Integrating Refugees in the Rhine-Neckar-Region: Initial Evidence from an Inclusive Soccer Project

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Summary

The study analyses data from a survey conducted in July 2016 in the German Rhine-Neckar region among a group of male refugees who participate in a small inclusive soccer project or are part of a control group. Our main findings with respect to labour market integration and the effect of program participation can be summarized as follows.

The total group of 81 responding male asylum seekers is on average 23 years old, has on average spent nearly nine years in education and already accumulated five years of work experience in their home countries or on their way to Germany. They report on average a good health and are fairly optimistic about finding work in Germany. 36 percent were searching for a job, while 14 percent report that they were working at the time of the survey. Thus, it seems that the responding refugees are equipped with a good health, reasonable work experience and motivation, and a low level of education, comparted to Germans of the same age group. 28 survey participants engaged in the soccer project. Most of them indicated that they would like to participate more frequently. Responding refugees, who participate in the soccer project report that they visit German natives in their homes more often than the control groups, which hints at some initial positive short run integration effects.

According to our experience respondents enjoyed collaboration in the survey. Since the number of respondents is small our findings are preliminary in nature. Future research that intends to more deeply assess causal impacts needs to rest on significantly larger samples and panel data.

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1. Introduction

In 2015 Germany experienced with 1.1 million people the largest net inflow of migrants after the early 1950s.[1] It is expected that especially the group of approximately 890 new asylum seekers will stay for a considerably time in Germany, since most of them escaped from civil wars and violence in Syria and other regions in Asia and Africa. Besides providing humanitarian aid for the group of asylum seekers measures to facilitate integration into the German society and in the labour market are discussed.[2]

In Germany numerous initiatives of volunteers emerged[3], which intend to provide support for refugees. Although such volunteer-based support is widespread, scientific studies on its impacts is, according to the best of our knowledge, up to now virtually non-existent.[4] In this study we concentrate on a specific small scale project run by a non-commercial association which aims at facilitating the integration of asylum seekers into the German labour market and society. We aim to close part of the research gap in analysing an inclusive and multi-dimensional soccer project for male refugees, which is administered

[1] See BAMF (2016), Felbermayr (2016) or Brücker, Rother and Schupp (2016).

[2] Good practices and strategies for labor market integration of refugees are summarized by Konle-Seidl and Bolits (2016); for economic research on asylum seekers and immigrants in general compare also Fuest (2016), Card and Peri (2016) or Dustmann and Frattini (2014), among others.

[3] For instance, Ahrens (2016) shows in a representative survey that almost 12 percent of all Germans are active in giving a helping hand to refugees; see also Karakayali and Kleist (2015).

[4] There are studies which focus on the volunteer but not on the volunteer's target groups. For example, Ferreira, Proenca and Proenca (2009) discuss potential determinants of the motivation to engage in volunteer-based work while Yamamoto and Sakamoto (2012) use the 2011 tsunami and earthquake in East Japan in order to illicit these motivations directly. Day and Devlin (1998) and Proteau and Wolf (2006) examine whether voluntary work generates a labor market premium for the volunteers themselves and find small to sizable wage premia.

by non-professional trainers.[5] It intends to improve on social inclusion and labour market participation.[6] The course consists of playing soccer, mentoring, language training[7], recreational activities and job placements in order to provide comprehensive support for integration. The invitations to participate in the project were randomized over a pool of refugees living in the Rhine-Neckar area in Germany in order to be able to gain sound knowledge about some short-run effects of the soccer project.

This study analysis the survey that we performed in July 2016 among a group of refugees associated with this treatment and two groups of control persons, also refugees, who did not participate in the soccer project. Socioeconomic similarities and disparities among these groups of refugees are examined, together with some information on the cost of their escape, their human capital and indicators of labour market integration. In addition it investigates whether the randomization worked with respect to generating similar distributions in the observable characteristics of control and treatment group. We provide some very preliminary evidence on short run effects based on our randomization design.

Our main findings can be summarized as follows. The total group of 81 responding male asylum seekers is on average 23 years old, has on average spent nearly nine years in education and already accumulated five years of

[5] We would like to thank Roman Frackenpohl and Daniel Lingenfeld from "Anpfiff ins Leben e.V." for the chance for collaboration and the extremely valuable support throughout conducting the survey.

