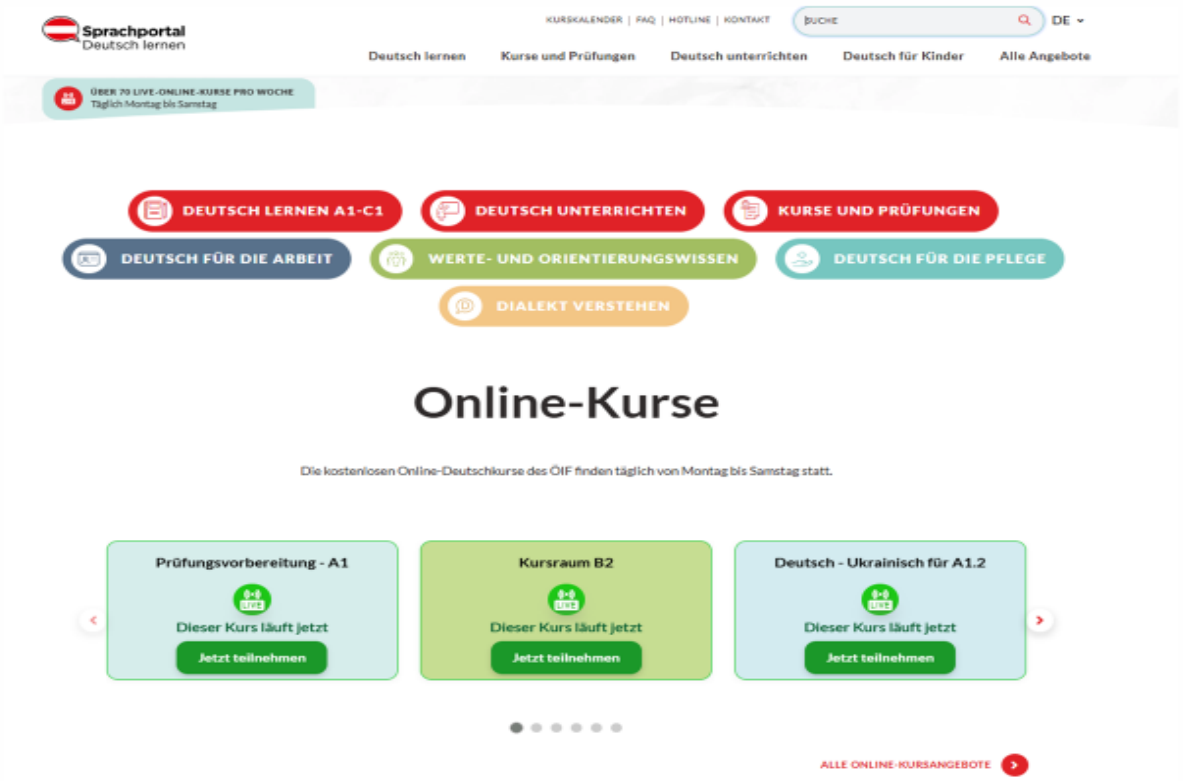
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The Language Portal

Sprachportal
Deutsch lernen

Die österreichweit größte Online-Plattform zum Deutsch lernen

mit über 3,6 Millionen Aufrufen und über 920.000 Nutzer/innen, Jahresbericht 2025



