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## AN INSTITUTIONAL COUNTRY-COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF THE LABOR MARKET; A CASE STUDY OF INTEGRATION OF INTERNATIONAL REFUGEES

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### ABSTRACT

To examine variations in refugee labor market integration from country to country we first conceptualize integration success as an attribute and outcome of a two-way process involving multiple actors whose roles and activities are enabled and restricted by the institutional environment in the host country. We then develop a framework that specifies macro factors influencing successful refugee labor market integration. In particular, our framework elucidates how regulative, cognitive, and normative aspects of the national institutional environment in the host country create different conditions for refugee employment, thereby shaping three stages of the integration process: (1) arrival and asylum procedure; (2) finding employment; and (3) workplace inclusion. Finally, we discuss theoretical and practical implications of this research.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the number of people crossing international borders to flee persecution, war, or environmental disasters is at an alltime high worldwide and is steadily increasing. According to official statistics, at the end of 2021 there were 31.7 million transnational refugees and asylum seekers worldwide (in addition to 53.2 million internally displaced people), which is more than twice as many as a decade earlier (UNHCR, 2022a). New trouble spots are constantly emerging. For example, more than a hundred thousand refugees from Nicaragua were registered in 2021, and about 7 million from Ukraine in the first eight months of 2022 (UNHCR, 2022a, 2022b). The pressing issue of integrating refugees into receiving societies has a long tradition of research (e.g., Escalona and Black, 1995; Sigona, 2005) that repeatedly highlights employment as a key aspect of societal integration (e.g., Ferris, 2020; Lee et al., 2020; Phillimore and Goodson, 2006). However, it is difficult to navigate the labor market of a foreign country without preparation. Refugees often do not have the chance to learn the language of the host country in advance or to have their qualifications recognized. Moreover, host country institutions and local actors often misread or ignore the needs of newcomers, and instead of helping, they create dependency or exclusion (Ghorashi, 2005).

While these challenges are well known, there are significant differences between host countries regarding refugee labor market integration (Brell et al., 2020; Dustmann et al., 2017; Federico and Baglioni, 2021; Hernes et al., 2022). This calls for more comparative research to identify, categorize, and explain the macro factors that contribute to successful refugee labor market integration. To date, there have been few cross-country comparative studies, namely best-practice inventories (e.g., Ferris, 2020; Konle-Seidl, 2018; Martín et al., 2016), comparative studies that focus on a few specific countries and selected institutions (e.g., Andersson Joona and Datta Gupta, 2022; Bešić et al., 2022; Mozetič, 2022), and multilevel frameworks based on literature

reviews (e.g., Lee et al., 2020; Loon and Vitale, 2021; Szkudlarek et al., 2021). These studies have identified several factors operating at the host-country level, such as immigration policies, labor market conditions, qualification accreditation systems, and societal climate. However, they are limited in scope and detail, as they examine either very specific factors in a country or region (e.g., the adoption of certain integration programs) or very broad categories of macro factors (e.g., “immigration policies”). Moreover, they are based on purely empirical investigations or literature reviews, whereas theoretically grounded models that also provide explanations for how macro factors operate are lacking.

Since a better theoretical understanding of the labor market integration of refugees is essential to understand this complex empirical phenomenon and make practical recommendations, the aim of this paper is to take a first step towards advancing theory in this field. We develop a theoretically grounded framework that specifies macro factors at the level of the host country which contribute to successful refugee labor market integration and highlights the relevant actors involved. The framework is based on the Country Institutional Profile (CIP) framework suggested by Kostova (1999). Rooted in institutional theory (e.g., Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995), the CIP construct seeks to explain differences in a dependent variable across countries based on the countries’ national institutional environment. The CIP framework is particularly well-suited for our purposes because institutions play a critical role in both the constitution of refugees and their employment (Hardy, 1994; Lee et al., 2020). While we use the CIP framework to guide our selection of potential macro factors and explain how they operate, we additionally draw on the influential framework of refugee integration proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) as well as existing multi-disciplinary literature in the field to further specify the macro factors.

Our approach is distinctive as we conceptualize refugee labor market integration as a process that begins with the arrival of a refugee in the host country, continues with the search for employment, and further continues in the workplace. The framework considers how factors associated with the institutional environment in a host country influence the activities of multiple actors involved in these three stages. Therewith we offer a theoretically grounded framework that helps explain country differences in refugee labor market integration. We view this as an important contribution to the literature on refugee integration at a time when numerous scholars have called for more theoretical foundation and greater attention to country context in research (e.g., Lee et al., 2020; Richardson et al., 2020; Szkudlarek et al., 2021). Furthermore, we provide detailed conceptualizations of refugees as a special group of people within the group of international migrants and of the much-debated goal of successful labor market integration, based on a discussion of previous literature. Thus, we make a theoretical contribution to both literature on international management (IM) and migration and integration. By linking IM and refugee integration research, we make conceptual knowledge from IM studies fruitful for the “grand challenge” in global society of dealing with issues around flight and displacement — issues which will continue to be of great importance.

## 2. REFUGEES: A DISTINCT TYPE OF INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS

There is no consistent terminology around refugees to date. Terms and operationalizations vary across scientific disciplines and also depend on practical context, such as legal or statistical purposes or when deciding if a person is eligible for social benefits. Some scholars and practitioners define Refugees and Forced Migrants in opposition to Economic Migrants. For example, Dustmann et al. (2017) emphasize the forced and spontaneous nature of refugee migrants triggered by “violence, conflict or natural disaster” (p. 503). In contrast, economic migrants’ decision to migrate, and if so, to which country, is based on their expected economic benefits (p. 528). Other scholars reject the distinction between refugees and economic migrants, arguing that these categories are fluid and that political, economic, and social factors that cause people to leave their country are always intertwined (e.g., Castles, 2003; Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; Donato and Ferris, 2020; Richmond, 1988; Zetter, 2007).

Overcoming the forced versus economic divide, Betts (2010) proposes the term Survival Migrants, defined as “people who have left their country of origin because of an existential threat for which they have no domestic remedy” (p. 361). His conceptualization recognizes that in recent years, “the combination of environmental disaster, state fragility, and livelihood failure frequently interact in ways that create a need for protection” (Betts, 2010, p. 361). FitzGerald and Arar (2018) stress the historical importance of persecution in conceptualizing refugee migration. Arguing that violence underlies most causes of flight, these authors define “refugee migration as flight from political violence, including the threat of violence behind persecution” (p. 393). Szkudlarek et al. (2021) contrast refugees and expatriates as “extreme cases of global mobility” (p. 462) and emphasize the forced nature of refugee migration caused by push factors like war, insecurity, or drought. Furthermore, these authors

view vulnerability, uncertainty, and a low social status in the host country as typical for refugees.

Building upon these approaches, we use the term Refugees to refer to people who have crossed international borders to escape an existential threat associated with factors such as persecution, war, political violence, or environmental disasters. What these people have in common is not just that they had similar reasons for fleeing. But they all have a vital need for protection.