[6] The authors are part of the "Real-World Laboratory: Asylum Seekers", an undertaking jointly carried out with the Heidelberg University of Education which is supported by the State Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg. It focuses on potential factors that influence the integration of asylum seekers in the Rhine-Neckar region and intends to contribute to improved measures for integration.

[7] In a recent survey participating refugees indicated consistently that they are in need of language courses, Freytag (2016). Over 96 percent of all participants in the study answered 'yes' to the question whether they are interested in German language courses. Scientific studies hint at the relevance of language proficiency for labor market assimilation of migrants and partly seem to confirm the effectiveness of language programs; see Chiswick (1991), Dustmann and Fabbri (2003); Lochmann, Rapoport and Speciale (2016), among others.

work experience in their home countries or on their way to Germany. They report on average a good health status and are fairly optimistic about finding work in Germany. 36 percent were searching for a job, while 14 percent report that they were working at the time of the survey.

Thus, it seems that the responding refugees are equipped with a good health, reasonable work experience and motivation, and a low level of education, comparted to Germans of the same age group. 28 survey participants engaged in the soccer project. Most of them indicated that they would like to participate more frequently. Responding refugees who participate in the project report that they visit German natives in their homes more often compared to the control groups, which hints at some initial positive short run integration effects. Since the number of respondents is small our findings are preliminary in nature.

Possible effects of the 890 thousand asylum seekers in 2015 and their integration in the German economy have been intensively discussed although evidence from micro data obviously is still rare (see Fuest, 2016) but improving (see Brücker, Rother and Schupp, 2016). In the past, labor market integration of refugees has been more difficult compared to other migrants. Fuest (2016, p 13), summarizing the evidence, concludes: “I do not think that the refugee wave of 2015 into Germany will bring economic advantages, but admitting those migrants was more a question of offering humanitarian aid.”

Our initial evidence on relatively low education and low search intensities that responding asylum seekers in the Rhine-Neckar region reported in July 2016 seem to provide some preliminary support for this conclusion. However, the sample of responding asylum seekers also report good health as well as significant labour market experiences from their home countries. In sum, these findings should be valuable in the medium term for integration in the German economy.

The study proceeds as follows. In the next section the treatment and institutional setting is introduced. Section three discusses the randomized experiment and explains how the survey was performed. Section four summarizes our initial evidence on human capital, on the cost of escape, and on labour market integration while section five concludes.

2. The inclusive soccer project HEIMSTÄRKE

The inclusive soccer project HEIMSTÄRKE was designed in order to facilitate the process of integration for asylum seekers residing in the Rhine-Neckar region. The course has been established in three communities: Walldorf, Sandhausen and Hoffenheim, where currently one course per community is executed with a size of 16 participants each. 'Anpfiff ins Leben e.V.', a volunteer-based association which aims at supporting the inclusion of disadvantaged groups through enabling them to participate in sports, administers the course. One professional soccer club at each location provided the training ground and other facilities in support of the project HEIMSTÄRKE. Furthermore, the project is integrated into the professional network of 'Anpfiff ins Leben' which enables the organizers to provide participants of the course with sports equipment and contact to firms in the region.

One important goal of the course is increase participants' employment opportunities. In addition, contact to local residents, the improvement of health, German language proficiency and life satisfaction are targeted. HEIMSTÄRKE is aiming at these goals by offering multiple treatments. The weekly two hour training sessions are based on the football3-cocept[8] and consist of three parts: (i) language training, mentoring or support in job search, (ii) soccer training and (iii) feedback.[9]

In the first part, either a German language lesson is taught, mentoring or job search assistance is provided. The language lessons have a focus on everyday language and sports, in particular soccer. The participants should learn to communicate on the pitch in German and in common conversations. The mentoring effort aims to provide guidance in every day's problems. Here,

[8] For more information on the basic concept of so called football3, see http://www.streetfootballworld.org/football3/?q=de#home.

[9] The multiple treatments offered by HEIMSTÄRKE are all designed to improve labor market activity for the refugees. Also the soccer training shall serve as a device for improving labour market chances. See for instance Cabane and Lechner (2015), who summarize the empirical evidence on physical activities and improvements in labor market outcomes.

difficulties regarding the housing conditions, administrative processes or communication issues are discussed and solutions are proposed. Moreover, job search assistance is provided. Being one main goal of the course, this subject is especially important. Participants acquire knowledge about the German labour market, get help in setting up a CV and are informed about job search channels. Notably, job placements shall be performed within the network of the supporting parties of HEIMSTÄRKE. The project shall help matching participants of the courses to firms from their network in order to supply participants with information on specific occupations, internships and full employment opportunities.

