# The Norwegian welfare state and the integration of refugees through activation

## An exploratory case study of Bergen

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# Abstract

Within the field of immigration research one particular topic keeps resurfaces, namely how will immigrants affect the welfare state, a discussion that is often focused on how to protect the welfare state from immigrants. There are, however, less research on how the welfare state in turn can affect immigrants, specifically their integration. This is a topic that needs to be explored, especially with the trend of activation in Europe. For the past decades there has been increased conditions of work for getting welfare benefits. This can be challenging for many immigrants, but more so for refugees who often struggle in the labour market. This has led me to ask the following question: How does activation within the Norwegian welfare state promote the integration of refugees?

Previous studies suggests that while skills and qualifications of refugees are one of the main reasons for why they struggle to integrate, it is not a sufficient explanation alone. Instead, there are research which suggests refugees face additional institutional barriers through their admission policies, the labour market, and the welfare state. To properly explore how this affects the integration of refugees I first conduct a case study in Norway and look at the various laws and government documents that frame their integration policies. The findings from this suggest that these institutional barriers do occur and that welfare regimes are a significant factor for this, but not a sufficient explanation alone. To really understand how the institutional barriers affect refugees' integration I have also conducted a case study in Bergen. This is necessary due to the state structure of Norway which gives municipalities the role of service providers for the welfare benefits. It is at the local level I can study how refugees are integrated. Here I look at the various qualification programs targeted at immigrants specifically. What I have found suggests that activation does in many ways promote integration, and while it can be a good way to include refugees, for some people the focus on labour market participation can be exclusive.

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# Table of content

## 1. Introduction

Immigration has been on the political agenda for ages and stays relevant, which the new wave of Ukrainian refugees is a testament to. One of the main discussions that have resurfaced many times over when talking about immigration is how it will affect the welfare state, which often focuses on the protection of the welfare state from immigrants (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016; Nordensvard and Ketola 2015; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018; Ruhs 2013). One of the reasons for this is that immigrants, mostly refugees, usually have a significantly lower socioeconomic status compared to natives. On average, refugees have less income, making them more dependent on welfare. While there is no clear consensus on the best method for integration, most studies focuses on employment as the main achievement. However, a common challenge for refugees in Europe is finding stable and long-lasting employment, leading them to have less disposable income. In most of the previous studies, this challenge is presented as an issue of lower skills and a lack of qualifications of refugees (Lemaître 2007; Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019), but there has been research which contradicts this assumption. While skills and qualifications remain an important factor, it fails to explain refugees' lower socioeconomic status in society. In fact, there have been studies showing that refugees face additional institutional barriers when trying to integrate (Hooijer and Picot 2015), and more specifically, a differentiation of social rights and admission based on who gets categorised as skilled and unskilled migrants (Ruhs 2013). With many countries in Europe being so guarded about their welfare state, refugees' exclusion from several benefits can therefore act as a barrier for them, making their integration harder (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016; Nordensvard and Ketola 2015; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018). However, at the same time, the welfare state can also be an important tool for their integration. It is, therefore, necessary to explore how the welfare state can help integrate refugees' and whether it excludes or includes them into society, mainly by helping them find employment.

*Research question*

Norway is a particularly interesting case within this topic. They have a fairly generous welfare state that builds on the values of shared responsibility, equality, and universalism (Esping-Andersen 1989, 49-52). This creates a suitable environment for inclusive benefits and the welfare state as a tool for integration. At the same time, the high generosity of welfare

benefits creates incentives for the state to protect themselves against immigrants and act more exclusive towards them. In response to this dilemma, refugees' integration has become centred on activation and they are included in the welfare state through employment and qualification programs (NOU 2011:7 ; NOU 2017:2). But in what way does this approach integrate refugees?

By exploring the research question, "*How does activation within the Norwegian welfare state promote the integration of refugees? An explorative case study of Bergen municipality"* I hope to understand how the institutional barriers unfold within a specific welfare regime and how it promotes integration.

The research takes an institutional approach. I look at integration only in terms of how the state institutions, specifically the welfare state, promote integration. This excludes refugees' experiences and much of their perspectives. The question is not looking to answer what the effect of the integration of refugees is, but rather how the institutions in place can promote it through their structures. Taking this approach allows me to gain further insight into the integration process of refugees, how it happens through welfare, and furthermore, how integration is both studied and understood.

*Expectations*

Much of the theoretical framework justifies the focus of the research and taking an institutional approach to studying the integration of refugees. The institutional barriers that were previously mentioned (Hooijer and Picot 2015; Emmenegger and Careja 2012; Ruhs 2013) is expected to occur within the Norwegian case as well. I expect to find restrictive admission policies based on who gets categorised as skilled and unskilled migrants and that these restrictions are reflected within their inclusion welfare state as well. It is also highly likely that the challenges refugees face in Europe will not deviate and that they will struggle with skills and qualifications that do not meet the demand of the labour market.
However, how these challenges and institutional barriers will unfold will most likely vary depending on the welfare model and the labour market. The Social democratic welfare model which Norway has (Esping-Andersen 1989, 49-52), will influence the state's integration strategies and be a determining factor for refugees' integration. Beyond the welfare regime, there are also different labour market policies, most importantly unemployment benefits and social assistance. For while the welfare regime probably has a significant influence over

integration, it is likely not the only factor. Ideal types such as welfare regimes have limited explanation power, especially at the local level where the study is conducted. Access to unemployment benefits and social assistance is therefore looked at separately. For refugees' these benefits can be an important source of income because of the institutional barriers making it hard to find work. While the relationship between the welfare model, admission policies, and the labour market is expected to occur, it is also expected that they cannot perfectly explain the integration process of refugees.

*Research approach*

To answer the research question, I will be conducting an exploratory case study in Bergen, a municipality in Norway. It is at the local level of government the activation strategy is implemented, and it is the municipality that are the service providers of welfare. It is, therefore, necessary to conduct a case study within a single municipality.

Using the qualitative method, I conduct an in-depth study on refugees' integration. This approach gives me room to explore integration and its complexities, allowing me to see more closely the involvement of the welfare state. Most previous studies on integration within Scandinavia, and more specifically the activation of refugees, focus only on the first few years in their integration. This is because within this timeframe, most refugees go through an introduction program. The program focuses explicitly on refugees' integration. Sweden, Denmark, and Norway all have a variation of this program, and it is often seen as a crucial part of their immigration policies (Hagelund 2020). While the program is important, especially since Norway recently replaced their integration law, it is only the first step for many refugees (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)). By only looking at this program, it fails to account for how integration is something which happens long-term. The socioeconomic differences between natives and refugees are something which persists for a long time, and many refugees still need additional help after the program ends. There are many other qualification programs that target immigrants, and all of them contribute to refugees' inclusion or exclusion within the welfare state. The thesis, therefore, contributes to the research field by providing a complete picture of refugees' integration journey. While the institutional barriers provide a good explanation for how the welfare state, together with admission and labour market policies, affects integration, they cannot give a complete picture of the actual process. Besides conducting a case study in Norway with document analysis of government documents, I also use interviews with employees from these programs and within the municipality. This helps uncover additional explanations beyond the institutional barriers, while also looking at how

they unfold at a local level. A major focus of these interviews has been on how all these programs cooperate and connect with each other. Since integration takes time, and many refugees go through several of these programs, how the transition between them happens can significantly influence the process.

*Chapter overview*

However, before I ca get to the study, I first need to establish the concepts to clarify what migration is and the different categorised of immigrants. Chapter 2 shows what makes refugees distinct and what other types of immigrants there are. Chapter 3 provides an overview of previous studies on how refugees are integrated in Europe. This chapter also provides a justification for the focus of the study and establishes some of the main challenges they face. Chapter 4 goes more into depth about the method I use, an exploratory case study, and discusses the validity of the research method. The next chapter, chapter 5, presents the case study. It starts at first with Norway at the national level, showing how the laws, documents, and welfare model frame refugees' integration. I then move on to the local level in Bergen and present the main qualification programs and parts of civil society. Afterwards in chapter 6 I present the interview analysis which is divided into sections based on various topics. Then in chapter 7 I discuss the findings from the study and demonstrate how these fits into the previous theory presented and the representativeness of my findings. Chapter 8 concludes with the main findings.

## 2. Concepts and clarification of migrants

### Definition of immigration

There are many ways to define what a migrant is. The thesis will use one of the more commonly used definitions by the United Nations.