This special need for protection is also at the core of legal definitions of refugees, which in turn are often based on the United Nations 1951 Refugee Convention. Legal definitions are important because recognized refugees enjoy several privileges over other migrants, such as residence and (often) work permits, housing, and health care. Furthermore, their need for protection often creates a greater sense of responsibility among civil society and employers in host countries (Feischmidt et al., 2019; Ortlieb et al., 2021; Simsa, 2016), distinguishing refugees from other internationally mobile people. However, these distinctions, made by the legal environment and societal context of host countries, also tend to put refugees at a disadvantage compared to locals. They construct and classify people as refugees in the first place (Diedrich and Styhre, 2013) and often politicize them as part of (inter)national struggles. The legal and social institutions of host countries also function as gatekeepers in a process of “sorting out” while exerting significant power on people’s lives (Zetter, 2007).

### **3. SUCCESSFUL REFUGEE LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION: FROM ARRIVAL IN THE HOST COUNTRY TO WORKPLACE INCLUSION**

What makes for successful refugee labor market integration is a controversial topic. Whereas many researchers and politicians focus on whether refugees are in paid work at all (e.g., Auer, 2018; Brell et al., 2020; Marbach et al., 2018), others claim that the quality of refugees’ jobs and what happens in the workplace should also be considered (e.g., Gericke et al., 2018; Hirst et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Loon and Vitale, 2021; Ponzoni et al., 2017). For example, Szkudlarek et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of finding meaningful employment in one’s profession. Similarly, Lee et al. (2020) suggest that refugees’ work should meet their qualifications, professional goals, and financial needs and provide opportunities for development. Hirst et al. (2021) view comparable opportunities to locals as a key aspect of refugee employment. On the other hand, several studies report that refugees experience unfair treatment and social exclusion in the workplace (Knappert et al., 2018; Ortlieb et al., 2021; Ponzoni et al., 2017; Tomlinson, 2010). Building on this research, we postulate that refugee labor market integration does not end when they enter gainful employment, but continues in the workplace. More specifically, the ways in which refugee newcomers retain employment, build their careers, and experience belonging and uniqueness in the workplace characterize their long-term integration (Hirst et al., 2021; Knappert et al., 2020).

Since labor market integration is closely intertwined with non-work aspects, the work of Ager and Strang (2008) on societal integration is also useful for our purposes. In their influential framework, Ager and Strang (2008) review, analyze, and summarize ten dimensions in four domains that constitute integration success: (1) employment, housing, education, and health, which concurrently serve as markers and means of successful integration, (2) rights and citizenship as foundation; (3) social connection in the form of social bridges with locals, social bonds with co-ethnics, and social links with state agencies; as well as (4) language and cultural knowledge plus safety and stability as facilitators. These ten dimensions are interrelated in complex ways (Ager and Strang, 2008; van Dijk et al., 2022). For instance, language and cultural skills, together with good health, are a prerequisite for finding commensurate employment, which in turn often allows for an improvement in language and cultural skills as well as social connection (Cheng et al., 2021). It is precisely because of these interrelationships that Ager and Strang’s (2008) framework, which originally focused on social integration, is helpful in identifying the institutions relevant to labor market integration. Moreover, we can transpose this framework from the societal level to the workplace level, as we describe in detail below in Section 5.3.

In addition to job quality and non-work aspects, the question of a specific “target state” plays an important role in defining integration success. Whereas integration can be understood as a state — that is, a person “is integrated” once they achieved a certain level, for instance the same outcomes as natives — we focus on integration as a process. This perspective is consistent with previous research on refugee integration (e.g., Donato and Ferris, 2020; Hesse et al., 2019; Hirst et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Phillimore, 2021). It also resonates with the IM literature on expatriates, which examines preparation, relocation, and adjustment as distinct phases within an individual’s international assignment process (e.g., Shah et al., 2022), as well as the growing body of IM research on the acculturation of highly skilled migrants (e.g., Hajro et al., 2019).

Lastly, in contrast to the view often expressed in public debates that integration is something refugees must do and for which they alone are responsible, researchers widely agree that integration is a two-way process involving a range of actors in the host country (Ager and Strang, 2008; Phillimore, 2021; van Dijk et al., 2022). This view is also central to the influential conceptualization of Berry (1997), who describes societal integration as an acculturation strategy based on mutual accommodation of newcomers and members of the host society, and hence requires newcomers to adopt basic values shared by members of the host society, but also requires an open and inclusive host society.

Summarizing, we conceptualize refugee labor market integration success as an attribute and outcome of a process that involves both refugees and other actors. This process begins when a person — usually after hasty preparations for flight and more or less long stays in transit countries (Brell et al., 2020) — arrives in the host country and applies for asylum. It is an open-ended process comprising distinct stages that build on each other, so that earlier stages are a logical prerequisite of subsequent stages, although overlaps may occur and some individuals may return from a later stage to an earlier one. In line with existing literature (e.g., Gericke et al., 2018; Seidelsohn et al., 2020), we distinguish the following three stages. The first stage comprises the period between a refugee’s arrival in the host country and the completion of the asylum procedure. The second stage refers to the period of seeking employment that begins when the person is recognized as a (Geneva Convention) refugee, granted subsidiary protection, or another form of protection on humanitarian grounds by the state authorities, which is usually accompanied by the granting of a residence and work permit. Although asylum seekers with ongoing procedures are legally entitled to gainfully work in some countries and/or after certain waiting periods and/or in certain job types, we chose this legal indicator to delineate the stages because the asylum decision is crucial for a longer-term perspective as well as safety and security (Ager and Strang, 2008; Ortlieb and Ressi, 2022). The final stage refers to inclusion at work, after the person has either taken up employment in an organization or started their own business.

This analytical structuring of the integration process, which also considers the time before and after starting work, enables a differentiated understanding of the factors influencing the labor market integration of refugees.

#### **4. THE NATIONAL CONTEXT OF REFUGEE LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION: A COUNTRY INSTITUTIONAL PROFILES FRAMEWORK**

Previous research has established that several host country characteristics influence the successful integration of refugees into the labor market. Recent reviews of the literature provide particularly valuable insights. For example, Lee et al. (2020) identify three main macro factors: “institutional regulations around immigration,” “institutional arrangements regarding recognition of foreign qualifications and education,” and “socio-political climate involving public sentiment and political rhetoric” (p. 198). However, the authors point out that most research on refugee workforce integration addresses the individual level, while there are significant theoretical gaps with regard to the contextual level. Szkudlarek et al. (2021) distinguish three clusters of macro factors: macroeconomic (e.g., local labor market), social (e.g., political climate), and institutional (e.g., integration policy). The authors also conclude that research in both IM and migration studies falls short in incorporating macro factors into theorizing on refugee integration. Grouping influencing factors slightly differently, Hirst et al. (2021) describe the societal, institutional, and policy influences as contextual factors of refugee recruitment and workplace integration, but again, there is no theoretical framework that accounts for this level.