The second part consists of soccer training and playing. Additionally to standard rules of soccer games, cooperative behaviour and applying the newly learned vocabulary, e.g. for saying a German sentence after scoring a goal, is awarded by additional points to the score. The last part is designated to give feedback on today's session in order to provide room for improvement and give participants the opportunity to fit the sessions to their needs. In addition the group is meeting occasionally for other sport events or social activities such as setting up a barbeque or visiting soccer games.

3. Design of the research project

3.1 Randomized Experiment

In order to assess whether the treatment has an effect on the outcomes of interests, a randomized experiment has been designed. The main methodological problem of assessing treatment effects stems from the impossibility of observing the same individual in two states at the same time (see Imbens and Wooldridge, 2009; Lechner and Pfeiffer, 2001, among others). That is, an individual being exposed to a treatment cannot be observed not having had the treatment and an individual, not having had a treatment cannot be observed having had the treatment.

Experimental settings where one group is treated and another group is not treated may be helpful in overcoming this basic methodological problem. Thereby, attention has to be paid to the underlying mechanism how individuals are assigned to the treatment. If participants are allowed to self-

select into the treatment or selection is partly influenced by unobserved characteristics, outcome comparisons between the groups may be substantially biased. A randomized experiment may overcome this difficulty. In order to claim that treatment effects have been estimated consistently one need to control the assignment into the treatment (Imbens and Wooldridge, 2009; Rubin, 1974; etc.). This may either be accomplished by knowing all observables which describe the selection process, by instrumenting unobserved confounders or by random assignment of group membership.

Our identification strategy relies on random group assignment of individuals who were recommended to be part of the treatment. The two step randomization procedure was developed as follows. Since the organizers of HEIMSTÄRKE had no contact to refugees, they were dependent on persons who did. Hence, they asked volunteers who worked in the refugee camps for recommendations. Then, a list of individuals of asylum seekers, who express a somehow general interest in playing soccer was assembled for each treatment location. Based on these characteristics refugees entered the pool of potential participants. Important to note is that refugees did not know that they were recommended or not recommended. Moreover, according to the best of our knowledge, no refugee knew that the treatment existed before the invitations to the treatment were announced.

For Walldorf and Sandhausen, the decision on who will receive an invitation and who will not, was entirely based on random draws from the pool of recommended refugees. However, this procedure was not applicable for Hoffenheim, due to the small number of recommendations and a restriction in the access to the playing ground. Because of already existing training schedules of other teams, the football pitch could only be used by HEIMSTÄRKE before noon. As a result, all recommended refugees who had spare time before noon were invited to participate in the course.

Table 1 reports the number of recommended participants by volunteer, where each row marks a volunteer, e.g. the first volunteer in Walldorf recommended eight participants, the second 20 and so on. In order to avoid the case that volunteers who were very selective in giving recommendations are underrepresented in the invited sample, the randomization process was clustered on the volunteer level. That is, participants were randomly chosen

from the pool of recommendations under the constraint that the number of invited participants from each volunteer has to be greater or equal than one.

The take up rate was remarkably high for Walldorf and Sandhausen. Everybody who got an invitation came to the first session. However, over time some participants dropped out of the course. Five, respectively six, participants quite courses in Sandhausen and Walldorf. Attrition was mainly due to return migration or moves to other cities. For Hoffenheim, which was not part of the randomization, the picture looks different. Only 38 percent of the invited participants showed up at the first two sessions. After ten sessions, with a maximum number of nine participants for two sessions, the organizers of HEIMSTÄRKE decided to enlarge the group with refugees from another city, such that the course steadily consists of 16 participants.

Table 1: Recommendations per Volunteer

Location	No. of Recommendations					Total
Walldorf	8	20	3	20		51
Sandhausen	15	21				36
Sinsheim	10	1	6	21	5	43

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey.

Since randomization is crucial in order to unveil causal effects of the treatment, the quality of randomization on the observables has been analysed. The randomization seems to have worked well. There are no statistically significant differences on a five percent confidence level regarding the predetermined variables. Regression results of randomized group assignment on predetermined variables prior to the assignment are reported in Table 8 in the appendix.