> "The UN Migration Agency (IOM) defines a migrant as any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a State away from his/her habitual place of residence, regardless of (1) the person's legal status; (2) whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary; (3) what the causes for the movement are; or (4) what the length of the stay is." (United Nations 2022)

However, this definition is rather broad. Immigrants consist of diverse groups, and this will affect the integration process. For example, both length of stay and reason for migration will impact their resident status and rights. This is especially prominent among asylum seekers, who usually have special rights and laws tied to their status (Mavroudi and Nagel 2016, 4-8).

*Country of origin and migration status*

Another thing that makes immigration a diverse category is the countries migrants emigrate from. One noticeable difference is between non-EU and EU migrants. There are many reasons for this. However, most studies focus on a difference in income between these groups compared to natives. Many studies reveal that non-EU migrants tend to have significantly lower income across Europe (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019; Dustmann and Frattini 2011; Shutes 2016; Dalli 2019). There are many explanations for this income gap. One common explanation is that non-EU migrants are usually categorised as low-skilled workers while EU migrants are seen as skilled workers (Dustmann and Frattini 2011; Wang and Naveed 2019).

However, the biggest difference between non-EU and EU migrants is the EEA agreement (Dalli 2019; Shutes 2016). This agreement is between EU member states and EEA Efta states such as Norway, which are not a part of the EU but still participates in the agreement. The purpose of EEA is to establish a single market within Europe where borders are not a barrier for trade, investment, or movement. This grants migrants from the countries involved the freedom of movement, giving them certain rights within Europe (OJ No L 1, 3.1.1994, p. 3; and EFTA States' official

gazettes. (2016)). This regulation of migration flows and rights based on whether migrants are from an EU member country or from outside Europe affects their integration process. Different conditions attached to their residency status can restrict or grant them access to essential welfare benefits and other rights (Shutes 2016; Dalli 2019).

*Reason for migrating: refugees*

Besides the country of origin, the reason for migrating also affects resident status and rights. Refugees are a particular type of migrants because their move is involuntary and necessary for survival (Mavroudi and Nagel 2016, 118). Defined by the United Nations, a refugee is:

> "Someone who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion." (The UN Refugee Agency 2022b)

Refugees are in a unique and vulnerable situation. Unlike other migrants, they cannot plan for their migration the same way, and the costs of moving are often quite high and challenging. This makes it difficult to seek approval before arrival, leaving them in an unstable situation. Before they are classified as refugees, they are asylum seekers, waiting for their status to either be approved or denied by the authorities (The UN Refugee Agency 2022a). If their application is approved, they are granted refugee status and will be protected under international law, following the 1951 Refugee Convention. However, while refugees are protected by special rights and cannot be sent back to their home country as long as it is unsafe (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2017). Asylum seekers, on the other hand, can still be sent back to the country in which they first applied for asylum, according to the Dublin-convention. Countries, therefore, have some flexibility within their immigration policies under the Refugee Convention (Hatland 2019b, 228-229).

## 3. Theoretical framework

### Resident status and citizenship regime

Migrants' resident status and rights are usually regulated at the national level, even with international agreements such as the Schengen agreement and the Refugee Convention. States are reluctant to give up their sovereignty on immigration policies, particularly on immigration from third countries. Several countries in Europe want to prevent irregular immigrants and low-skilled workers from entering and restrict their borders from third countries (Hampshire 2016). Martin Ruhs argues that "migration cannot be studied in isolation from admission policies" (Ruhs 2013, 3). He explores why high-income countries restrict the rights of migrant workers and finds a relationship between high-income countries' admission policies, skills, and the right of migrant workers. Because skilled migrants generate higher growth and benefit high-income countries, they are more desirable than low-skilled workers. According to their national interests, countries will naturally target skilled migrants while restricting admission for low-skilled migrants. To make their country seem more attractive to those they perceive as skilled migrants, they will, in turn, grant them more rights. In other words, there is a trade-off between openness and migrants' rights (Ruhs 2013).

Ruhs focuses explicitly on worker migrants and looks at how migration's potential costs and benefits can impact national interests and migrants' admission policies. This is interesting, mainly how social rights can be restricted through limited welfare and public service access. He shows how migrants' rights often depend on who are the desired migrants and how strict the admission policies are (Ruhs 2013).

This relationship between admission policies and restrictions can also be seen in articles discussing migrants' access to the welfare state. There is a lot of discussion and fear centred on whether immigrants can undermine the welfare state and if there can be both open immigration policies and a generous welfare state. As a result of this fear, migrants' rights, such as access to the welfare state, can be restricted based on what type of immigrants they are (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016), in other words, if they are desirable or not. An article that looks at the rise of right-wing populists in Nordic countries and how it has affected the welfare states. Here they find that a more unfavourable public opinion on immigrants does not lead to welfare retrenchment. Instead, it leads to the restriction of migrants' access to welfare (Nordensvard and Ketola 2015). This has been found in both Denmark and Netherlands.

Again showing little support for welfare retrenchments as a response to migration, and it has instead led to migrants' access to welfare being limited (Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018). The discussion of migrants' costs and benefits for the nation-states has an effect not only on admission policies but also on how the welfare state includes them. The articles presented here supports much of Rhus's findings on how migrants' rights may be restricted based on whether they are perceived as a cost or benefit for the state. In this context, it shows how migrants' access to welfare benefits is restricted based on the belief that they will become a burden.

However, unlike labour migrants, refugees are admitted not based on skills but for humanitarian reasons. International law protects and secures their rights. However, the openness of borders and admission policies are still relevant for refugees, even if their rights cannot be restricted the same way as labour migrants through a categorisation of skilled or low-skilled. It is still essential to understand which types of migrants are desirable and how national interests can impact immigration policies, even for refugees. For admission policies, there is still some freedom for the receiving country even under the 1951 Refugee Convention to protect their borders. The countries can still limit their acceptance quotas and decide how much capacity they have for handling refugees (Refugees and Policy Development and Evaluation Service 2008). However, admission policies are not just about how many migrants are let in. It is also about the conditions placed on the migrants' stay. Therefore, there is still a matter of some openness, even for refugees. Refugees are also usually labelled unskilled, often seen as unwanted, and disadvantaged within the labour market. This makes them appear as a threat to national interests and a burden on the state, which could affect their integration and place stricter conditions on their stay. Such has been the case in Denmark, Sweden, and Norway, who have undergone restrictive policy changes for refugees. Denmark stands out with rigorous immigration policies, limiting refugees' access to the welfare state through decreased financial support, conditions of work, and stricter conditions for permanent residency (Hagelund 2020).

## Economic integration

*Why economic integration?*

I have now established that national interests do impact migrants' rights. The costs and benefits of migration are therefore central to the discussion. The question then becomes, how

are they measured? While migration affects many different areas within society and has several costs and benefits, traditionally, what constitutes “successful” migration is measured using economic factors. One of the more common approaches is to compare migrants’ economic status to natives, using natives as an indicator of success. The goal for integration, therefore, becomes about getting migrants to a similar social standing to that of natives. While integration cannot be reduced to economic measures alone, it is undeniable that migrants’ economy impacts their well-being and is of national interest. Economic integration is, therefore, an essential aspect of migration.

*Measurement of integration*

How the integration of migrants is measured can affect the results one gets. When Klem, Lasek, and Brzozowski studied economic integration among immigrants within the Nordic region, they used a long-term view. They looked at integration as a process that continues over time, essentially capturing the multidimensionality behind the concept. It is a two-way process in which both migrants and the state conduct a cost and benefits analysis, meaning that both invest in the migration process in some ways. It will therefore take time for migrants to integrate economically, and success can be seen as something that happens over the long-term and often within the labour market (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). In other words, when talking about the costs and benefits of migration, it is in terms of an investment. In the beginning, the costs will naturally be higher because of the adjustment period, and it is only after time that both the state and the migrants will see their return on the investment.

Nevertheless, if we look at income alone, comparing the income levels between migrants and natives, there is a clear trend of migrants making significantly less. This difference becomes even more apparent when differentiating between non-EU migrants and EU migrants, as non-EU migrants have significantly lower income levels than natives and EU migrants (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019). The question then is, just what determines a successful economic integration? The trend above can be understood as migrants falling behind. The comparisons look at income across the working-age population and find a pay gap between them (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019). However, in Klem, Lasek, and Brzozowski's study, they account for skill when comparing migrants to natives using similar income-level. They find a much smaller difference between natives and migrants, which can then be understood as much more successful levels of integration (Kelm,

Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). In other words, how one compares migrants to natives can significantly impact the results.