ÖIF ÖSTERREICHISCHER INTEGRATIONS FONDS

The Language Portal

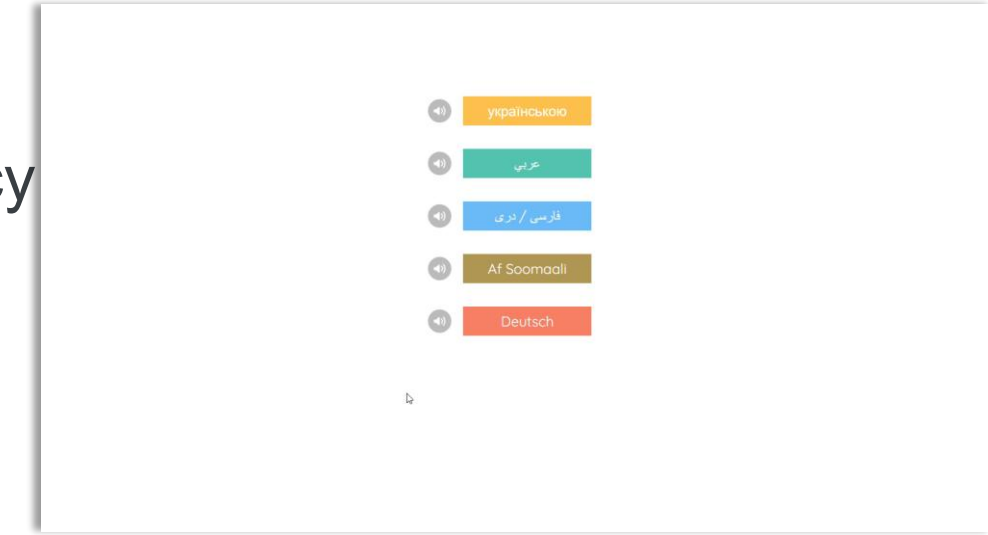
- Over 70 live online sessions per week and extensive learning materials
- Learning German: “First Steps in Austria” for Arabic- and Dari/Farsi-speaking learners
- Strong focus on labour market topics
  - **Working in Austria:** employment contracts, payslips and working conditions
  - **Application training:** job interviews, CVs and application letters
  - **Insights into different sectors:** hospitality, food retail and healthcare
  - **German for healthcare professions**, including nursing and first aid

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Alpha Portal

New digital learning platform for literacy development

- Supports independent learning alongside German courses, with a focus on basic literacy and digital skills
- Target group: Learners with basic literacy needs
- Available in five language options with audio support: German, Arabic, Farsi/Dari, Ukrainian and Somali



3. Challenges

- **Uncertain residence status**: Public investment focuses on those with a longer-term residence perspective
- **Participation and motivation**: Voluntary online learning; 30% drop-out rate in face-to-face German courses in 2025
- **Regional mobility**: Relocation after recognition complicates continuity of integration measures
- **Low education and literacy levels**: Around 80% have at most compulsory schooling; increasing literacy needs
- **Limited labour market access**: Work permits required; strong competition for low-skilled jobs, especially in Vienna

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4. Looking Ahead: The New Integration Programme

- The planned programme will also include asylum seekers with a high likelihood of being granted international protection
- Assessment of skills and work experience for each participant at programme entry
- Three core pillars of the Integration Programme: Language, Values and Employment
- Participation is mandatory; non-compliance may result in a reduction in social benefits

ÖIF

Key Takeaways - The Austrian Approach

- **Start early, invest strategically**: Provide early access to language learning and orientation, while focusing more comprehensive support on those with a longer-term residence perspective
- **Connect language learning with employment**: Language acquisition and practical work experience should go hand in hand, taking individual skills and qualifications into account
- **Combine support with clear responsibilities**: Effective integration requires accessible opportunities, personal responsibility and coordinated support, with clear obligations where applicable

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ÖSTERREICHISCHER INTEGRATIONS FONDS

Thank you for your attention

Julia Schmidlechner
Head of Coordination - Austrian Integration Fund (ÖIF)

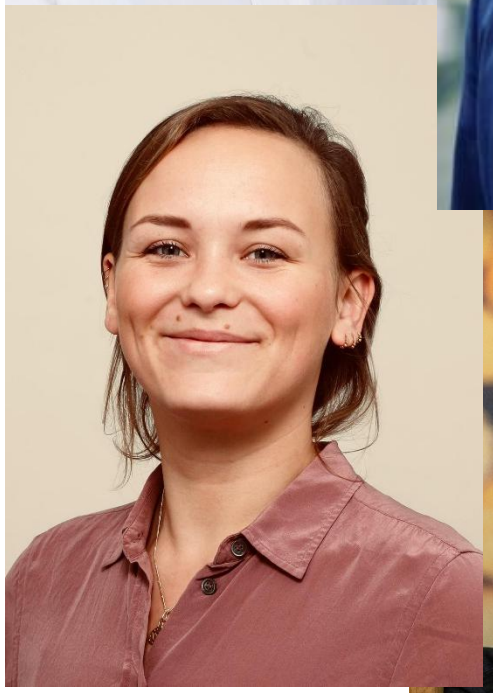
Break

Programme will resume
at 14.40 CEST











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Expert panel

Realising early integration: challenges and good practices

- **Romy Santpoort**, project manager What works in social policy and practice (Doen wat werkt), Dutch knowledge institute Movisie
- **Nahom Berhane**, coordinator COA participation desk Amstelveen
- **Robin Muzea**, project manager From Asylum to Work (Van Opvang naar Werk), municipality of Rotterdam
- **Jasper Janvier**, business manager Synergie Netherlands