3.2 The ZEW inclusive soccer project survey

In order to assess selected outcomes of the project, ZEW conducted a survey among the refugees who belonged to the pool of recommendations. The pen and paper survey took place at six different locations, which are all located in the Rhine-Neckar region. Refugees were interviewed either at their camp or at the soccer court. The participants of the survey were either approached by the trainers, if they belonged to the treatment group or by mail and social

workers, if they were part of the control group. All potential survey participants were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that no information supplied by the individuals would be handed to any official administration nor would influence their asylum application. In addition they were informed that the aim of the survey was purely scientific in nature.

The survey team tried to reach the entire pool of recommended refugees as well as individuals who lived also in the camps and were eager to participate in the survey. The latter group will henceforth be referred to as the 'non-recommended control group' because they do not belong to the randomization pool. The survey was conducted within a month between the 29th of June, starting in Wiesloch and Walldorf, and 21st of July, ending in Sinsheim. In this period a total of 81 male refugees participated in the survey and filled out the questionnaire. Table 2 shows the number of interviewed persons as well as their group status for the six locations.

Table 2: Survey Participation at Six Different Locations

Location	N	Treatment	Recommended Control	Non-recommended Control	Date of the survey
Camp, Wiesloch	8	0	7	1	29.06.16
Camp, Walldorf	7	0	3	4	29.06.16
Soccer court Walldorf	11	11	0	0	29.06.16
Soccer court Sandhausen	10	10	0	0	08.07.16
Camp 1, Sinsheim	32	6	6	20	15.07.16
Camp 2, Sinsheim	13	1	8	4	21.07.16
Total	**81**	**28**	**24**	**29**	

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey.

At the time of the survey, the treatment was roughly three months in place for all course groups. Hence, the survey may serve also as an opportunity for a very preliminary and initial short-time evaluation of the project. In addition the survey provided useful knowledge for this group of participating refugees. The aim of the survey was to interview the invited participants as well as the

persons in the recommended control group. At the soccer courts in Walldorf and Sandhausen participation was not high, such that only 21 out of 32 potential interviewees filled out the questionnaire. For Sinsheim, we decided to not conduct interviews at the soccer court because participation for this group was especially unsteady around the time of the survey. Hence, we interviewed participants as well as non-participants at two refugee camps in Sinsheim, namely the camp 1 at Breite Seite 3 and camp 2 at Fohlenweidenweg 33. Reaching persons in the control group turned out to be difficult. Where it was possible, we used the contact of the volunteers to the refugees in order to motivate them to engage in the survey. This worked quite well for Sinsheim. However, at the camps in Wiesloch (Walldorfer Str. 13) and Walldorf (Industriestr. 58) the respective participation rate was only around 54 and 21 percent.

The survey was performed with a paper based questionnaire consisting of 49 items in total, which are stretching over different topics. These topics include recreational activities, professional activities, the social environment, health, personality and values, language and stay in Germany, general information about the interviewee and information about the escape to Germany. Compared to similar studies such as the IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey on refugees (see Brücker et al, 2016) which entails almost 450 questions, our questionnaire is fairly modest, comparable to the one performed by Buber-Ennser et al (2016) among refugees in Austria. Among others, the IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey contains more detailed questions on personality and migration background compared to ours and was based on face-to-face interviews.

Participants belonging to the treatment group filled out an additional questionnaire, which tries to capture their experience with and in HEIMSTÄRKE. In general the items were designed to provide a ‘quick & easy’ fill in. No open questions were included, where participants are forced to write a sentence or more. The K6 mental health (Kessler et al., 2002), a locus of control and a self-control inventory (see Borghans et al., 2008; Cobb-Clark, 2015 and Tangney, Baumeister and Boone, 2004, among others) suffered from high missing-rates. Therefore we excluded these items from the analysis.

The German questionnaire was translated by a professional institute into English, French, Dari, Farsi, Arabic, Urdu and Tigrinya. One problem in

undertaking the survey was the difficulty of filling out the questionnaire with respect to the level of education, the literacy and the cultural background of the participants. Even though having translated the surveys into the native language of the refugees, there were participants, who had problems in reading and understanding the survey. This was despite the fact that the survey was designed to facilitate a 'quick & easy' fill in.

According to our field experience we think that the survey information gathered is fairly fine for those who were able to understand the questionnaire. Surely more experience is needed to provide more knowledge on the quality of refugee's responding to questionnaires. We regard the findings reported in the next section as preliminary in nature.