There is no clear answer for which measurement is correct because it all depends on what is successful economic integration? Many studies find that within Europe, migrants with a similar level of occupation to natives do not have that much difference in income between them. Most of the difference is not necessarily active wage discrimination but rather occupational choices (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Dustmann and Frattini 2011). The fact is, migrants are overrepresented within lower-income work in Europe, and whether that is an issue or not regarding integration can be discussed. Some can see this as proof of unsuccessful integration. Nation-states can see this as a poor return on their investment. People in lower-income work are often more dependent upon the welfare state, which can create the fear of migrants being a burden on the state rather than contributing to economic growth. However, this fear may reflect more about the state's labour market realities and be less about a migration issue. If people in lower-income work are burdens of the state, then the issue would probably lie with an unstable and less protected labour market rather than with the workers. So, instead of an issue with integration, it could also indicate that the work available is the central issue

Overrepresentation within lower-income work may not necessarily be a failure of integration. If migrants' basic goods and services are covered by their income, and they are in a relatively stable economic state, regardless of their lack of wealth, it might not be an issue that they earn less compared to natives. However, if this is the case, it can also be argued that lower-income work is not an issue for the individual if it does not negatively impact their well-being. However, it is not the same as a group overrepresenting lower-income work. As a group, migrants will then have significantly fewer resources available than natives, which can exclude them from society and make it more challenging to both mobilise and advocate for their interests. This also raises the question of within integration and whether equality between immigrants and natives means result-based or having the same opportunities. In other words, which differences should be tolerated can impact the understanding of what constitutes a successful integration of migrants.

*Effects of labour participation for integration beyond income*

Economic integration is also important for recognition and being a part of society. It is not simply about having a secure income, though it is vital, as income grants access to basic goods and services. However, work also holds value outside the terms of money. It is a central part of most people's daily life (Greve 2018). To work means to participate in society, and it is a place where people establish connections and creates networks. It can create a feeling of belonging and recognition. So, while the focus on income is important, it sufficiently explains the role labour participation means for integration. Finding work can be a goal within the integration process, not just as a means of becoming independent from the welfare state but also as a way to participate in society and feel fulfilment.

*Challenges of integration into the labour market*

In short, getting work can be both a goal and a necessity for migrants upon arrival or later in their integration process. While integration cannot be reduced to economic measures alone, it is undeniable that migrants' economy has significant influence over their well-being and is of national interest. However, it is not easy for migrants to enter the labour market. As mentioned, high-income countries tend to prefer skilled migrants because that is what their labour market needs. Meanwhile, low-skilled migrants are usually seen as undesirable and are in less demand (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Ruhs 2013). Therefore, economic integration will have different challenges depending on migration status. Labour migrants, for example, have a job upon admission, while other types of migrants, such as humanitarian ones, may have a more difficult time finding work. Their integration process can therefore take longer.

*Specific challenges for refugees*

Refugees are expected to integrate into the labour market, but in this process, they face unique challenges, and their integration journey differs significantly from labour migrants. Because they were forced to move for their protection, they are expected to be less prepared for the challenges within the country they arrive at and are therefore naturally less well adapted. They often lack the skills that are desirable or acknowledged within the labour market (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020). There is a significant difference in labour market participation and wages between refugees, other migrants and natives. Refugees usually start at a much lower level within the labour market because of their situation, which leaves them with a less adapted skill set and a lack of work experience. However, this gap between refugees and other

migrants, in addition to natives, narrows time, showing that they eventually integrate (Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017). There is, in other words, a cost of migration for both the nation-state and the migrants. Refugees often endure traumatic experiences and a long migration journey with little time and resources left to invest in their skills and employability in the early stages of migration (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017).

However, while the gap between refugees' integration in the labour market, other migrants, and natives narrow over time (Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017), refugees still tend to have lower-paid work. They are often in more unstable and insecure employment, which pays less, and because of this, they are seen as "unwanted" and "undesirable" by the state. Some countries, such as Denmark, therefore, use social control through the welfare state to control migrant groups (Lindberg 2020; Hagelund 2020). The welfare state, whether the state restricts access or is more inclusive, remains an essential tool for immigrant integration. It can help lessen the gap between refugees and other groups or be a means of social control and push them into an "outsider" role within society (Lindberg 2020).

**Skill level and its impact on economic integration**

A common explanation for migrants' low income and overall lower socioeconomic status has been their skill level compared to natives. Skills are essential determinants of income and access to labour (Lemaître 2007). However, how states define skills among migrants could be questioned as it usually has unintended consequences for women, certain age groups and nationalities. Foreign experience and educational attainments are not always acknowledged in the migration process (Bailey and Mulder 2017). Still, most migrants are aware of this and often consider the transference of skills as a cost of migration. After all, integration is a process which will take time (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019), especially for refugees who need time to adapt (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017). Therefore, it is important to treat migration as a process. Adaption to the host country's labour markets requires time and investment in skills (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). Much of the income difference between natives and migrants is explained by migrants' overrepresentation in the low-skilled jobs (Lindberg 2020; Brynin and Güveli 2012).

**Institutional barriers and their impact on the integration process**

Based on the previous section, it seems evident that skills are important determinants for the economic integration of migrants. However, referring back to the section on *Resident status and citizenship regime* one can see that migrants' admission policy and residence status affect their rights and, by that extent, their integration process. Gerda Hooijer and Georg Picot find that the gap between the skills of migrants and natives alone is insufficient to explain their different socioeconomic status. Instead, they find that immigrants face additional institutional barriers, restricting their access to the labour market and social policies. Their results reveal that a large portion of immigrants at risk of poverty in Europe is categorised as humanitarian and family immigrants. These immigrants are generally seen as "unwanted". Therefore their rights are differentiated, and their access to welfare is restricted (Hooijer and Picot 2015). Both the welfare state and admission policies can control certain migrant groups through restrictive benefits and conditions on migrants' residency (Ruhs 2013; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018; Nordensvard and Ketola 2015). This is parsely what has led to the gap in income between migrants and natives, essentially slowing down the integration process of migrants. These arguments are supported by Ruhs, who also demonstrates how rights may vary by immigration status and whether they are seen as undesirable or desirable for the national interest (Ruhs 2013).

Another thing Hooijer and Picot point out is how the labour market is also restrictive. Since immigrants are new to the market, finding a job can be challenging (Hooijer and Picot 2015). At the same time, integration is a process (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019) with an adjustment period for immigrants where the gap between income and labour market participation closes over time (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017). It is not certain that immigrants will have complete access to the labour market regardless of how much time passes and that the institutional barriers that restrict immigrants' access will diminish. It is, therefore, important to account for the numerous ways to determine successful integration because when measuring migrants and natives within the same perceived skill levels, the socioeconomic status of immigrants and natives is pretty much the same (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). However, this tells us that immigrants are overrepresented in low-skilled work (Lindberg 2020; Brynin and Güveli 2012). Hooijer and Picot points out a relationship between highly regulated labour and access to the labour market. A heavily regulated market makes it more challenging to obtain a high-paying and stable job. Meanwhile, a less regulated market makes work more accessible, but at the cost of

pay and security. Getting a job, therefore, depends on how regulated the labour market is (Hooijer and Picot 2015).

The types of jobs available for migrants also play a part in this, as migrants are not just struggling to find work, but among those employed, a majority of them are in low-paying work (Brynin and Güveli 2012; Lindberg 2020). The labour market is an important institutional barrier that can significantly affect integration (Hooijer and Picot 2015). One theory that can help explain how the labour market is restricted is the dualisation theory. The theory discusses how the labour market consists of two main sections, "outsiders" and "insiders". "Outsiders" being defined as those with low-paying and unstable work, while "insiders" are those with high-paying and stable work (Emmenegger and Careja 2012). This divide in the labour market can also lead to a dualisation process, where policy changes differentiate rights between "outsiders" and "insiders". How these policy reforms affect the divide within the labour market is uncertain, as it depends on several factors such as existing institutions, the welfare state and politics within the country (Emmenegger et al. 2012, 9-17). Immigrants in Western Europe often fall within the category of "outsiders" and represent a particular group within this segment. When applying the dualisation theory to immigrants, there are additional factors to consider. The categorisation of "desired" and "undesirable" being one of them, and reformed social security systems reducing incentives for immigration. Here it shows how both admission policies and the welfare states are used to control the immigration population. Emmenegger and Careja find that migrant status is one of the main reasons for their high poverty and social exclusion levels. Even when controlling for educational attainments, non-EU migrants still earn less compared to the native population and often work in worse conditions (Emmenegger and Careja 2012).

This theory plays into Hooijer and Picot's argument and demonstrates that access to the labour market may not give complete access, excluding a vast group of immigrants from secure positions (Hooijer and Picot 2015). This is important as many welfare benefits are restricted in terms of labour market participation, and sometimes these benefits are not well adjusted for part-time jobs. To better understand the integration of immigrants, it can be helpful to have an institutional approach and look at the different ways the labour markets and the welfare states can either restrict or include migrants. In this context, activation programs become increasingly important for immigrants, especially refugees, who face several challenges related to these institutional barriers.