To address this under-theorizing in the field of refugee labor market integration, we introduce the CIP framework proposed by Kostova (1999) as a fruitful perspective to identify and organize the various contextual factors and explain how cross-country variance in integration success is shaped by the host countries’ institutional environment. Borrowing from institutional theory (e.g., Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Scott, 1995), Kostova (1999) suggests that a CIP is composed of three elements that differ more across countries than within a country: a regulatory component (i.e., laws and regulations), a cognitive component (e.g., shared knowledge and cognitive frames), and a normative component (i.e., values and norms). All three elements influence individuals’ mindsets and activities. For example, managerial decisions to adopt certain anti-discrimination policies are shaped by national anti-discrimination law, managers’ shared knowledge of anti-discrimination policies in that country, and their shared values and social norms regarding minorities and anti-discrimination.

While Kostova (1999) and the founding ideas of institutional theory focus on organizations and the adoption of practices to gain legitimacy from the environment and ensure organizational survival, the CIP framework also proved useful in analyses of cross-country differences in phenomena such as entrepreneurship

(Busenitz et al., 2000) and managers' attitudes (Parboteeah et al., 2008). On the one hand, these applications illustrate the broad analytical utility of the CIP framework; on the other hand, they call for a deeper understanding of the microfoundational assumptions made in institutional scholarship to bridge the macro and micro levels of analysis (Powell and Colyvas, 2008). Kostova (1999) addresses this macro–micro bridging by conceptualizing the role of individuals as “carriers of the institutionalized knowledge of the society” (p. 315), who engage in practices that are consistent with the national institutional environment. This specification also sheds new light on refugee labor market integration and, in particular, what Lee et al. (2020) have called a “cascading effect” of institutional influences on the perceptions and activities of employers and refugees. As institutions are created by individuals while framing the possibilities for individual action by providing the “scripts for meaning making” (Powell and Colyvas, 2008, p. 277), individuals involved in refugee integration reproduce the relevant institutions. In doing so, they create relatively stable, country-specific conditions for individuals' perceptions, decision-making, and activities.

Drawing on these theoretical considerations, we assume that first, successful refugee labor market integration results from activities of various actors. Prior literature has featured a broader set of actors involved (Gericke et al., 2018; Hesse et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2020), including political decision-makers; staff of public authorities, agencies responsible for integration, and the public employment service; volunteers and professional advisors of refugees; the refugees themselves; and workplace actors such as recruiters, managers, and coworkers of refugees. The activities of these actors are shaped by a country's institutional environment, and they in turn shape the institutional environment. Also the actors themselves, their roles, identities, and the way they act and interact with one another are a result of the institutional context (Hardy, 1994; Wehrle et al., 2018; Zetter, 2007).

Second, we assume that refugees and other individuals possess agency, although institutional factors restrict their scope for action to varying degrees across the integration process (Dekker et al., 2018; Szkudlarek et al., 2021; Tomlinson, 2010). While the fundamental nature of institutions is that they simultaneously enable and constrain action, people are not human marionettes, but engage (consciously or unconsciously) with their institutional environment (Cardinale, 2018). In institutional theory, the notions of rejecting and decoupling describe possible ways in which organizations consciously deviate from the institutional template (e.g., Kostova et al., 2008; Oliver, 1991). An example is employers who present themselves as diversity-oriented on their website but do not engage in effective diversity management (“window dressing”), or who circumvent prohibited discrimination in hiring by using a staffing agency.

## 5. INSTITUTIONAL FACTORS OF SUCCESSFUL REFUGEE LABOR MARKET INTEGRATION

Based on our conceptualizations of refugees and labor market integration, we have developed a framework specifying the influence of country-specific institutional factors on refugee labor market integration. To identify which regulatory, cognitive, and normative factors constitute a CIP with respect to refugee labor market integration, we draw on the framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) as well as the existing literature on refugee integration, which originates in various scientific disciplines such as economics, sociology, management studies, political science, and migration/refugee studies.

Since the relevance of actors and institutions varies across the different stages of a refugees' integration process (Gericke et al., 2018; Hardy, 1994; Shevel, 2011), we structure our framework along the three stages we described in Section 3 of this article. Following Kostova (1999), we propose that the institutional environment in a host country creates specific conditions for these stages, which build on each other so that (more or less favorable) institutional conditions in earlier stages can have long-lasting effects on subsequent stages and ultimately influence country-level variance in refugee labor market integration success.

To reduce complexity, our framework refers to the stylized case of people who leave their country of origin (or long-term residence) as adults, either through a resettlement program or on their own, seeking to settle long-term in a host country after a flight of a few months or a few years.

We discuss the regulative, cognitive, and normative institutional factors shaping the activities of key actors involved in refugee labor market integration in the following paragraphs. Fig. 1 presents our framework.

### 5.1. Stage 1: arrival in the host country and asylum procedure

While all signatory countries of the Geneva Refugee Convention from 1951 and the New York Protocol from 1967 are committed to caring for arriving people in need of international protection, the specific way in which refugee reception and asylum processing are organized differs from country to country (AIDA/ECRE,

2021; Hardy, 1994; Federico and Baglioni, 2021). Prior research shows that the institutional environment in the period between arrival in a country and the final asylum decision also affects the labor market integration of refugees (Andersson Joonas and Datta Gupta, 2022; De Vroome and van Tubergen, 2010; Dustmann et al., 2017).

### *5.1.1. The regulatory dimension*

Previous research has consistently highlighted that national law plays a decisive role in refugee labor market integration in two domains, as they shape refugees' opportunities to enter a foreign country and its labor market: (1) asylum and immigration law and (2) law concerning labor market access.

5.1.1.1. Asylum and immigration law. National law determines who is allowed to enter a country and what rights and obligations these people have. In recent years, many governments around the world have introduced increasingly restrictive migration regimes and border controls (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2021; Shevel, 2011; Varnava et al., 2022). Therewith governments have responded to opponents of immigration, and some also argue that more restrictive immigration policies increase the chances of integration because resources could be used to promote integration and there would be less risk of ethnic "parallel societies" and possible anti-immigrant resentment in receiving societies (Bjerre et al., 2021; Joppke, 2017; Seidelsohn et al., 2020).

An important element of national asylum and immigration law are the legal routes through which refugees can enter a country. International resettlement programs, in particular, facilitate the integration process (EMN, 2016). Under such schemes, people in need of international protection are granted legal status on site in the country of origin or in a transition country, equivalent to that of Geneva Convention refugees in the destination country. In addition, resettlement programs typically include services such as preparation (e.g., cultural orientation training), medical examinations, transfer to the destination country, as well as accommodation and further integration support in the destination country (UNHCR, 2011). However, the specific design of resettlement programs also plays a role. For example, privately sponsored refugees in Canada were found to be more likely to be employed than government-assisted refugees (Kaida et al., 2019).

Likewise, if a country has a family reunification scheme, some refugees can take this relatively less strenuous route. As studies in various countries have shown, those who come to the country under family reunification find jobs more quickly, and better quality jobs, than those who come on their own as asylum seekers (Bakker et al., 2017; Bevelander and Pendakur, 2014). In contrast, the granting of temporary protection status or other shorter-term residence permits related to suspension of deportation (e.g., toleration, humanitarian leave to remain, or otherwise exceptional leave to remain) keeps asylum claimants in limbo and thus hinders employment (Fleay et al., 2013; Phillimore and Goodson, 2006; Wehrle et al., 2018).