4. Initial insights from the ZEW survey

This chapter provides initial insights on characteristics of surveyed refugees within the treatment and control group as well as refugees who were outside the experimental design. Findings are organized around three topics: socio-economic characteristics and family background, elements of labour markets integration in Germany and opinions about participation in HEIMSTÄRKE.

4.1 Socio-economic characteristics and family background

First, we want to illustrate some socio-economic characteristics and the family background of the participating refugees. Table 3 provides an overview on the distribution of home countries within the surveyed sample.

Roughly one third of the survey participants have been born in Afghanistan. Another third of the participants originate from the Islamic Republic of The Gambia (17 percent), Syria (10 percent) and Iran (9 percent). In total 60 percent of the individuals among the observed population are born in Asia, while 18 percent are born in Africa. Our sample is obviously not representative for the population of refugees living in Germany. However, for the evaluation of the treatment, representativeness is not needed. Other studies such as the IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey are representative regarding the population which already filed an asylum application. In our study participants are drawn from

the entire distribution of refugees living in the Rhine-Neckar-Region, regardless of their asylum application status.

Table 3: Country of Birth across Groups

	Total	Treatment	Recommended Control	Non-recommended Control
Iraq	9%	14%	13%	0%
Syria	10%	14%	13%	3%
Afghanistan	32%	21%	25%	48%
Pakistan	1%	0%	0%	3%
The Gambia	17%	25%	17%	10%
Eritrea	2%	0%	8%	0%
Iran	4%	0%	0%	10%
Turkey	1%	0%	0%	3%
Togo	1%	4%	0%	0%
Missing	22%	21%	25%	21%

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; N=81.

The distribution of nationalities across treatment and the recommended control group seems to be quite similar. Differences, however, to both of these groups are visible with respect to the non-recommended control group. Here, almost half of the sample was born in Afghanistan.

Table 4 shows pre-migration characteristics of the surveyed individuals as well as their current health and their time in Germany. The mean age in the sample is 22.8 years, the average duration in Germany 9.2 months. The treatment group is on average 23.2 years old, whereas the recommended control group is slightly younger (21.7 years on average). The non-recommended control group is 23.3 years on average. Regarding the time being in Germany, the recommended control group is on average one and a half months longer in Germany than the treatment group.

Important dimensions for understanding labour market integration are related to the socio-economic background and the working experience from the home country. Table 4 indicates that almost 72 percent of the surveyed individuals had a paid job before they came to Germany. There are some differences

between the groups (treatment: 75 percent, rec. control: 54 percent, non-rec. control: 83 percent), which seem to sustain when looking at the length of working experiences, which varies between 4.3 and 6.0 years. These differences may result from the small sample size and low response rates and therefore should not be overrated.

Table 4 also presents the average years of education, an indicator of human capital widely used in education and labour market research (see Card, 2001; Pohlmeier and Pfeiffer, 2011 or Pfeiffer and Stichnoth, 2015 among others). The average amount of schooling of 8.8 years for refugees in our sample is above the average in their home regions or countries. According to Morrison and Murtin (2010), the average number of years in education is 6.0 in North Africa and Pakistan, 6.8 in Iraq and 8.0 in Syria. The comparison seems to point in the direction that refugees, who migrated to Germany, might be positively selected with respect to years of education. Note however that the numbers assessed by Morrison and Murtin (2010) hold for the entire population and not for the group of young people. Since there is an upward trend in years of education in nearly all countries in the world the young generation will have, as a rule, higher numbers compared to the average population.

The average number of years in education of respondents is substantially below the average number of years of education in Germany. According to the Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung (2016) and OECD (2016), more than fifty percent of young people in their 20's are enrolled in universities. In this group years spent in education will be on average around 18 years, double the time respondents in our sample of refugees reported to have been in education.

The average years of schooling differ between the treatment and control groups. The treatment group has 9.6 years of education on average, while the recommended control group has 8.1 years on average. The non-recommended control group is right in between the two other groups with 8.5 years of education on average. The recommended control shows a higher density of low-educated individuals than the treatment group.

In addition to a reasonable education, a good health should be a prerequisite for a successful integration into the labour market. Table 4 reports the assessment of the refugees' own health status, which seems to be relatively

positive on average. The finding is not surprising given the average age of the survey participants. There seem to be no major group differences (treatment 3.87; rec. control 4.1; non-rec. control 4.11), where the scale ranges from 1 to 5 (bad – very good).