**Access to the welfare state**

To better understand the welfare state as a tool to control and monitor immigrants and their integration, it is necessary to look at the different types of welfare regimes in Europe. Gosta Esping-Andersen has been very influential within the field of welfare typology and provides a range of categories for different welfare regimes. By looking at the international variations in social rights and welfare stratification, and its difference between the state, market and family, Esping-Andersen finds different regime types. The first type is "liberal" and is characterised by strict rules of entitlement and a mixture of protection of social rights promoting the equality of poverty while also having market-differentiated welfare, which promotes a class divide. The second type is "corporatist" welfare which is less redistributive and attaches rights to class and status, trying to maintain a traditional societal structure. The third and final type is called "social democratic". This type is characterised by principles of universal solidarity, which promotes high standards of equality. It also focuses on getting more people into work to support the expensive welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1989, 49-52).

This typology faced criticism later on but remains relevant even today (Arts and Gelissen 2010). The regime types have different justifications for what differences are acceptable within society, outlining who gets access to the social benefits and under which circumstances. This affects society in several ways as the welfare state does not just concern the beneficent. Instead, it sets up how goods and services are distributed, which affects the socioeconomic divides. The different ways of redistribution affect the integration process in numerous ways shaping migrants' socioeconomic standpoint.

However, simply focusing on the welfare regime alone is not enough. Ideal types of welfare often fail to account for how different aspects of social benefits have very different justification for who gets access. Fossati, Knotz, Gandenberg and Bonoli present evidence that perceived "deservingness" varies among different types of benefits and not necessarily that much between different welfare regimes. Unemployment benefits tend to have a much lower deservingness rate than other benefits, especially related to migrants, and this can lead to much more restrictive access (Knotz et al. 2022). While regime types do set up a general understanding of which principles the state is motivated by, it is also important to acknowledge that these principles vary with different types of benefits.

While there are many studies on integration policies and citizenship status, there is a lack of research regarding how welfare regimes influence migrants' access to the labour market and their economic integration as a whole. Most of the literature has been on how migrants affect the welfare regime, concerning whether or not migrants can undermine it upon entry. Hooijer and Picot address this gap and provide evidence of institutional barriers such as immigration policy, labour market regulations, and welfare eligibility rules, reinforcing the risk of poverty and labour insecurity among migrants (Hooijer and Picot 2015). Stephen Castles and Carl-Ulrik Schierup also address this research gap. They discuss how access to the welfare state is closely related to migrants' access to citizenship. The welfare state plays a central role in reducing class conflict and consolidating nation-states. National identity is therefore very closely connected to welfare which can lead to the exclusion of migrants. Migrants do face unique issues, especially regarding their integration process. Access to welfare benefits can be crucial in this process, and therefore their exclusion and inclusion within the welfare state needs to be addressed (Castles and Schierup 2010).

**Social and Labour Market Policy**

Within a welfare regime, there are significant differences between the various benefit schemes, and it is, therefore, beneficial to differentiate between them. A welfare state is made of various social and labour market policies, and access to welfare is determined by different conditions set by the benefit schemes.

It is difficult to define just what social and labour market policies are as they can have a lot of different meanings depending on context (Greve 2018, 2). Today, social policy is usually associated with the welfare state, representing central policies such as education, housing, health care and social security (7-8). However, these policies can vary in shape and form between countries, usually due to different historical traditions and developments (1). In their book, Bent Greve tries to define social policy more concretely by looking at several previous definitions. They find many similarities between them, and most definitions contain an institutional character with the purpose of ensuring state members' well-being (8-10). It can be understood as a way of organising society across different areas through institutions with the purpose of maintaining their state members' well-being.

Unlike social policy, which has a rather vague description, labour market policy is much easier to define (10). To quote Bent Greve:

> "…it revolves around how the labour market functions and what needs to be done in order to reduce unemployment, but also to ensure a continually high level of employment and debates on the generosity of benefits for those unemployed" (Greve 2018, 10)

Moreover, while it makes sense to distinguish between the two concepts, there are some overlaps. Labour market policy is not separate from the welfare state as both social, and labour market policies do concern the well-being of their citizens (10). They both tackle social risks within society and contain strategies for how to minimise these risks (11).

*Passive and Active Labour market policy*

While there is a clear definition of what labour market policy is, there is still a large variety of policies within. These policies are commonly divided into two categories; Active Labour Market Policy (ALMP) and Passive Labour Market Policy (PLMP) (Greve 2018, 112). ALMP has the central goal of getting more people into work through various means (112). For successful activation, there are three core elements: employability, opportunities and motivations (115). How these goals are achieved, however, varies significantly between countries. They can reflect the countries' welfare regime and their labour markets (118). PLMP consist of social security benefits such as unemployment and social assistance (Greve 2018, 86) as well as early retirement. These benefit schemes are meant to provide economic security in case of unemployment and, unlike ALMP do not simply operate as a means to get people employed (104). After all, there are many different reasons for and types of unemployment. Unemployment benefits, to a limited degree, protect against the economic insecurity of losing one's job and thereby protect their well-being (87). Unemployment benefits often have conditions attached to them, and for a person to be recognised as unemployed, they need to be actively searching for a job or unable to do so. Being unemployed is not the same as being out of work. It means that they are unwillingly out of work and actively searching for a new one. In other words, they are still a part of the labour market.

As we can see, both PLMP and ALMP centre around the protection against various social risks. However, labour market policies are also a means to protect the economy and provide

stability (Theodoropoulou 2018, 7). In fact, it is even argued that unemployment benefits are not simply passive as it serves an important function in keeping the economy stable (Clasen and Clegg 2012, 4). However, before getting into the discussion of the effects of unemployment benefits, the concept must be explained.

*Unemployment benefits and social assistance*

As labour markets vary between countries and occasionally within, unemployment benefits will naturally look different as they respond to different labour market regimes and different social risks (Picot, 2012, 4). To define unemployment benefits, I will quote a section from George Picot's book on politics segmentation: *Unemployment benefits can be defined as public monetary transfers that are paid to unemployed in order to compensate for their loss of income* (Picot, 2012, 4). Besides providing economic security for both the economy and those at risk of losing their job, it is also a resource for the jobless to seek new employment (4). Looking back the dualisation theory, we see that immigrants tend to be overrepresented among the so-called "outsiders", meaning they are in an insecure position in the labour market due to the type of work they get access to (Emmenegger and Careja 2012). Being in that position makes having access to unemployment benefits a critical tool to protect their well-being. It helps to reduce the social risk immigrants are exposed to, which, if we follow the previous sections and the literature on the topic, has a tendency to be higher when compared to natives. This is especially true early in the integration process when the immigrants are still adjusting to a new society.

However, as discussed early on the topic of welfare generosity, unemployment benefits are usually viewed as less deserving compared to other benefits, especially concerning immigrants (Knotz et al. 2022). Getting back to Ruhs's argument of immigration being viewed in terms of costs and benefits, we can see that there is an underlying idea that immigrants need to earn their right to stay, often through being productive workers (Ruhs 2013). There is, however, an underlying fear that too generous unemployment benefits will aggregate unemployment rates and labour supply and take away incentives for people to seek jobs. According to the job search models, this could make job seekers more discriminant about jobs and further pressure raises in wages (Arts and Gelissen 2010). However, there are some flaws with this thinking. First of all, it assumes that the only incentives for work are monetary values (Greve 2018), and it also fails to account for how the benefit levels of

unemployment benefits depend on several factors, and it is often followed by a number of conditions.

Unemployment benefits are not an alternative to work but rather a means to secure people's well-being in case of unemployment while getting them back into the labour market, and sometimes that can mean any type of work. There are inherent risks to participating in the labour market, and their participation depends on if there is a demand for their skills which is not always the case.

To what extent unemployment benefits will be available depends on the conditions attached to the benefit schemes and which type of benefits they are qualified for. Some unemployment benefits are finances through “insurance” while others are “welfare-based”. Insurance for example, has conditions tied to previous employment and wages, which excludes several groups from this benefit. Meanwhile, “welfare-based” systems are more inclusive and provide a minimum level of income (Picot 2012, 32). As one can see, unemployment benefits demonstrate a differentiation of social rights (4), some schemes being more exclusive to others which is why it is important to look at different types of unemployment benefits and who qualifies for them (6).

