Studying life circumstances of refugees in Germany: A feasibility analysis

A cooperation project of the Robert Bosch Foundation and the Research Unit at the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration

Dr. David Schiefer | Expert Council’s Research Unit
GESIS Lecture Series
February 2nd 2016 | Mannheim
Agenda

1. The Expert Council
2. Background and feasibility study
3. The population
4. Collecting quantitative data among refugees (sampling)
5. Field access
6. Interview situation and questionnaire
The Expert Council was founded in 2008 as an initiative of eight big private foundations (today seven).

- unique initiative of foundations and migration scientists
- academic institution, politically independent
- nine experts from different disciplines and various academic affiliations
- Main task: annual report on migration and integration
- Conferences, political dialogues, press work
- separate research unit for policy-oriented projects

Head office in Berlin
Studying refugees: Background
Background: Application numbers rising since 2009; 2015: 441,889 First Applications.

Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Background: In 2014 more than half a million individuals lived in Germany who had immigrated for humanitarian reasons (629,301).

* Suspension of deportation, hardship cases, old-case-regulation, well-integrated youth

Source: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge
Current most severe problems urging for solutions: Registration, accommodation, provision of food and health care, asylum applications.
Ambivalent atmosphere in society.
Integration: Equal chance of participation in all areas of the societal life (SVR 2010).

Structural:
- Housing
- Labor Market
- Education
- Welfare
- Legal System
- Political Participation

Socio-cultural:
- Language
- Social contacts
- Associations/Organizations
- Traditions and Life Style
- Identity
Change process in politics and society: From mere limitation and exclusion to integration and perception of potentials (however: recently backward movement).

Realignment of refugee policies and integration programs require credible knowledge of needs, aspirations and life circumstances of refugees. Current discourses often lack empirical evidence.

(Until recently) refugees only minor part of migration research field. Analysis of life circumstances was rather deficient.
Feasibility Study

Prüfung der Machbarkeit einer groß angelegten Befragung von Asylbewerbern bzw. Personen mit humanitärem Aufenthaltstitel oder mit Duldung zu ihrer Lebenslage in Deutschland.

Ziel: Repräsentative, mindestens belastbare Daten.

Anvisierter Zeitraum der Untersuchung: 1,5 bis 2 Jahre (Start ggf. 1. Quartal 2016).
Feasibility Study

- Identify important stakeholder in the area of refugees and asylum
- Examine state of research and knowledge, identify gaps of research and needs for further investigations
- Collect previous experiences of empirical studies with refugees
- Develop qualitative and quantitative research designs (sampling, field access, etc.)
- Identify organizational and logistic requirements, estimate financial expenses
Feasibility Study: Insights
The population is very complex

Refugees in Germany: Individuals who have left their country of origin involuntarily for humanitarian reasons and have entered Germany with the attempt to apply for humanitarian protection, or have been brought to Germany for humanitarian reasons.

By legal „categories“

1) Individuals *with* regular humanitarian residence permit
   - Entitled to asylum (*Asylberechtigt*), Refugee based on GRC (*GFK-Flüchtling*), Subsidiary protection (*subsidiärer Schutz*), National deportation prohibition (*Nationales Abschiebungsverbot*), Resettlement, etc.

2) Individuals *without* a regular humanitarian residence permit
   - Before registration, during asylum application procedure (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*), suspension of deportation (*Duldung*)

3) Individuals with a residence permit based on subsequent regulations
   - Old-case-regulation (*Altfallregelung*), Hardship cases (*Härtefälle*), well-integrated youth, etc.
The population is very complex

By countries of origin: 2015 more than 100 countries of origin; TOP-10 countries usually cover 65-70% of applications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ranking 2015</th>
<th>Applications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Syria</td>
<td>158.657</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Albania</td>
<td>53.805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Kosovo</td>
<td>33.427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Afghanistan</td>
<td>31.382</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Iraq</td>
<td>29.784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Serbia</td>
<td>16.700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Eritrea</td>
<td>10.876</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Macedonia</td>
<td>9.083</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Pakistan</td>
<td>8.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Iran</td>
<td>5.394</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(unknown citizenship: 11.721)
The population is very complex

By length of residence: Depending on the research question.