Table 4: Migration Characteristics and Health

	Total	Treatment	Recommended Control	Non-Recommended Control
Age				
mean in years	22.8	23.2	21.8	23.3
(standard deviation in years)	(3.8)	(3.6)	(3.2)	(4.4)
[number of answers]	[80]	[28]	[24]	[28]
Work Home (0,1)	72%	75%	54%	83%
[number of answers]	[77]	[28]	[21]	[28]
Experience Work Home				
mean in years	5.2	4.3	5.2	6.0
(standard deviation in years)	(3.4)	(3.0)	(2.2)	(4.0)
[number of answers]	[37]	[14]	[6]	[17]
Education				
mean in years	8.8	9.6	8.1	8.5
(standard deviation in years)	(4.7)	(4.2)	(4.9)	(5.0)
[number of answers]	[71]	[27]	[20]	[24]
Health[a]				
mean (1 (bad) – 5 (very good))	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.1
(standard deviation)	(1.1)	(1.1)	(1.2)	(0.9)
[number of answers]	[78]	[28]	[23]	[27]
Time in Germany				
mean in months	9.2	8.9	10.5	8.3
(standard deviation in months)	(3.9)	(3.6)	(4.4)	(3.5)
[number of answers]	[72]	[25]	[22]	[25]

[a] reported are the means of a self-assessment given on a scale 1 (not at all) – 5 (very good). Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

Migrating from troubled home countries may not only be cumbersome and exhaustive but also expensive. Monetary costs of the escape therefore can matter for economic integration of refugees in Germany. If the migration process associated with these costs is seen as an investment, a certain return from it may be expected. Furthermore, if refugees accumulated debts, the incentive to be active on the labour market might be considerably increased. Hence, we included questions about the monetary costs of the escape.

Table 5 presents these self-reported costs of migrating to Germany. On their way to Germany, 77 percent of the surveyed individuals have crossed the Mediterranean. The crossing is not only associated with high risks but also costs of 2,212€ on average.

Table 5: Monetary Costs of the Escape

	Total	Treatment	Recommended Control	Non-Recommended Control
Crossed Mediterranean Sea	77%	74%	71%	85%
[number of answers]	[75]	[27]	[21]	[27]
Cost Crossing (0,1)				
mean in €	2,212	1,021	2,645	2,531
(standard deviation in €)	(2,375)	(598)	(3,078)	(,2240)
[number of answers]	[38]	[9]	[13]	[16]
Cost Escape				
mean in €	4,900	3,734	4,445	5,827
(standard deviation in €)	(2,578)	(2,389)	(3,220)	(2,146)
[number of answers]	[39]	[12]	[8]	[19]
Debt Escape				
mean in €	3,978	2,988	2,765	4,838
(standard deviation in €)	(2,926)	(3,101)	(1,658)	(2,921)
[number of answers]	[29]	[9]	[4]	[16]

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

There are significant differences in the costs between the treatment and control groups. First, this might be explained by high missing rates for every

group – about 50 percent within each group. Second, as shown in Table 3, the groups differ substantially by their country of origin and thereby by the route taken. Treated individuals experienced lower costs compared to the control group. A similar picture emerges when looking at the overall costs of the escape to Germany. An average individual spent 4,900€ on her way to Germany. The IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey reports somewhat higher average costs for the escape. This might be due to the different samples in terms of the country of origin, since the monetary migration costs are a direct function of the route taken. However, note that from the initial 81 surveyed individuals only 39 responded to this item – again we observe missing rates around 50 percent within each group. The accumulated debt from the escape is on average 3,978€. This means that on average refugees financed 81.2 percent of their escape expenses by credit.

4.2 Integration in Germany: Initial evidence on short run differences

The second section aims to shed light on observed differences or similarities between the randomized groups with respect to the process of integration in Germany.

Successful labour market integration does not only require certain competencies and qualification but also motivation and optimism. We asked participants of the survey respondents about their labour market prospects. Regarding the expectations on labour market participation, there is a clear picture of optimistic survey respondents: 91 percent think that it is very likely or likely that they will find paid work within the next two years. Only 4 percent do not share the confidence of the other survey participants.