Lastly, some countries have a policy of geographic dispersion that places asylum seekers in distinct regions across the country (e.g., Romania, Portugal, France; AIDA/ECRE, 2021; USA, Benson et al., 2022). Such dispersal policies have been found to hamper labor market integration because refugees lose their social networks when they move and they are often assigned to regions with higher unemployment and/or prevalent xenophobia (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2020; Fasani et al., 2022; Phillimore, 2011).

5.1.1.2. Law concerning labor market access. The extent to which asylum claimants are allowed to enter the labor market while waiting for their (final) asylum decision varies across countries (Ertorer, 2021; Federico and Baglioni, 2021; Ferris, 2020). In Europe, for example, asylum seekers are either not allowed to gainfully work at all or only after a waiting period. They have to wait for different lengths of time after lodging the asylum application, such as 60 days in Italy, 3 months in Finland, 6 months in Greece, 9 months in Germany, and 12 months in the Czech Republic (AIDA/ECRE, 2021). Some countries limit employment opportunities to specific organizations (e.g., municipalities or charitable organizations), occupations (those short in labor supply), or contract types (e.g., internships, apprenticeships, or contracts limited to a few hours per week or a few months). Previous research has shown that work experience can help asylum seekers establish social contact with locals (Boese, 2015; Gericke et al., 2018; Tomlinson, 2010), acquire knowledge and skills needed in local workplaces (Boese, 2015; Ortlieb et al., 2021; Ponzoni et al., 2017), rebuild self-esteem and identity (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2007; Hunt, 2008; Wehrle et al., 2019), and also find employment after legal status associated with a long-term or permanent residence and work permit were granted (Marbach et al., 2018; Ortlieb et al., 2020).

Hence, summarizing the regulatory factors operating in the arrival stage, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the better legal channels of entry into the country are specified and the less dispersion policies there are; and (2) the sooner asylum claimants are allowed to take up paid work.

### 5.1.2. *The cognitive dimension*

The cognitive component of the institutional environment entails shared knowledge and cognitive frames that influence refugee labor market integration. It should be recalled that though knowledge and cognitive frames are carried by individuals, they are considered macro factors in the CIP framework since “cognitive programs are elements of the social environment and are social in nature” (Kostova, 1999, p. 314). We identified three factors in the existing literature that are related to the knowledge and cognitive frames of actors such as state agency officers, judges, and other locals involved in refugee integration: (1) categorizing refugees as people in need of protection, (2) knowledge about effective practices of asylum procedures and counseling asylum seekers, and (3) language training opportunities.

5.1.2.1. Categorizing refugees as people in need of protection. The cognitive frames people use when interacting with refugees, designing asylum procedures, or deciding on asylum applications influence further activities and refugees’ chances of integration (Crawley and Skleparis, 2018; FitzGerald and Arar, 2018). State agency officers and judges — representing the social links of refugee integration (Ager and Strang, 2008) — base their asylum decisions on information gathered from documents and interviews with applicants. Since the individual backgrounds and relocation trajectories of asylum claimants are complex, there is often some leeway. This is where societally shared stereotypes may shape decisions, not only because individual decision-makers hold similar assumptions, but also because, in an effort to gain legitimacy for their decisions, they adapt them to what appears to them to be commonly shared ground. A case in point is a homosexual asylum applicant who did not appear “gay enough” to a state agency officer to be granted asylum (German newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, August 15th, 2018). On the other hand, refugees and legal advisors have also learned to create individual life narratives that fit the legal regime (Smith-Khan, 2017; Jacobs and Maryns, 2022).

Cognitive frames, which are shaped by national public media (De Coninck, 2020; Wright, 2014), are also important in the broader society, as the label “refugee” can trigger greater willingness among locals to support these people. However, this label can also be a stigma associated with negative images of needy, poor, and underdeveloped people (Baranik et al., 2018; Ludwig, 2016).

5.1.2.2. Knowledge about effective practices of asylum procedures and counseling asylum seekers. There is consensus among both researchers and politicians that the faster the asylum procedure is completed, the better the integration process of refugees (AIDA/ECRE, 2016; De Vroome and van Tubergen, 2010; Kosyakova and Brenzel, 2020; Phillimore, 2011). The main reason is that insecurity and forced inactivity during the ongoing asylum procedure cause stress and threaten mental health, which in turn hampers refugees’ ability to participate in language and cultural training, establish social contacts, and (later) search for a job (Bakker et al., 2014; Phillimore, 2011; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2017). Thus, shared professional knowledge and standards in a country about how to manage asylum procedures effectively has an impact on refugee labor market integration.

In many countries, asylum procedures take several months or years (including, sometimes multiple, appeals) (AIDA/ECRE, 2016; Dustmann et al., 2017; TRAC, 2021). However, politicians and decision-makers in state agencies in some countries have introduced fast-track procedures for asylum claimants from distinct countries of origin, as exemplified by the recent case of several countries’ open borders for refugees from Ukraine (e.g., Barr and Finnegan, 2022). It is important to note, however, that lengthy procedures leading to a first-instance decision need not automatically be a disadvantage either. On the contrary, thoroughness is important to ensure highquality counseling, interviewing, application review, and decision-making to guarantee fair treatment and reduce the likelihood of appeals. For example, Ott (2019) shows that the organization of asylum procedures (i.e., which authority assumes which tasks and responsibilities) varies across the European Union and that this has implications for the speed and quality of procedures. Further sources of variation include quality assurance systems (AIDA/ECRE, 2021) or political legacies — such as in the post-communist countries of Eastern Europe, which built their entire refugee protection regimes from scratch in the 1990s (Shevel, 2011). However, not only the length of the asylum procedure, but also the activities asylum seekers engage in during the waiting period matter in finding suitable employment. For example, recent evidence from Sweden, where newcomers participate in a program comprising language training as well as knowledge about Swedish society and the labor market shows that longer waiting periods, as people are better prepared, can also increase the probability of finding employment and getting higher pay (Åslund et al., 2022).

Furthermore, people involved in refugee integration, such as state agency officers, support organization staff, or volunteers, need appropriate knowledge on how to counsel and support asylum seekers and how to organize such services. A plethora of books, brochures, and websites provide practical recommendations, for instance Konle-Seidl (2018), Martín et al. (2016), EURITA (2019) addressing volunteer mentors, or FRA (2019) focused on young refugees. The question, however, is whether people are aware of these resources and put the

recommendations into practice in a country. Thereby, the scope, degree of professionalization, and state funding of support initiatives vary across countries (Feischmidt et al., 2019).

5.1.2.3. Language training opportunities. Previous research clearly shows that refugees' language skills in the host country play an important role in finding employment (Auer, 2018; Cheng et al., 2021; De Vroome and van Tubergen, 2010; Fasani et al., 2022). As the quality and free availability of language classes for asylum seekers vary from country to country (Ferris, 2020), refugee labor market integration will be more successful in countries that offer early, high-quality language training, despite the risk of "sunk costs" in the event of a negative asylum decision.