Early stage of residence: Evaluation of Reception System

Late stage of residence: Evaluation of Long-Term Integration

Arrival/Reception  Asylum Application Process  Protection/Suspended Deportation

Asylum Seeker
- Suspended Deportation
- Residence Permit

Residence Permit
- Suspended Deportation
- Asylum Seeker
A quantitative description of the population is possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Central data base of foreign individuals (Ausländerzentralregister, AZR) | ▪ Legal residence status, country of origin, age, gender  
  ▪ Main statistics publically available, special statistics by request |
| Statistic of welfare recipients by Asylum Welfare Law (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz) | ▪ Asylum seekers, individuals with suspended deportation,  
  in parts accepted refugees  
  ▪ Differentiated by „central“ and „decentral“ accomodation,  
  length of stay                                                     |
| Micro-Census statistics                                               | ▪ Country of origin, since 2008 reason for migration (small proportion of sample)  
  ▪ Deviations from AZR data possible                                 |
| Data bases of local refugee reception authorities (untere Aufnahmebehörden) | ▪ Registration of refugees residing in a municipality, partially centralized database für Bundesländer (BW: MigVis) |
| Eurostat data                                                         | ▪ Number of asylum application by country of origin                                                |
Is it possible to collect quantitative data of refugees from which one can generalize to the population?
Sampling based on Central Data Base of Foreign Individuals (*Ausländerzentralregister*, AZR)

- When applying for asylum an individual is entered in the nationwide data base of foreigners
- Best option, enables (stratified) random selection based on country of origin, residence status, age, gender, etc.

Face-to-face survey in collective shelters and individual apartments
(asylum seekers, individuals with suspended deportation, accepted refugees)

Acquisition of addresses from local foreigner's registration offices (*Ausländerbehörden*)

(stratified) random selection of individuals

No addresses!

Total number of refugees in country
(central data base of foreigners)

Alternative:
Cluster sampling of foreign registration offices
Sampling based on Central Data Base of Foreign Individuals (*Ausländerzentralregister*, AZR)

- **Limitation:**
  - Access!
  - Addresses

- **Non-coverage:**
  - Individuals with German citizenship (naturalized)
  - Individuals who have not been registered at time \( t \), yet (subsequent drawing necessary)
Cluster sampling based on initial reception facilities (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtungen)

- During initial reception, refugees are accommodated in collective reception facilities run by the states
- Mandatory (max. 6 month) → full coverage
- Limited number, locations known

Face-to-face survey in facility (mainly asylum seekers)

(stratified) random selection of individuals

Total number of inhabitants in facility

Full coverage or selection

Total number of initial reception facilities (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtungen) in country
Cluster sampling based on initial reception facilities (Erstaufnahmeeinrichtungen)

- Limitations:
  - Target group: Very early stage of residence, mainly stage of asylum application procedure (de facto durations often < 6 month)
  - Lack of orientation, insecurity regarding meaning of survey
  - Less experience in the country to share
  - Large facilities, noisy, no privacy
Cluster sampling based on local refugee reception authorities (*untere Aufnahmebehörden*)

- After the initial reception period, refugees are distributed to municipalities within the state
- Local authorities responsible for reception and accommodation

Face-to-face survey in collective shelters and individual apartments (asylum seekers, individuals with suspended deportation, in parts accepted refugees)

- (stratified) random selection of individuals
- Total number of foreigners registered by local refugee reception authority (*untere Aufnahmebehörden*)
- (stratified) random selection of administrative units
- Total number of administrative units (*Landkreise, autonomous cities*) in country
Cluster sampling based on local refugee reception authorities (*untere Aufnahmebehörden*)