Despite the fact that the surveyed individuals share a quite optimistic view on their future position in the labour market and being in Germany for more than 8 months on average, labour market activity was limited at the time of the survey. Table 6 presents the share of surveyed refugees who work and search for a job in Germany, attend a German language course in the last four weeks as well as visited Germans in their home within the last twelve months. According to this table, 14 percent has a paid job in Germany currently. The IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey also reports this number, see Brücker et al (2016, p 68).

The non-recommended control group seems to be far more successful in finding any kind of employment. Similarly, this group is much more active in looking for a job: half of the persons who answered this question in this group are currently searching for employment. The recommended control and treatment group report much lower values. This might be due to differential education aspirations. Since the treatment group is on average younger and more educated, more of them might aim for further education or training rather than for employment.

Table 6: Integration in Germany

	Total	Treatment	Rec. Control	Non-rec. Control	treat. vs. rec. Contr.[a]
Work in Germany (0,1)	14%	7%	9%	25%	0.70
[number of answers]	[78]	[27]	[23]	[28]	
Search for paid work (0,1)	36%	22%	35%	50%	0.33
[number of answers]	[78]	[27]	[23]	[28]	
Expectation to find a job[b]	3.5	3.4	3.6	3.4	0.19
(standard deviation)	(0.7)	(0.5)	(0.7)	(0.8)	
[number of answers]	[77]	[27]	[22]	[28]	
Attended Language Course (0,1) [number of answers]	77% [79]	71% [28]	79% [23]	79% [28]	0.36
German Language Skills[c]	3.1	3.1	2.9	3.3	0.53
(standard deviation)	(0.9)	(0.8)	(1.0)	(0.8)	
[number of answers]	[77]	[27]	[24]	[26]	
Visit German Natives (0,1)	35%	54%	27%	22%	0.06
[number of answers]	[77]	[28]	[22]	[27]	

[a] reported are the p-values of a t-Test testing H_0 = the groups are equal.
[b] reported are the means of expectations on a scale 1 (very unlikely) – 5 (very likely).
[c] reported are the means of self-assessment on a scale 1 (not at all) – 5 (very good).
Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

Another reason for the overall low percentage of individuals pursuing a paid work might lie in the fact that the experienced amount of institutional help in

searching a paid job is quite low. 80 percent report having experienced no institutional support in searching for paid work. Thus, the surveyed participants indicated that they are mainly using non-institutional channels in order to find work. Employment offices and job centres cover only 31 percent of the used channels, whereas looking for a job via their network is used much more extensively (49 percent).

Another important parameter for assimilation into the German society and the German labour market are language skills. A considerably high percentage (77 percent on average) reported to have attended a language course in the last four weeks. As Table 6 indicates, there are no pronounced differences in language course attainment between the groups.

When looking at a self-assessment of German language skills, the treatment group has an average speaking skill level of 3.1 on a scale 1-5 (not at all – very good) (rec. control 2.92, non-rec. control 3.27). This value indicates average German conversational skills among the groups. The same picture emerges when looking at self-assessed German writing and reading skills, which range from 2.9 to 3.4. However, in direct contact to the participants of the survey, our impression sometimes was that the conversational level of German language skills was quite low. This suggests that there might be over reporting, which is in line with other findings. Edele et al. (2015), for instance, argue that self-assessed language skills correlate only moderately with language test scores and seem to be systematically biased. Especially the non-recommended control group reports a high level of conversational German with 42 percent reporting that they mastered speaking the German language well, which seems rather extraordinary. Table 6 summarizes the relative self-assessed proficiency in speaking the German language.

The variable ‘visits of natives at home’ indicates a specific dimension of social inclusion into the German society. This concept is frequently used in order to measure immigrant’s contact to the native population (see among others Kanas et al., 2012; Lancee, 2012; or Danzer and Yaman, 2013). In addition to this, the questionnaire also included a question on the number of German friends which yielded very inconclusive results. Table 6 reports that individuals in the treatment group have closer ties to the German population than the other groups. The difference is statistically different from zero at a 94 percent

confidence level. This might already be an initial short term outcome of the treatment.

In addition it was tested whether outcome variables across recommended and non-recommended control group differ. Bivariate tests did not hint at statistical difference in outcomes. Thus, recommendations may have been not very selective and findings of this study might be transferrable to other groups of refugees to some extent.