Summarizing the cognitive factors in the arrival stage, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the more locals categorize refugees as people in need of protection without stigmatizing them; (2) the better the knowledge about effective practices designed to maximize speed and quality of asylum procedures as well as for counseling asylum seekers is; and (3) the more high-quality language training opportunities are available for asylum seekers.

### **5.1.3. The normative dimension**

In addition to law and cognitive schemes, what people perceive as "good" or "bad" in the host country society plays a role in refugee labor market integration. Prior literature has categorized this third dimension of the national institutional environment as, for example, "socio-political climate" (Lee et al., 2020, p. 200) or "societal attitudes" (Szkudlarek et al., 2021, p. 467). Social norms are crucial as they play out in all three elements of the social connection domain in Ager and Strang's (2008) framework (i.e., social bridges, social bonds, and social links). While several areas of social norms may be relevant at this stage of the integration process, we have identified moral considerations and solidarity of host society members with refugees as the most important normative aspect in the literature.

5.1.3.1. Moral considerations and solidarity with refugees. In asylum procedures and possible appeals to the courts, social norms influence whether state agency officers or judges use the existing legal leeway for more restrictive or more generous decisions. Likewise, activities of actors such as managers of refugee accommodations, legal counselors, social workers, doctors, and volunteers are infused with social norms, which also affect the living conditions of refugees and ultimately their chances of preparing themselves optimally for finding employment (Tomlinson, 2010; Van Dijk et al., 2022; Wehrle et al., 2018). As Ager and Strang (2008) noted, a particularly important aspect in this regard is the friendliness of locals. Furthermore, refugee employment is fostered by a shared will among locals to do good and care for refugees (Cantat, 2021; Simsa, 2016), a positive reputation of social enterprises targeting refugees, and the presence of massive initiatives that advocate for refugees in public or launch campaigns to promote solidarity in a country (Garkisch et al., 2017), often shaped by the public press (Richardson et al., 2020), politicians (Knappert et al., 2020), or the church (Hueck and Williams, 2011).

In contrast, social norms can also appear negatively, in the form of insults, unkind words, or wry looks from locals, which can make refugees feel inferior and isolated (Phillimore and Goodson, 2006; Tomlinson, 2010). The framework of microaggressions (Shenoy-Packer, 2015; Sue et al., 2007), for example, explains how overt hatred and explicit verbal attacks are often replaced by more casual, implicit, but hostile indignities that threaten refugees' mental health and thus jeopardize an important precondition of employment.

Hence, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful the more locals share social norms of moral considerations and solidarity with refugees, rather than social norms that manifest themselves in overt attacks or microaggressions.

## **5.2. Stage 2: finding employment**

Once a refugee has received a positive asylum decision and a residence and work permit, the next steps typically include finding employment. Numerous studies have shown that refugees need more time to find jobs compared to other immigrants or natives (e.g., Bakker et al., 2017; Brell et al., 2020; Dustmann et al., 2017; Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, 2017). They also achieve poorer outcomes in terms of pay and occupational status (Connor, 2010; Fasani et al., 2022; Ortlieb and Weiss, 2020). While their outcomes converge over time to those of other immigrants and natives, the time it takes them to catch up with natives varies across countries (Brell et al., 2020; Dustmann et al., 2017). The chances of finding employment depend strongly on the individual characteristics of job seekers and the economic situation in a host country (Brell et al., 2020; Szkudlarek et al., 2021). But the institutional landscape of the country also plays an important role, as we argue in the next paragraphs.

### *5.2.1. The regulatory dimension*

Prior research and our own plausibility considerations suggest that host country law plays an important role in this stage of the integration process in the following three domains: (1) law concerning access to occupations, (2) anti-discrimination law, and (3) law concerning education and vocational training.

5.2.1.1. Law concerning access to occupations. Although recognized refugees have free access to the labor market in most Western countries, an array of legal regulations can constitute barriers. Examples include national laws that exclude foreigners from public service jobs (e.g., in Greece) or hijab-wearing women from teaching in public schools (e.g., in France) or from courts as lawyers, prosecutors, or judges (e.g., in parts of Germany).

Likewise, refugees are allowed to start a business in most countries, but in some countries, licenses are required by state agencies or professional chambers for several types of businesses, and the number of licenses are limited, for instance for doctor's practices, pharmacies, and tobacco stores (e.g., WHO, 2019). Also, countries differ in terms of the bureaucratic effort required to start a business; for instance, starting a business was found to be easier in Israel than in the Netherlands (Hill et al., 2022). As self-employment is an important option for many refugees (Shneikat and Alrawadieh, 2019), integration success will be higher in countries with fewer barriers to business creation.

5.2.1.2. Anti-discrimination law. In “Western” countries, the law prohibits discrimination against job applicants on various grounds, including origin/nationality, race, ethnicity, religion/belief, disability, sexual orientation, age, and gender (Klarsfeld and Cachat-Rosset, 2021). However, there are differences across countries in the extent of non-discrimination, law enforcement institutions, and access to justice (Chopin and Germaine, 2017). The latter may be particularly difficult for recent refugees because they have limited knowledge of their rights and lack the resources to sue a discriminatory organization.

5.2.1.3. Law concerning education and vocational training. A host country's legal framework for education and vocational training is relevant in two ways. The first is the recognition of educational credentials and vocational qualifications from the refugees' country of origin (Lee et al., 2020; Szkudlarek et al., 2021). For instance, the Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Union stipulates that agencies in member states recognize credentials from third countries. However, even within the European Union, countries may differ, as many refugees do not have credentials and therefore the extent to which there are host-country-specific standards that allow for recognition without detailed proof matters. Second, previous research has shown that the refugees' educational attainments as well as vocational training and work experience acquired in the host country have more weight in employers' hiring decisions than credentials from the country of origin (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Gericke et al., 2018). Hence, if a country has relaxed criteria for admitting refugees to higher education or vocational training, refugees have a better chance of acquiring domestic qualifications and thus finding employment. To recap the regulatory factors that matter for the stage of finding employment, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the less restricted access to certain occupations is; (2) the broader the scope and the better the implementation of anti-discrimination law are, and the better refugees' access to justice is; and (3) the lower the entry requirements for local education and vocational training organizations are.

### *5.2.2. The cognitive dimension*

Previous research highlighted a number of cognitive institutional factors, of which the following four are particularly important: (1) categorizing refugees as people in need of protection and making a valuable contribution in the workplace, (2) assessment of refugees' knowledge, skills, and abilities, as well as (3) training and counseling facilities.