The unemployment benefits can be divided into three standard types as identified by George Picot: Unemployment insurance (UI), Unemployment assistance (UA), and Social assistance (SA) (Picot, 2012). Unemployment Insurance is usually the most generous one and harder to qualify for (34). Previous employment is necessary, and the benefits levels can be determined by past income. This is because it is usually financed by both “employees” as well as “employers”. Unemployment assistance, on the other hand, is easier to qualify for. Access depends on who is categorised as unemployed, which is usually based on a means test. The benefits are financed by a state budget, and the overall benefit levels are flat-rate. The last type is Social Assistance which is technically not an unemployment benefit as it is not conditional on unemployment but rather on being in need. However, SA is still relevant for the unemployed and is usually the last resort for them. There are many similarities to UA as well, both being funded by the state, having means-tested, and a flat-rated benefit level (33). As one can see, there are many different types of benefits, all of them have conditions attached to them. However, these conditions may not just vary on benefit type but also on

who gets categorised as unemployed. In Denmark, for example, access to social assistance is limited for migrants (Hagelund 2020).

### Trend of activation

Over recent decades there has been pressure on public spending, and due this trend, Europe has now entered into something which can be called permanent austerity. The labour market has changed. The manufacturing industry has lost its importance and has been partly replaced by the service industry, which has a much lower potential for economic growth and puts pressure on wages. This in turn affects the welfare regimes, which rely on wages. These developments, and the permanents austerity, have caused a trilemma across Europe between full employment, public budgetary restraints and wage equality, making it much harder to balance them (Theodoropoulou 2018). However, this did not lead to large retrenchments or a dramatic decrease in support for welfare. Instead, there has been a trend of activation policies with a stronger focus on employment and a movement away from passive labour market policies. Unemployment benefits are therefore strongly affected by this trend. There has been more of a focus on skill training and "needs-based" income support for the unemployed as a result. How this trend looks within the different countries in Europe does, however, vary. Activation may also differentiate across the outsider/insider divide (Theodoropoulou 2018) and, in some cases, negatively impact immigrant who, because of their overrepresentation among outsiders, is much more vulnerable to welfare reforms (Emmenegger and Careja 2012).

Still, for many countries, activation remains an important aspect of their integration policies. This is mainly due to the difference between income and labour market participation between natives and immigrants across Europe, with immigrants being worse off. To include immigrants in the labour market, the welfare state usually interferes. For most countries, activation is a central tool for the integration of immigrants, but how this strategy is executed varies. The policy reforms and outcomes depend not only on the labour market but also on other factors such as welfare regime and admission policies (Butschek and Walter 2014).

### The differentiation of social rights

When discussing refugees' integration, the institutional barriers which have been presented will influence their integration process in various ways. In much of the previous literature and studies in this field, the focus has been on how the skills and qualifications of immigrants

have resulted in overrepresentation among lower-income work and a higher risk of poverty, especially among refugees and other humanitarian immigrants (Hooijer and Picot 2015; Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Dustmann and Frattini 2011). What constitutes a successful integration can be debated, but there are several indications that non-EU immigrants across Europe are worse-off in all socioeconomic indicators regardless of educational attainments (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019; Dustmann and Frattini 2011; Shutes 2016; Dalli 2019). Beyond skills and qualifications, immigrants also face several institutional barriers (Hooijer and Picot 2015; Ruhs 2013; Emmenegger and Careja 2012). The admission policies which set the premisses for under which conditions immigrants are allowed to stay will affect what rights immigrants have. Refugees are mainly protected by international agreements in this area (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2017), but their admission policies and how open a country is to migrants will impact their integration. The welfare state also plays an important role as a means to control and manage the immigration populations. Both admission policies and the welfare state are often closely connected. Lower-skilled migrants are often perceived as a threat to the welfare state, and their access to benefits can be limited (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016; Nordensvard and Ketola 2015; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018; Ruhs 2013).

Additionally, because of a trend of activation, work is becoming an increasingly important condition for access to benefits (Theodoropoulou 2018). This is especially important for refugees who arrive in the country with little resources and needing to restart their lives. However, because of how the labour market is structured, Europe is in high demand for skilled workers. A growing service industry also provides more unstable and lower wages (Theodoropoulou 2018; Emmenegger and Careja 2012). In response the admission policies are more restrictive towards low-skilled migrants. Most immigrants categorised as low-skilled enter as humanitarian and family migrants, which is perceived as undesirable and therefore has more restrictive admission and less access to public services (Ruhs 2013; Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020). Their entrance into the labour market is also more challenging, not just because there is a low demand for workers matching their skill set but also because they need time to adjust (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017). The immigration process requires time and resources (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). There is also the issue of when migrants do get employed, how they often end up overrepresenting unstable and lower-paid work, or as the dualisation theory puts it as

"outsiders" (Emmenegger and Careja 2012). Being in that insecure position, migrants may therefore be more dependent upon welfare benefits whose access is conditioned on work.

However, while there is a clear pattern of institutional barriers which affect refugees' integration, there is still a lack of research on how the welfare state influences this process. Much of the previous studies in this field focus on how immigrants affect the welfare state. With the growing activation trend and refugees struggling in the labour market, it becomes important to look at how this affects them and their integration beyond just skills and qualifications. An institutional perspective can better help show how the integration process happens within the state. To do this however, it is necessary to conduct a case study within a country since these institutional barriers depend on factors such as welfare regimes, specific labour market policies, admission policies and the labour market. This has prompted me to ask the following question: *How does activation within the Norwegian welfare state promote the integration of refugees? An explorative case study of Bergen municipality.*

## 4. Method

The theories on the topic and previous research underline how meaningful labour market participation is for refugees' integration. Most previous studies regarding this topic have focused on skills as a determining factor for labour market participation. However, there is also conclusive evidence that institutional factors can significantly influence their integration process as well. The welfare state plays an important role, and the relationship between immigration and welfare generosity is a heavily debated topic in this respect. However, while there is much discussion on how immigrants can impact the welfare state, there is less on how the welfare state, in return, impacts immigrants' integration process within political science. This thesis will contribute to the research regarding the welfare state's role in refugees' integration by conducting a qualitative case study to explore how the Norwegian welfare state promotes integration.

*What is a case study?*

A case study can be many things. John Gerring defines a case study as:

"…an intensive study of a single unit for the purpose of understanding a larger class of (similar) units." (Gerring 2004, 342)

A case study can therefore be either qualitative or quantitative. The purpose of a case study is simply to better understand causality and how the variables vary across cases. However, this method can be approached in several ways, and there are many different sub-types of a case study. What type of case study one conducts is depends on what the research is trying to achieve. For example, whether a case study is trying to find a causal relationship between a set of few variables or trying to explain the correlation of a larger set of variables can determine if qualitative or quantitative is the best suited method (Gerring 2004).

These sub-types of a case study also impact the different trade-offs within the method. However, there are some general weaknesses and strengths. One of its strengths is the depth a case study has, and it allows the researcher to explore the unit at a close range and thereby

take the context of the unit into consideration. Because of this a case study is often best suited for exploratory and descriptive cases. At the same time, this strength does come at the cost of generality and representativeness. The more specific and less cases a study has, the less representative and general it will be. It can therefore limit how representative the study is for other units. How much of this trade-off happens do however vary with the different sub-types and approaches of the case study (Gerring 2004).

*Case selection*

The case study that is conducted within the thesis is an exploratory one. The research question goes into depth about a phenomenon which lacks research on, namely the inclusion of refugees within the welfare state and more specifically how activation affects refugees' integration. I have so far presented theories which demonstrates how refugees' integration is meet with institutional barriers in Europe (Ruhs 2013; Hooijer and Picot 2015; Emmenegger and Careja 2012). Some of the previous studies focuses more exclusively on the welfare state (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016; Nordensvard and Ketola 2015; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018). One compares refugees' inclusion within the social democratic model in a comparative perspective with Denmark, Sweden, and Norway (Hagelund 2020). However, there is still a lot left to explore. There is not much research which gives an understanding of exactly how the welfare state can include refugees' and thereby promote their integration. To better understand the welfare state as both an institutional barrier and a tool for refugees' integration I have conducted a case study in Norway and Bergen.

Within Europe Norway stands out with a generous welfare state built on the ideals of shared responsibility (Esping-Andersen 1989; Kildal and Kuhnle 2019). At the same time, they are a high-income country who has strong incentives to restrict immigrants' access to the welfare state (NOU 2011:7 2011). Seeing as admission policies within Europe are similar and restrictive (Hampshire 2016), it is expected that Norway does not deviate from this pattern. Additionally, because of how refugees are protected by an international agreement (UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2017), their admission policies will also be similar. Then there are the studies on the institutional barriers that can be found in Europe and based on previous studies there is nothing to suggests that Norway will deviate from this either. What is expected to be different in Norway is how the institutional barriers affects refugees'

integration, more specifically the welfare state. Norway will therefore be a case study in the population of advanced democracies.