Limitations:

1. Access
2. Unequal distribution of countries of origin across nation
3. Undercoverage: only refugees under responsibility of local reception authorities (asylum seekers, suspended deportation, in parts accepted refugees)
   - no initial reception
   - no recognized refugees living in private accommodation
   - in future: no „secure countries if origin“
4. Strong fluctuation (address quality), variations in local registration systems
5. Design effects
Cluster sampling based on local registration offices (Meldebehörden)

- When transferred to municipalities, refugees need to register with the local registration office (Meldebehörde)

1. Screening for residence status
2. Face-to-face survey in collective shelters and individual apartments (asylum seekers, individuals with suspended deportation, accepted refugees)

(stratified) random selection of offices

Total number of local registration offices (Meldebehörden) in country

(stratified) random selection of individuals by nationality

Total number of foreigners registered in office
Cluster sampling based on local registration offices (Meldebehörden)

Limitations:

1. No information on residence status (oversampling)
2. Unequal distribution of countries of origin across nation
3. Undercoverage: No individuals in initial reception stage
4. In early stage of residence strong fluctuation, unclear registration practice (address quality)
5. Design effects
Multi-stage sampling by type of accommodation

1. Face-to-face survey in **individual apartments**
   (asylum seekers, suspended deportation, accepted refugees)

   **snowball search via multiple channels**
   (social networks, social workers, etc.)

   Refugees in individual apartments

   **(stratified) random selection**

   Total number of refugees in administrative unit

   **(stratified) random selection of administrative unity**

   Total number of administrative units
   (**Landkreise**, autonomous cities)

   **Total number of inhabitants in shelter**

   **selection of shelters**

   Total number of coll. refugee shelters

   Refugees in collective shelters

   Face-to-face survey in **collective shelters**
   (asylum seekers, individuals with suspended deportation, in parts accepted refugees)
Reducing complexity

- Stages of residence (initial reception, transition period, period after asylum decision)
- Asylum status (secure vs. insecure)
- Type of accommodation
- Regions
- Countries or origin (language issue):
  - Immigration numbers (relevance)
  - Reason for migration, likelihood of protection
  - Regional distribution of countries of origin
Representative vs. quote sampling / theoretical sampling

- Social-demographic and socio-economic characteristics
- Regions of countries of origin
- Migration motives
- Asylum status (secure vs. insecure)
- Place of residence (states, rural vs. urban regions)
- Type of accommodation (collective vs. individual accommodation)
- Social context of migration (individual, family)
Field access
Vulnerable group that is difficult to reach

- Early stage of residence and insecure legal status:
  - Traumatic experiences, exhaustion, lack of orientation
  - Stressful accommodation situation
  - Trust and compliance: high insecurity in terms of legal residence, association of surveys with application process and authorities
- But: Eventually very open to share experiences
- Accepted refugees in later stage of residence:
  - More settled, more stable living situation
  - Surprisingly high response rate? (Worbs, Bund 2016)
Vulnerable group that is difficult to reach

- Face-to-face survey:
  - Very effortful and costly, difficult to reach individuals, regardless of sampling design
  - Collective accommodations especially challenging, local support necessary

- Mail survey:
  - Address quality and reachability (esp. collective shelters)
  - Trust and compliance even lower

- Phone survey:
  - Early arrivals mainly mobile phones (prepaid)
Interview situation and questionnaire
Interview situation and questionnaire

- Private rooms vs. common room
- Interviewer (gender, age, cultural background, appearance)
- Independence and anonymity
- Reciprocity (and its limits)
- Comprehensibility (research per se, goal of study, content of questionnaire)
- Language and culture (equivalence)
- Sensitive topics
Empirically-based knowledge on the life situation of refugees is urgently needed

THE refugee does not exist (complex population)

Representative data require privileged access and large effort

Field access and interview situation needs to be thoroughly prepared
Thank you for your attention!

Contact: schiefer@svr-migration.de