5.2.2.1. Categorizing refugees as people in need of protection and making a valuable contribution in the workplace. If recruiters in work organizations categorize a job applicant as in need of protection, they may be more willing to support and to hire the person even though they may lack credentials and have limited language skills (Gericke et al., 2018; Ortlieb et al., 2021; Ponzoni et al., 2017). Likewise, if refugees are viewed as capable and highly motivated to work — as opposed to being stigmatized as helpless and lacking agency (Baranik et al., 2018; Bullinger et al., 2022) — this will increase their chances of finding commensurate employment (Lundborg and Skedinger, 2016). Public discourses shape such framing, for instance in Germany, where various voices highlight the skills of Syrians and their potential to address the country's chronic shortage of skilled workers (e.g., BMWi, 2021a).

5.2.2.2. Assessment of refugees' knowledge, skills, and abilities. As an accurate assessment of qualifications is a prerequisite for adequate employment, countries with appropriate procedures applied by the

public employment service, employers, or refugees themselves will be associated with refugees' higher chances of finding employment (Hirst et al., 2021). Examples include Denmark, where skills assessments are an element of the mandatory integration program (Bjerre et al., 2021), or Austria, where the public employment service conducts screenings, partly in collaboration with refugee support organizations (Ortlieb et al., 2020). The German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy operates a web portal where employers can find country reports on education and vocational training, as well as services for assessing the equivalence of qualifications with occupational profiles in Germany (BMW, 2021b). However, the mere existence of programs "on paper" is less important than their actual implementation and the presence of qualified staff, and countries vary in that regard (Bešić et al., 2022).

5.2.2.3. Training and counseling facilities. High-quality training facilities tailored to the needs of refugees can help refugees find employment. Examples include universities offering places or scholarships to refugees along with language training, discipline-specific bridging courses, and buddy programs (e.g., University of Poitiers; Complutense University of Madrid). In Germany, for example, the State of Baden-Wuerttemberg offers a one-year training to become a train driver, which also includes special job coaching (BW, 2020).

Moreover, since most refugees are unfamiliar with the education and vocational training system, occupational profiles, and job application procedures in the host country (Cheng et al., 2021; Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Wehrle et al., 2019), job search will be more successful in countries where refugees have access to a comprehensive range of counseling services. Examples include the Austrian Integration Fund, which offers language courses, personal counseling in local offices, and detailed information on language training and the recognition of foreign credentials. Co-ethnic communities also often provide such kind of support (Cheung and Phillimore, 2014; Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018).

To recap the cognitive factors that matter for the stage of finding employment, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the more locals categorize refugees as people in need of protection and making a valuable contribution in the workplace; (2) the better the tools for the assessment of refugees' knowledge, skills, and abilities and the better staffed organizations carrying out skills assessments are; and (3) the better the training and counseling facilities for refugees are.

5.2.3.1. Norms concerning refugees' employability. In the process of seeking employment, many refugees interact with various people, such as public employment service officers, refugee support organization staff, and volunteers, all of whom act "as the markers and means of facilitating, or else impeding, opportunity structures" (Mozetić, 2022, p. 15). These interactions have been shown to affect refugees' employment prospects by shaping their expectations and actions (e.g., Nardon et al., 2021; Senthanaar et al., 2020). However, research has shown how some actors who assist refugees (professionally) in finding employment rely on norms that are not in refugees' best interest. For instance, Diedrich and Styhre's (2013) study of a Swedish labor market initiative found "flawed" norms used by refugee counselors to determine employability, which adversely affected the refugees' chances in the labor market. Comparing the experiences of highly educated refugees with civic integration programs in Oslo, Malmö, and Munich, Mozetić (2022) found that refugees experienced these programs as fostering or hindering their employment prospects depending on the degree of adaptability and customization of the programs. We assume that the norms and values followed and conveyed by such programs and their staff reflect societal values because they are designed to be legitimate in their societal context. Some of the country-specific value orientations they contain, such as societal emphasis on hierarchy and endorsement of inequalities associated with power distance (Parboteeah et al., 2008) or social dominance orientation (Craig and Richeson, 2014), are more likely to impair than promote refugee labor market integration.

5.2.3.2. Refugee employment as an element of corporate social responsibility initiatives. Firms hiring refugees (under decent working conditions) signal to their customers and other stakeholders their commitment to addressing the societal challenge of refugee integration (Lee and Szkudlarek, 2021; Weber and Larsson-Olaison, 2017). Gaining legitimacy from the external environment is also at the core of institutionalist reasoning based on Meyer and Rowan (1977), suggesting that organizations adopt practices that are societally legitimated. However, this also means that organizations will only hire refugees if they trust that their customers, suppliers, investors, employees, and other stakeholders appreciate this practice (Knappert et al., 2020). Some employers are reluctant to hire refugees because they fear negative reactions from customers and conflicts with coworkers (e.g., Lundborg and Skedinger, 2016; Ortlieb et al., 2021). Thus, while there is variation in corporate social responsibility initiatives across countries (Habisch et al., 2005), another precondition for their effectiveness is that both employers and stakeholders believe that employing refugees is something worthwhile.

To recap the normative factors that matter for the stage of finding employment, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the more the norms of actors assisting in finding

employment match refugees' interests; and (2) the more employers consider refugee employment as an element of their corporate social responsibility initiatives.

### **5.3. Stage 3: workplace inclusion**

A distinctive feature of our framework is that it considers what happens at the workplace as an element of refugee labor market integration. The framework proposed by Ager and Strang (2008) also offers a fruitful take on integration in this regard if we transfer the societal integration domains of the framework to the workplace level. Accordingly, inclusion at work means, for example, that a refugee is socially connected (corresponding to the domain "social connection") and feels safe at work ("safety and stability"), has the same opportunities for advancement as their colleagues ("rights"), and feels and behaves like an organizational citizen ("citizenship").

This understanding of workplace inclusion goes beyond previous research from an economic perspective that concentrates on employment characteristics such as pay, overqualification/occupational status, temporary versus permanent contracts, and part-time versus full-time work (e.g., Bakker et al., 2017; Brell et al., 2020; De Vroome and van Tubergen, 2010). Although these economic aspects are also relevant to some of the integration dimensions in Ager and Strang's (2008) framework (e.g., employment or safety and stability), the understanding proposed here goes further and is more in line with a diversity-and-inclusion perspective that highlights workplace aspects such as experienced discrimination, participation in decision-making, and perceived belonging and uniqueness state policies and practices in integration, we suggest that organizational practices and the general work environment are crucial at this stage of refugee labor market integration (Hirst et al., 2021; Loon and Vitale, 2021). Thereby, organizational decision-makers adopt certain practices against the institutional background, and all kinds of activities of collective or individual actors are embedded in the national institutional environment (Kostova, 1999).

State actors also play a role in workplace inclusion of refugees. In particular, ongoing asylum procedures can jeopardize workplace inclusion (Ortlieb and Ressi, 2022; Ponzoni et al., 2017). In addition, workplace actors might make a special effort to achieve workplace inclusion that is visible to state actors if they anticipate that this will help a refugee in any legal proceedings. For our model, however, workplace actors are central to this stage of the integration process, hence the following paragraphs concentrate on them.

#### **5.3.1. The regulatory dimension**

Previous literature suggests that legal aspects at the workplace level are less relevant for successful labor market integration than in the earlier stages of the integration process. However, two domains are important: (1) anti-discrimination law and (2) law concerning employee representation bodies.