However, to investigate how refugees are included within the welfare state and how this affects their integration, it is necessary to narrow the focus on a single municipality, Bergen. The Norwegian government is built with a strong focus on local government as service providers within the welfare state (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019). Because of this, there is significant variances in welfare programs and the number of immigrants between the municipalities (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)). While the Norwegian government decides the admission policies and the general outline of the activation strategy, it is the municipalities that are the main providers of the welfare programs and benefits (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019). Therefore, in addition to Norway as a case study for the advanced democracies, I will also conduct a case study of Bergen within Norway.

What the research question sets out to ask is how integration and activation within the welfare states connects and if it promotes integration. The question is not necessarily asking about the effect of these programs, but rather how activation within the welfare state can promote integration. The focus is institutional and sets out to not only explore the integration process of refugees in Bergen and but also to describe how refugees are either included or excluded within the welfare state and how this is relevant for the study of integration. The research will therefore have implications for how we study integration and specifically how the welfare state is involved.

*How will the case study be conducted?*

The thesis adopts an exploratory approach. The theory section and previous studies on the subjects helps narrow the scope and reveal some of the important aspects of integration within Europe. But at the same time, the theories do not necessarily help explain how this integration process happens within the welfare state and how activation has affected not only immigration policies but the different welfare benefits and programs at a close level. An exploratory approach can therefore help uncover the relevant mechanisms connecting the welfare state with the integration of refugees.

The case study is explorative as it sets out to address the complex phenomena of refugees' integration through an institutional approach. This will provide an in-depth understanding of

the topic and help identify several possible underlying explanations which has previously been overlooked. The way I study integration in this thesis will contribute to future studies by providing valuable insight in how it happens within both the welfare regime and through specific benefits.

The approach will help provide a descriptive picture of the topic and give insight into the research question. However, there are several ways to go about this. Because the thesis uses a qualitative approach and is in part exploratory, I use two distinctive methods which are best suited for this: a document analysis of government reports and law documents, in addition to interviews of state employees and from one employee within the voluntary section.

*The interviews*

For the thesis I conducted six interviews with state employees and one employee from the voluntary sector. The complete list of the interviewees can be seen in appendix 1. These interviews provide useful insights into the different welfare programs in Bergen. As employees working with the integration of refugees in some manner, they have a valuable perspective and can provide data that is not found in a document analysis. Unlike the government reports and law documents which are good at showing how the institutions are build up, employees within the municipality can provide even more insight into how these institutions actually work at the local level.

Because the interviews are with employees who have experience within this field and are conducted one-on-one, the interviews are semi-structured. This allows for flexibility and allows the conversation to follow up previous answers and gives room for the interviewee to bring up topics I might have neglected. There are, however, some prepared topics and more open questions which I would use in all of the interviews, so that they are comparable in some manner.

*Scope of the interviews*

There are some critiques of interviews as method which needs to be addressed. There are some discussions regrading the knowledge generated by this method regarding how accurate it is. Interviews can in many ways reflect the subjective experience of a single person, and therefore reflect a cultural phenomenon rather than objective truth (Yeo et al. 2014, 181-182).

However, because the interviewees are experienced professional within the field I am currently researching their perspective reflects that of an employee who has seen how integration actually happens and makes it valuable. Additionally, the document analysis provides an alternative source which strengths the representativeness of the data.
There is also the matter of the research scope, because in analysing data collected from interviews their perspective needs to be accounted for (Yeo et al. 2014). Since the thesis has an institutional focus, I chosen to not include interviews from refugees and their experience as participants within these programs are therefore not included. While it is a valuable perspective, it is outside the scope of this thesis. What the research question asks is not the actual causal effect of the activation within the welfare state, but rather how the relationship between the relevant institutions unfolds, and how this can in a probable fashion effect refugees integration seen through an institutional perspective.

*Strength and weakness of the case study*

One of the strengths of the case study as mentioned is the depth of the research. This also helps strengthen the concept validity of the study (George and Bennett 2005, 19), which is especially important when talking about the welfare state. There are several types of welfare regimes and the Norwegian welfare state falls into a specific type, called the social democratic model (Esping-Andersen 1989). However, as stated in the theory section, there is still some nuances within the welfare regimes and between the different types of benefits. Even though the welfare model is defined by equality and universalism, these characteristics do vary across different benefits (Knotz et al. 2022), especially when considering the difference of passive and active labour market polices. There is therefore a need for high concept validity to study the welfare state as a more nuanced and a complex institution.

There is however a trade-off with the generality of the study. For while the thesis goes into great depth into a single municipality, this can come at the cost of representatives. The same goes for the focus on the Norwegian welfare state and labour market. The study of the welfare state is more representative of the social democratic model and says less about activation and integration within other types of welfare regimes. The labour market also reflects a Norwegian model which has limited representativeness outside similar case studies. However, what the study then does represent and gives an insight into is the social democratic model and how activation happens within in, and even further how this in turn effects integration policies. Focusing on Bergen municipality also narrows the scope significantly and effect the

generality of the findings. However, it is a necessary scope as stated earlier because of the municipalise role in the welfare state. Additionally, Bergen municipality within Norway comes across as representative of other large municipalises with a large refugee population. The policies behind the welfare benefits are also decided at the national level and lays down the foundation of all welfare programs across Norway. The findings can therefore also be of relevance for smaller municipalises as well. The overall weakness of representativeness should therefore not be an issue for the external not internal validity of the case study as long as the findings are not used in an overreaching manner. While the scope may be narrow, it is still of relevance and can be used to help explain other cases as well in later studies.

## 5. The case of Norway

### The Norwegian welfare state

In Esping-Andersen's typology of welfare states, the Nordic model falls within the "social democratic" type, which is characterised by universal solidarity and high standards of equality (Esping-Andersen 1989). These characteristics are prevalent within the Norwegian welfare state were the notions of universalism and equality are strong. The universalism approach grants all residents basic rights and a standard of social security, regardless of ethnicity, religion, class, and gender. Meaning that their access to welfare benefits is based upon an acknowledgement of their basic rights as human beings, not something to be earned (Kildal and Kuhnle 2005). Equality as a highly regarded value within the Norwegian society also falls under the same logic as universalism, creating a shared sense of responsibility for their fellow man rather than an individualised responsibility (Kildal and Kuhnle 2019). Both of these characteristics within the welfare state has resulted in high levels of redistribution which contributes to less dramatic social differences and higher levels of equality when compared to other countries (Pedersen and Kuhnle 2020).

In addition to universal benefits, the Norwegian welfare state also uses means testing and social insurance. Social insurance is explicitly tied to previous income levels, and for means testing current income is a determining factor for access and level of benefits. In other words, access to welfare becomes dependent upon previous and current labour (Hatland 2019a). Beside universalism and equality, the "social democratic" type also promotes high levels of employment, something which is necessary to support the expensive welfare state (Esping-Andersen 1989). Because of this, the condition on job-seeking is becoming increasingly common within the welfare state. However, despite this, the Norwegian welfare state remains universal. Not because everyone gets the same benefits unconditional, but because everyone who is exposed to social risk is entitled to welfare benefits. This is also how the welfare state promotes equality by ensuring that inequalities are evened out through redistribution (Kildal and Kuhnle 2005).

**A trend of activation within the Norwegian welfare state**

For the last two decades a trend of activation within social policies has emerged (Pedersen and Kuhnle 2020). This influenced various reforms in the 1990s and continues to do so today (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019). One the bigger reforms was the establishment of the Labour and Welfare Organisation, or better known as NAV. Before NAV there was three separate organisations: municipality social assistance, the labour-market organisation, and the welfare organisation. However, because all these organisations focused on getting people employed, they were eventually merged over the course of 2007-2011. Now NAV exists as a single organisation with various programs, both at the national and the local level (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019, 125-126). The politics behind these reforms stems from the working-line strategy which came about in the 1990s. This strategy states that anyone who can work will work (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019, 105). The establishment of NAV is a result of reforms targeted at reducing the amount of people dependent on the welfare state through employment (NOU 2011:7, 97). Work incentives within the welfare state have since then become increasingly important.