4.3 Self-Assessment on HEIMSTÄRKE

This final subsection illustrates HEIMSTÄRKE participants' opinion about the course. It provides some initial evidence on respondents' self-assessments. Table 7 presents the degree to which participants in HEIMSTÄRKE agree or disagree with the statements in the first column.

Table 7: Self-Assessments on HEIMSTÄRKE

	disagree completely	disagree somewhat	agree partially	agree somewhat	agree completely
Besides football, I'm not learning very much	50%	4%	4%	8%	33%
I would like to participate more frequently per week at HEIMSTÄRKE	14%	5%	18%	5%	59%
I see participation as an opportunity to get a job	4%	8%	24%	20%	44%

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

Over the half of the participants report the experience that the project HEIMSTÄRKE is more than just football training to them. In contrast, 41 percent of the participants report no substantial learning effects beyond the football training. This very polarized distribution of answers points to initial mixed results on respondents' valuation. However, when comparing these assessments with other items, when participants are asked to evaluate their experiences with specific parts of the course, feedback is largely positive. For

instance the language lessons are highly valued by participants: 82 percent report improvements of their language skills. Furthermore, as shown in Table 7, 64 percent of the participants would like to participate more frequently in HEIMSTÄRKE.

Additionally, 64 percent view participation as an opportunity to find paid work. Only a small fraction of 12 percent does not expect increases in their chances to find a job via participating in the treatment. Overall, our initial findings hint at a positive short-term assessment of the course by its participants. Whether the treatment will be effective after its completion should thus be investigated.

5. Conclusion

The study analyses data from a survey conducted in July 2016 in the German Rhine-Neckar region. We surveyed a group of male refugees who participate in a small inclusive soccer project and two groups of refugees, who did not participate in the soccer project. Our main findings with respect to labour market integration and the effect of program participation can be summarized as follows.

The total group of 81 responding male asylum seekers is on average 23 years old, has on average spent nearly nine years in education and already accumulated five years of work experience in their home countries or on their way to Germany. They report on average a good health and are fairly optimistic about finding work in Germany. 36 percent were searching for a job, while 14 percent report that they were working at the time of the survey.

Thus, it seems that the responding refugees are equipped with a good health, reasonable work experience and motivation, but a low level of education, comparted to Germans of the same age group. 28 survey participants engaged in the soccer project. Most of them indicated that they would like to participate more frequently. Responding refugees, who participate in the soccer project report that they visit German natives in their homes more often than the control groups, which hints at some initial positive short run integration effects.

According to our experience respondents enjoyed collaboration in the survey. Since the number of respondents is small our findings are preliminary in nature. Future research that intends to more deeply assess causal impacts needs to rest on significantly larger samples and panel data.

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7. Appendix

Randomization of the treatment status is a crucial condition for estimating causal treatment effects in our setting. Hence, we checked for systematic differences in predetermined characteristics across groups prior to the treatment assignment. Table 8 reports the estimation and test results.

Table 8: Balance Check Randomization

Group	Coef.	Std. Err.	t	P>t	[95% Conf. Interval]	
Worked in Home Country	-.047	.20	-0.23	0.82	-.48	.38
Speaking Native Language	-.099	.19	-0.51	0.62	-.51	.31
Writing Native Language	.029	.34	0.09	0.93	-.68	.74
Reading Native Language	.022	.38	0.06	0.95	-.77	.81
Asylum granted	.760	.40	1.93	0.071	-.072	1.60
Age	-.000	.04	-0.00	0.998	-.08	.08
Education	.054	.04	1.27	0.222	-.036	.14
Years of School Father	-.008	.06	-0.14	0.892	-.13	.11
Years of School Mother	.003	.069	0.04	0.97	-.14	.15
Children	-.62	.39	-1.59	0.130	-1.45	.20
Time in Germany	-.033	.035	-0.94	0.361	-.106	.041
Escape with Family	.144	.367	0.39	0.700	-.63	.92
Crossed Mediterranean	-.078	.25	-0.31	0.763	-.61	.46
Constant	.80	1.23	0.65	0.524	-1.79	3.39

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

If the randomization worked, there should be no relationship between the explanatory variables and group assignment. This is true for every variable on a five percent significance level which indicates that the randomization had worked quite well. The only variable which is weakly significant is ‘Asylum granted’ which captures whether asylum is already granted in Germany. However, this is only true for seven individuals in the entire sample of whom two belong to the control group and five to the treatment group. Therefore the quality of randomization should be adequate.