5.3.1.1. Anti-discrimination law. Adverse treatment of refugees in employment, in areas such as pay (including fringe benefits), promotion, personnel development, and dismissals, are prohibited in Western countries (Chopin and Germaine, 2017; Klarsfeld and Cachat-Rosset, 2021). Thus, as with hiring decisions, the scope of non-discrimination regulations, law enforcement, and refugees' access to justice — which vary from country to country — play a role in anti-discrimination in organizations and thus in refugees' workplace inclusion.

5.3.1.2. Law concerning employee representation bodies. Since individual refugees typically lack the knowledge and power to complain about possible nuisance at the workplace (Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2006; Kosny et al., 2020), collective advocacy is important. In some countries (e.g., the Netherlands and Germany), the employee representation law stipulates that a works council elected by employees to represent their interests in negotiations with management ensures that minorities are not discriminated against and that their interests are enforced. Conversely, employers operating in a context with legally backed-up employee representation might be more considerate in their practices and take refugees' interests into account from the outset in their efforts to act in a legitimate manner. To sum up the regulatory factors in the stage of workplace inclusion, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the broader the scope and the better the implementation of anti-discrimination law addressing the workplace level are, and the better refugees' access to justice is; and (2) the better their interests, including non-discrimination, can be enforced by a statutory employee representation body.

#### **5.3.2. The cognitive dimension**

Previous research suggests that workplace actors' knowledge and cognitive frames are beneficial for refugee workplace inclusion. In this regard, we identified the following two factors: (1) knowledge about organizational practices promoting diversity and inclusion and (2) dissolving the refugee category.

5.3.2.1. Knowledge about organizational practices promoting diversity and inclusion. If human resource

managers and the refugees' supervisors and coworkers know how to promote diversity and inclusion, this will improve refugee workplace inclusion. Hirst et al. (2021) highlight the importance of human resource philosophies (i.e., human resource managers' beliefs and assumptions about refugees) in fostering refugee inclusion, if these are appropriately implemented through human resource practices. Previous research also suggests that diversity climate positively affects refugees' optimism, self-efficacy, and resilience (Newman et al., 2018), and that personal support by managers and coworkers increases refugees' well-being (Gericke et al., 2018; Ortlieb et al., 2021). Since organizational approaches to diversity and inclusion (Peretz et al., 2015) as well as the associated attitudes of organizational members (Parboteeah et al., 2008) vary by societal context, we expect country-level differences regarding actors' knowledge about organizational diversity and inclusion practices.

In addition, several practitioner guides can help organizations and the refugees themselves with onboarding, training, and interpersonal relationships in the workplace (e.g., DIHK, 2022; Mehta et al., 2019; OECD/UNHCR, 2018). Other sources of knowledge include Internet platforms, seminars, business networks, and conferences for practitioners. However, as all of these sources may vary in scope, content, and awareness across countries, we assume respective differences in integration success (Konle-Seidl, 2018; Martín et al., 2016).

5.3.2.2. Dissolving the refugee category. While it can be beneficial for refugees to be categorized by recruiters as people in need of protection when applying for jobs, this category can backfire in the long run, as it tends to be "sticky" and difficult to get out of people's minds. As Pesch et al. (2022) argue, it can be detrimental to refugees if their managers view them primarily as vulnerable individuals because these managers pay too little attention to refugees' skills and career advancement. Moreover, previous studies (Ghorashi, 2021; Ortlieb et al., 2021) have shown that organizational members often expect refugees to assimilate, but that many refugees have long-term feelings of otherness and refugeeness. Being trapped in the refugee category not only hinders their professional advancement, but can also limit their sense of belonging and thus their potential for inclusion (Ludwig, 2016; Ortlieb and Ressi, 2022). This categorization (Diedrich and Styhre, 2013), further imprinting the refugee category and its assigned meaning on workplace relationships. Moreover, and somewhat paradoxically, this may be especially the case in countries where political discourse emphasizes the notion of equality, for instance Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, because it is less common to reflect on possible biases there (Ghorashi, 2021).

To sum up the cognitive factors in the stage of workplace inclusion, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful (1) the better workplace actors know how to promote diversity and inclusion; and (2) the more workplace actors eventually dissolve the refugee category.

### 5.3.3. The normative dimension

Moral considerations of locals and their solidarity with refugees, which we identified as a normative institutional factor in the first stage of the process of refugee labor market integration (Sub-section 5.1.3), may translate into compassion in the workplace and thereby promote refugee inclusion. The extent to which managers and coworkers positively value and embrace refugees — as opposed to hostile sentiment and ignorance — plays a role in integration (Boese, 2015; Knappert et al., 2020; Ponzoni et al., 2017). To our best knowledge, such values and norms at work have not yet been studied from an international perspective. However, several large-scale surveys found cross-country differences in the citizens' ideological stances and feelings towards refugees, such as helpfulness and openness towards refugees (e.g., Bruneau et al., 2018; Czymara, 2021). Further, we identified inclusive organizational cultures as a particularly relevant normative institutional factor in this stage of the refugee labor market integration process.

5.3.3.1. Inclusive organizational cultures. An organization's culture provides a point of reference for norms and values shared by organizational members and defines what is perceived as (un)acceptable behavior in the organization (Alvesson, 2013). In an inclusive organizational culture, people value the differences that employees bring to the workplace while viewing discriminatory behaviors as unacceptable (Nishii, 2013) and refrain from exploiting refugees through extremely poor working conditions (Knappert et al., 2018; Ortlieb and Weiss, 2020).

Institutional scholars assume that organizations within the same institutional environment develop similar organizational cultures as a result of isomorphism (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). This idea of "fit" across the organizational and country levels has found considerable support in the literature, also concerning cultural elements related to inclusion (Lee and Kramer, 2016). We therefore suggest that there are country-level differences in inclusive organizational cultures that affect workplace inclusion of refugees. National Diversity Charters reflect these differences as they vary in content, number of signatories, and when the initiative was

launched (European Commission, 2021).

Hence, regarding normative factors in the stage of workplace inclusion, refugee labor market integration in a host country will be more successful the more organizational members promote an inclusive culture and do not discriminate or exploit refugees in the workplace.

### 6. DISCUSSION

This article examined the internationally important phenomenon of integrating refugees into host countries' labor markets. It presents a framework that specifies the country-level institutional factors that contribute to successful refugee labor market integration. Extending previous frameworks that have identified more general macro factors such as immigration policies, societal climate, and labor market conditions (Lee et al., 2020; Szkudlarek et al., 2021), we employed the CIP framework by Kostova (1999), the refugee integration framework by Ager and Strang (2008), and the existing multi-disciplinary literature to specify a variety of factors along the stages of the labor market integration process. The distinction between three stages of this process — arrival and asylum procedure, finding employment, and workplace inclusion — allowed us to identify the actors and activities in each stage, as well as the institutional environment in which the actors and activities are embedded. We then examined the country-specific regulatory, cognitive, and normative institutional factors that influence refugee labor market integration.