Central to the activation strategy is the condition of active labour market participation attached to welfare benefits. The benefits are still generous, but with more control mechanisms attached to them, ensuring that the welfare state provides work incentives for those capable of employment (NOU 2011:7, 87-111). These control mechanisms are usually in the form of individualised plans and programs with obligatory participation. Most of the labour market politics focuses on individualised needs and actively uses work assessments to figure out what they are and how much follow up they will eventually need (NOU 2011:7, 88-98). Several programs also use the "individual placement and support" (IPS) method, which is seen as necessary when dealing with diverse groups and is an important part of the activation policies in Norway (Villa and Johansen 2019). This method is a cooperation between NAV and the health organisation, which helps support those who want to work but has phycological issues or suffers from addiction. Apart of this method many programs also use job specialists and individualised plans where the main goal is getting an ordinary job (NAV 2021). The activation strategy and work incentives therefore happen in the form of increased support and targeted program, which is supported by a generous welfare state.
However, while the activation trend has significantly influenced welfare reforms and helped increase the work conditions attached to benefit recipients, this is not a change in tradition for

Norway. Throughout recent history, welfare benefits have traditionally focused on activation with the goal of having high levels of employment. The trend does not break with previous traditions, rather it can be seen as a continuation of it (Halvorsen and Jensen 2004). Since universal coverage is expensive and because it is mostly financed by taxes it requires high levels of labour participation to support it (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019).

**The welfare state and immigration**

There are two central official public reports (that will now be referred to as NOUs) which discusses the relationship between the Norwegian welfare model and immigration policies. By looking at these two reposts, one can establish how the admission policies of immigrants are directly related to the Norwegian welfare model. An NOU from 2011 entitled "welfare and migration" expresses explicit concern of the sustainability of the welfare model considering the immigration trends (NOU 2011:7). Meanwhile an NOU from 2017 entitled "integration and trust" focuses on refugees and more specifically their relation to the welfare state as humanitarian immigrants (NOU 2017:2).

Concerning the sustainability of the welfare model and the immigration trends, the NOU from 2011 identifies four main challenges which are; refugees and family reunification migrants are at a disadvantage within the labour market and in need of qualification programs; labour migrants from EEA bringing new challenges and requirements of state intervention in order to support the stability of the labour market; the exportation of welfare benefits from EEA migrants; and migration bringing new areas of concern regarding follow-up, service and control for the public administration (NOU 2011:7, 9). At the core of these challenges lies the fear that migrants will become a burden on the welfare state and overtime undermine it. It is presented as both an issue of a security and an issue of integration. Central in this discussion is the costs and benefits of immigration, which is mostly seen in terms of how they can be a valuable resource for the labour market. Migrants are seen as wanted when they have skills that are desired and in demand (NOU 2011:7 2011). However, for a lot of migrants this is not case, especially regarding the Norwegian labour market which consists of a compressed wage structure and high qualification demands (Dølvik 2008).

The welfare state and the labour market are closely connected. Not only does the welfare model depend on high employment levels (Esping-Andersen 1989, 51-52),but the labour

market also plays an essential part in promoting equality. The Norwegian labour market together with the welfare state promotes low income inequality (OECD 2019) resulting in small wage differences (Løken, Stokke, and Nergaard 2013, 9). Beside the coordination of generous welfare benefits and a strong focus on employment Norway is also characterised by a high degree of union afflicted workers. Instead of having a national legislation on minimum wages the wage structure relies on collective bargaining. This structure has proven to work well in Norwegian context and has led to a compressed wage structure (Dølvik 2008). Additionally, the labour market is also heavily regulated by the state which ensures good working conditions. However, a consequence of this model is a highly skilled population with few available jobs for low-skilled workers. This issue is especially prevalent among immigrants who do not have relevant education or the necessary language skills to make them desirable on the labour market (OECD 2019). Because of this, the group poses challenges to the sustainability of the welfare state, to the wage structure and social inclusion (NOU 2011:7).

Since the welfare in Norway is built on the principles of universalism and equality, it is fairly generous, which makes Norway an attractive country for migrants (NOU 2011:7, 64-65). However, the welfare generosity is a form of investment and to sustain the high levels of benefits there needs to be a return on this investment in form of long-lasting participation, sometimes in the form of permanent residency and stable employment. Because of this there needs to be some form of exclusivity which is why the state reasons that there needs to be immigration control (NOU 2011:7, 11-12). Here we can see a clear relationship between restrictive immigration controls and generous welfare benefits, which forms a welfare state and migration dilemma where a generous welfare state cannot exist without restrictive border control. The sustainability of the welfare state thus becomes dependent on strict admission policies.

For this dilemma the NOU presents three main strategies to handle it. The first alternative is using general cutbacks on welfare and reducing its generosity. The second alternative is restricted access for welfare benefits based on citizenship status. The last alternative is an activation approach, which would mean going from passive labour markets policies towards more active once (NOU 2011:7, 9-10). All of these strategies were considered, but the end result was the activation strategy. The first two alternatives did not address the main challenges that were previously presented as they did not offer any solution for the

qualification issue or the overrepresentation in unemployment. They also contradict the main principles of the welfare state and could potentially lead to worse living conditions for vulnerable groups and the population as a whole. To best preserve the welfare model, the activation approach was considered the best solution (NOU 2011:7, 17-19), additionally it follows the previous activation trends within the welfare model and it is a path we continue on today (Halvorsen and Jensen 2004).

Regarding activation and the sustainability of the welfare state, the strategy also helps persevere the Norwegian labour market as well. Afterall, both of these models build on the principle of equality, which is why beside high levels of employment, having an inclusive labour market is important as well. It is not enough to get people into work. Up-skilling in combination with activation is an important strategy used to help protect the compressed wage structure, something which will in turn protect the welfare state. The alternative which the government wishes to avoid, is to lower wages, something that could potentially lead to a two-tier labour market and more drastic wage differences (NOU 2011:7, 87-111). Here we can see how the principles of the welfare state alongside the labour market model is focused on equality and protecting a high standard of living.

However, it is acknowledged that regardless of these strategies there will be an over representation of immigrants among low-skilled workers, at least in the case of refugees. Unlike other types of migrants, refugees' residency is not conditioned on work but rather humanitarian purposes. Because of this their entrance to Norway cannot be restricted based on skills. However, the welfare and immigration dilemma are still present (NOU 2017:2). While the fear of refugees becoming dependent on welfare benefits and not finding employment does not directly affect their residency, they are indirectly affected through activation strategies. It only means that the border control of refugees is not dependent on employment and skills, but rather their integration is centred on this. Additionally, because of generous welfare benefits taking in a fewer number of refugees is justified by the Norwegian state as it is more costly and requires several welfare benefits over longer time. Their integration journey is a form of investment (NOU 2017:2), but unlike labour migrants, it is not expected that the investment is returned, mostly because refugees are not seen resources for the labour market (13), and even with several activation policies there is still a limit to what they can do. Refugees overrepresenting low-wage work is not presented as an issue in of itself, it is even acknowledged by the government that this is unavoidable. Instead of focusing on national

interests it is refugees' wellbeing that is the main focus here. The governments primary solution for overrepresentation among low-skilled work is to have a highly redistributive welfare state and high intergenerational mobility through education, ensuring that this difference of income does not persist (NOU 2017:2, 19-21). As a result of these factors, refugees and other humanitarian immigrants' integration journey is mainly focused on employment.

Since the NOU in 2011 and 2017 the development within immigration, integration and welfare polices continues to follow the same path with much of the same concerns and challenges, as well as using an activation approach to address these. In a more recent report from the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI) it shows that much of the main challenges addressed in the NOUs is still prevalent today, especially issues regarding qualifications and a skill gap of migrants (mangfoldsdirektoratet 2021). The activation policies are continuously developing to better address these issues.

**Who are the migrants? Nationality**

Migrants consist of many diverse groups, and the integration between them varies. The previous definitions for immigrants and refugees presented in the theory section still stands, but there are as said, many different types of migrants within these definitions. By looking at admission policies and government documents concerning migration in Norway, I will present the different types of immigration there are in Norway, and how refugees' admission and resident status are when compared to other types of migrants. One notable divide is the one between non-EU and EU migrants (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019; Dustmann and Frattini 2011; Shutes 2016; Dalli 2019). The difference between the two groups stands out in Norwegian immigration policies as well. In Norway migrants are categorized as either Nordic, from EU/EFTA member countries, or from a third country. Each of these groups have different admission policies and access to rights, which leads to different challenges in the integration process (Norwegian Ministries 2020). The reason for this divide is mainly due to international agreements made with the emigrating countries, securing certain rights for specific migrants.

Concerning Eu migrants, the EEA agreement grants free movement between borders. This gives migrants considerably more rights as there are much less conditions put on their resident

status, and their admission policies are less strict compared to non-EU migrants or third country migrants as they are called. Migrants from third countries do not have free movement and their admission policies are therefore much stricter and heavily regulated. Their residency usually has more conditions attached to it as well. Immigrants from Nordic countries, on the other hand, has even fewer conditions compared to both groups. They do not need any form of resident permit to live or work in Norway (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 10). However, the group of Nordic immigrants is not much of interest to the thesis. EU migrants is also not as relevant for the thesis other than as a comparative perspective for refugees' immigration policies. What is interesting about EU migrants is how migrants' rights, including both conditions for resident status and admission policies, differs so significantly from non-EU migrants, and is therefore a helpful tool to highlight how rights and access to welfare are redistributed according to migrants' status.