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Statement:

Language first, then employment

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Statement:

For an employer, there are few obstacles to hire an applicant for international protection

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Interview with **Heba**

Expert by experience - a journey through early integration

Interviewer: Hans Lemmens

- Coordinator

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Closing remarks

Hans Lemmens

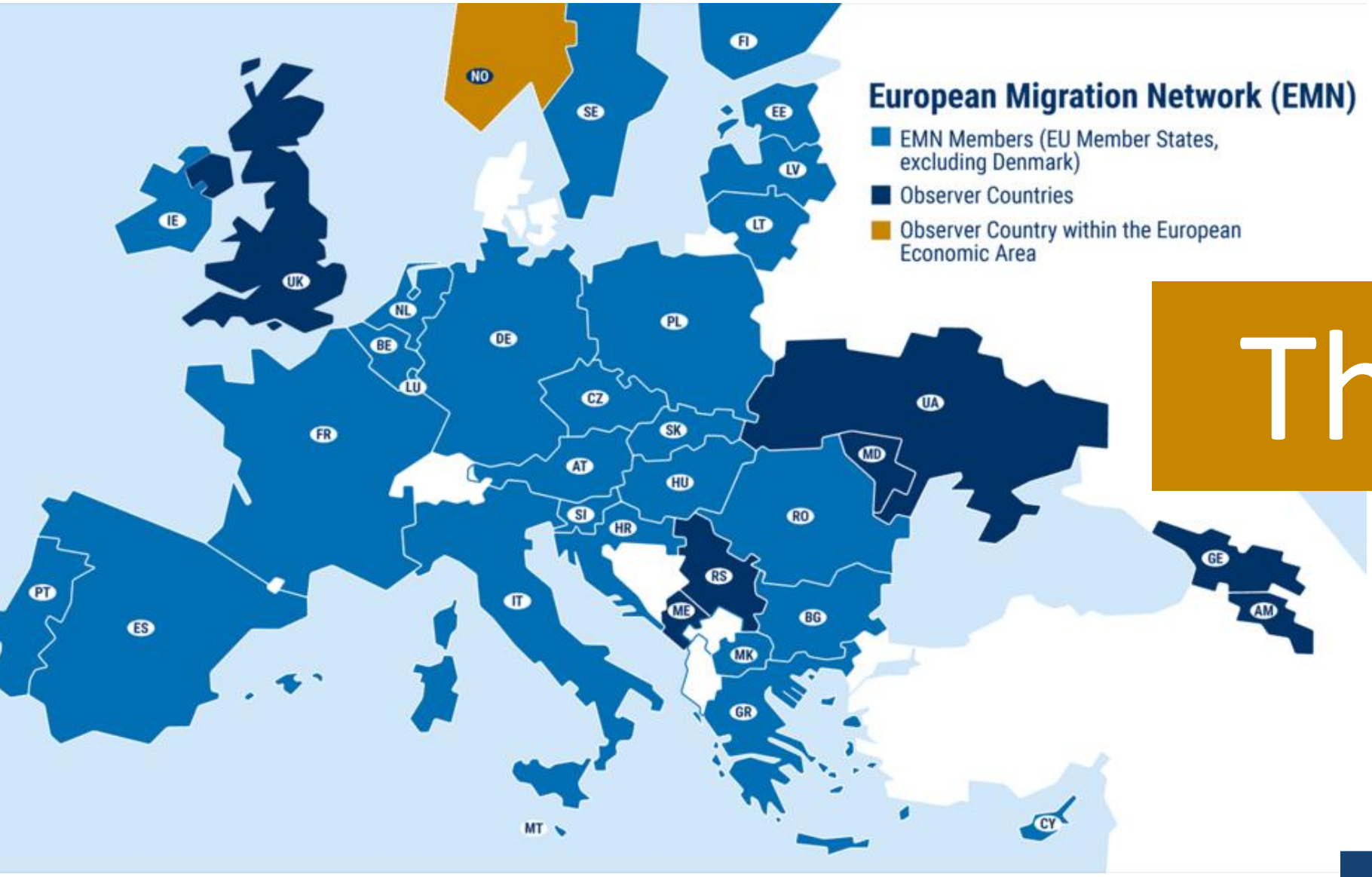
- Coordinator

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