Our framework links an IM perspective with research on migration and integration, and it makes a theoretical contribution to both of these literatures. First, we broaden the scope of IM scholarship, which typically focuses on management decisions in multinational corporations. Like a multinational that has to manage subsidiaries in various countries, the care of refugees worldwide can be understood as major international management task in the service of societal goals. In that sense, our article showcases the fruitfulness of IM scholarship for addressing the “grand challenge” of migration (Hajro et al., 2019). Likewise, building on Szkudlarek et al.'s (2021) discussion of refugees and expatriates as extreme cases of internationally mobile people, our framework highlights that distinct factors are important at varying stages of the relocation process and that individual adjustment depends not only on cultural distance (i.e., normative institutional factors in the CIP framework) but also on regulatory and cognitive institutional factors. Our framework goes beyond previous research that has reviewed the refugee integration literature in two ways. First, our selection of potential influencing factors is guided by Kostova's (1999) CIP framework and Ager and Strang's (2008) integration framework, rather than being based solely on previous empirical studies. This allows for a more nuanced, complete, and systematic understanding of the factors operating at the country level. Importantly, we offer a theoretical explanation for how these factors work. As we argue, the institutional factors are transmitted and reproduced through the activities of various actors involved in refugee integration.

Second, the framework we have developed contributes a fine-grained perspective based on institutional theory to the migration and integration literature. Our focus on institutions is not in itself a novelty (e.g., Bucken-Knapp et al., 2020; Hardy, 1994; Hesse et al., 2019; Shevel, 2011). But it was our application of the CIP framework that allowed for a systematic analysis that is both general and detailed enough to make cross-country comparisons. Our framework is designed to facilitate empirical cross-country comparative research with the goal to create country profiles of refugee labor market integration and to systematically examine country-specific success factors. For this purpose, the next step will be to operationalize the institutional factors to assign values to the country profiles, for example through surveys (like e.g., Kostova and Roth, 2002; Busenitz et al., 2000) or existing data, such as those provided by Eurostat, the World Bank, or law handbooks.

Researchers could also use the resulting CIPs to address the opposite question and focus on the convergence of practices across countries rather than differences in practices across countries, consistent with the classic institutional research interest in organizational isomorphism and the promise of “best practices”. For example, in the European Union, there have been political efforts for several years to harmonize refugee integration procedures under the Common European Asylum System (CEAS). Nevertheless, until recently, member states had implemented very different procedures, and a unified approach did not occur until millions of refugees fled Ukraine in the spring of 2022 (based on the EU Directive on Temporary Protection 2001/55/EC). These developments make research into the causes and especially the consequences of converging practices even more urgent. At the same time, future research should also examine the influencing factors at the supranational level that Lee et al. (2020) mention — such as transnational conventions and international regulations — and about which little is known to date.

The framework we have developed is also useful for practitioners. Political decision-makers, consultants,

or refugee support organizations can use it to create country profiles and identify potential for improvement. We see two strengths of our framework in this regard. First, the distinction between the three stages of the integration process should remind practitioners of the processual nature of integration and show them which key institutions and actors they should target. For example, bans on discrimination need to be developed and monitored not only with regard to employers' hiring decisions. Rather, policymakers and decision-makers in state agencies and courts should take into account that stereotypes can already take effect in the refugees' arrival phase and asylum procedure, which can have a negative impact on their subsequent job search. Second, while policymakers tend to focus on the legal framework, our framework shows which cognitive and normative dimensions they should additionally consider. For example, in tandem with anti-discrimination legislation, policymakers should promote workplace actors' knowledge about diversity and inclusion practices, and also stimulate social norms of solidarity with refugees and compassion in the workplace.

Accordingly, refugee labor market integration can be improved by workplace actors becoming aware of the phases and components of our framework. For example, employers should know about the importance of refugee workplace inclusion beyond hiring them and should address their staffs' solidarity norms and relevant knowledge (e.g., about diversity practices). Our framework emphasizes that it is not sufficient for companies to hire refugees to comply with anti-discrimination law or to demonstrate corporate social responsibility. Rather, the legitimacy of corporate action, which is central to institutionalist thinking, is bestowed by the environment only if employers shape organizational culture and working conditions in ways that ensure the workplace inclusion of refugees. For international business leaders engaged in the transfer of refugee employment and inclusion practices, our framework provides a roadmap of potential country-specific factors to consider when designing local adaptations.

Refugees who find themselves at the center of the foreign institutional environment outlined here are likely to experience the different factors and their impact on their lives as overwhelming. If possible, actively engaging with the complex host country context and sharing experiences with locals and peers will help to understand this context, and thus make sense of the behavior of locals, and navigate the labor market in the host country. This entails, for example, strategically accepting the label "refugee" in phases when host country institutions create advantages associated with this label, but discarding it when they would bring disadvantages.

We see the following limitations of our framework. First, since we focus on employment, we refer — like many of the institutional factors we discuss — to a special group of people who are physically and mentally able to take up work. In contrast, we neglect the less privileged people who cannot work and in whom employers are not interested. Future research should therefore extend our framework to other groups of refugees, including focusing on dimensions of integration other than employment, such as health, housing, and social connection in the sense of Ager and Strang (2008).

Second, to reduce complexity, our framework neglects the refugees' country of origin. However, by analogy with Kostova (1999), who points out that the similarity of the institutional environment between two countries plays a role in the transfer of organizational practices between them, we assume that institutional similarity between a refugee's country of origin and host country also affects employment in host countries. To illustrate, refugees from countries that have education and vocational training institutions that are compatible with the host country, such as internationally accredited universities, will face fewer barriers to finding employment in the host country than refugees from countries without such institutions. Hence, a promising avenue for future research would be to examine such institutional country similarities.

A third limitation refers to our conceptualization of the three stages of refugees' labor market integration process. While we are not able to specify the length of the stages — each of which may last from a few weeks to several years (e.g., Brell et al., 2020; Bucken- Knapp et al., 2020) — there may be overlaps or repetitions, for example, when a person moves to another job. Whereas our framework depicts a simplified process, in reality, refugees' trajectories can be much more dynamic and continuously in flux.

Hence, it is important to emphasize that even though we argue that institutional factors at the country level are important for refugee labor market integration, individual-level factors also matter (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; Wehrle et al., 2018). Likewise, institutional environments at lower levels of analysis are important, along with characteristics of regions and cities (Hooper et al., 2017), industries (Lundborg and Skedinger, 2016; Ortlieb and Weiss, 2020), and organizations (Boese, 2015; Ponzoni et al., 2017). The multilevel models developed by Lee et al. (2020) and Szkudlarek et al. (2021) emphasize precisely that point. In proposing our framework that focuses on macro factors, we do not intend to dispute the importance of considering multiple levels of analysis. Rather, we aim to provide a basis for future cross-country comparative research on refugee labor market integration in which the country-level factors are better specified. Such research is urgently needed

in a world that is constantly creating new crises, forcing people to leave their homes.

### 7. DATA AVAILABILITY

No data was used for the research described in the article.

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