**Conditions for residence**

The Immigration Act is what regulates the admission policies, conditions of residence and the ability to work in Norway (*Utlendingsloven* 2008). Looking at the laws that outlines the Immigration Act I can establish the general rules for residence in Norway.
According to paragraph 60 of the Immigration Act or as it is called in Norway "Utlendingsloven", first time residents are granted a temporary stay in Norway up to five years at most and at minimum one year. This permit allows them to move freely inside the country, grants the right to work and earn an income, permission to travel outside the country, and perhaps most importantly it establishes grounds for permanent residence (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §60).

Paragraph 62 of the "Utlendingsloven" states that an immigrant can apply for permanent residence after living in Norway for three years. For the application to be accepted, they need to fulfil some conditions; the migrant cannot have left Norway for more than 7 months; they still need to fulfil the original conditions upon their admission into Norway; they do not meet the requirements of expulsion; Norwegian language training and social studies have been competed; and the migrant has been self-supporting for the last 12 months (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §62).

As stated earlier, migrants from the EU, have the right of free mobility, and this impacts the conditions for admission and residence permit. Because of the EEA Agreement, EU migrants do not need a permit to stay or work in Norway, they only need to register with the police if they stay over three months (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 20). Paragraph 112 of "Utlendingsloven" goes further into detail on this, providing the conditions for staying more than 3 months in Norway, which can be granted under any of these conditions; being employed or running a business; providing services; having sufficient support to provide for themselves and possibly family, including health insurances that covers Norway; or being admitted at an educational institution with an educational purpose, while once again having health insurance. The law goes even further into detail of the first condition of employment under same paragraph. In the event of employment loss, the EU migrant can continue to stay as long as they fulfil any of these conditions; unemployed due to poor health or an accident; unwillingly unemployed after having paid work for more than one year and is now a registered job seeker; unwillingly lost their job after their contract expired in less than a year or they lost their job during the first 12 months; or they started a career oriented education that is based on their last job. Also, if 6 months have gone by since they became unemployed and can no longer financially support themselves, they are no longer allowed to stay in Norway as labour migrants (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §112).

For permanent residency paragraph 115 establishes that EU migrants who have stayed legally in Norway for continuously five years gets permanent residence. There are some exceptions for labour migrants who could get permanent residence even earlier under some conditions, which I will not get into as those details are not relevant (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §115). Non-EU migrants have stricter rules for gaining both temporary and permanent residence. While they must apply for permanent residence after five years, EU migrants gets it after that period regardless, with a few exceptions of course, and as long as their temporary stay was legal (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §115). Among the conditions what stands out the most is that non-EU migrants have to complete language training and social studies in addition to being self-supporting for the last 12 months (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §62). Their integration process is therefore more heavily regulated. The laws are focused on the non-EU immigrants remaining independent from the state at a much stricter level than for EU migrants. However, within the regulations for EU migrants, there are some restrictions in place which states that they too must be able to support themselves financially. In the case of unemployment, the law states that to keep their residency it must be involuntary and not permanent (*Utlendingsloven*

2008, §112). Additionally, the conditions for EU migrants are mostly centred around work, including several scenarios in case of unemployment, but as we can see (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§112 and 115), this is not the case for non-EU migrants. Their resident permit is much less work focused, and this is visible in the condition "they still need to fulfil the original conditions upon their admission into Norway" (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §62). This is not to say that non-EU migrants are not required to work, but rather the general layout of the resident permits do not assume that the migrants are either students or workers. This is something that will be discussed more in the next section as I get into the different typed of migrant categories beyond nationality. The conditions that have been discussed so far may also vary slightly with the different type of migration.

**Types of residence permits**

The previous section discussed how different agreements set different conditions for immigrating. However, different conditions for immigrating and access to rights in general, are not simply because of nationality. Migrants are also categorized by reason for migration in addition to intended length of stay. This plays an important role for what public services they get access to and shapes their integration process.

There are four general categorised based on the reason for migration, labour, family, protection and education. Within these categories again there are even more sub-categories, and all of these have different conditions of admission and stay (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 14-17).

*Labour migrants*

For EU migrants there is not any conditions on this beyond what has already been mentioned. However, this is not the case for non-EU migrants. In order to be given a resident permit based on labour, there are strict conditions that needs to be fulfilled. A general rule for labour migration is that both "work conditions and wage need to correspond with Norwegian workers in similar jobs" (Norwegian Ministeries 2020, 20-21; *Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§ 23-24). Beyond this, non-EU migrants must either be some form of a skilled worker, a newly graduate from a university in Norway, a student or a seasonal worker (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 20-21).

One can already see how the previous NOUs that were presented (NOU 2017:2 ; NOU 2011:7) corresponds with the admission policies, and how skilled migrants are presented as desirable and un-skilled migrants as undesirable. The admission policies in Norway are rather strict for non-EU migrants while being open to skilled workers, trying to attract them. Seasonal workers are the only category that is not skilled, and it does not grant permission to seek permanent residency (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 20-21). This shows clearly how the admission policies uses strict controls to protect the welfare state from low-skilled workers, who are more likely to depend on welfare benefits due to a more vulnerable position in the labour market. Norway is clearly in demands for high-skilled workers, and not those who are categorised as low-skilled workers.

*Family*

The family members of a migrant with residence permit (without restrictions) also have the right of residence. By family members the report prioritises spouses, cohabitants, unmarried children under the age of eighteen, or a parent of an unmarried child under the age of eighteen. For the permit to be granted the migrant staying in Norway must meet an income requirement, document that this requirement can be meet during the application time and they cannot be finically dependent on benefits from social services in the last 12 months (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 18). Again, we see that the conditions guards against potential "costs" on the welfare system and lays the groundwork for economic integration with the goal of independence from the state. However, there some important exceptions to these conditions. For people with refugee status the rules are a bit different if certain conditions are meet. Unlike others, migrants with residency based on protection can still apply for family reunification even without permanent residency (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§40 and 40a).
The immigration Act also gives more conditions beyond the once states above in certain situations. The migrant in Norway for whose family is seeking family resident permit, must have had four years of education or work in Norway. This applies for the migrants staying in Norway for either international protection, on humanitarian grounds or family ties However, this only falls under family establishment and not family reunification (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 18; *Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§40 and 40a).

Here again, the concern about the welfare state is reflected in the conditions or residency. One of the main challenges presented in the NOU from 2011 was about family reunification

migrants struggling in the labour market, which means they are more likely to need welfare benefits (NOU 2011:7). However, to prevent this, there are clear economic conditions placed on the conditions of residence.

*Protection*

In Norway a migrant can be granted protection on either humanitarian concerns or with refugee status. At arrival the migrants are placed in temporary reception facilitations, which is voluntary but at the same time a condition to receive financial support. Refugees and humanitarian migrants do have freedom of movement in Norway, but because a majority of them depend on financial assistance and public services, many migrants choose to settle in the municipality they were assigned. This is a condition in order to participate in the Introduction Act (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 37; NOU 2017:2).

The introduction Act was replaced in January 2021 by the Integration Act, which entailed some changes such as a more individual focused perspective, attempting to match the need of migrants. Those participating in the Integration Act is entitled to something called the introduction benefit, which varies in amount by certain conditions. The goal of Integration Act is as the name suggests, to get more refugees integrated into society, and the main tools to do so is through work. One of their main objectives is to focus on formal education and get more refugees qualified (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)).

There has been a concerning trend of increased employment rate for first few years only for it to taken a sharp turn and decrease from the next five to ten years. They identified one of the main challenges being the gap between the skills refugees possess and the demand in the labour market, the solution will therefore naturally be to improve their qualifications and get documented competence better suited for the Norwegian labour market (Norwegian Ministries, 51-52; NOU 2017:2). The introduction program therefore represents much of the activation strategy and how it has affected refugees. The influence of the welfare state and immigration dilemma which was presented earlier, therefore manifests among the integration strategies and as a condition for economic support, and is less about the legal right for residency in the case of refugees. So, while, there is a clear contrast between labour migrants and refugees, the same focus on employment exists. They both also differentiate between skill level in various ways, and when comparing the two, one can see how the welfare state is connected with the admission policies.

It is also important to note that not every migrant arriving for protection is granted residence permits. Because of Norway has a pre-determined number of refugees due to their resettlement quota, there is a difference in migrants arriving and those being accepted (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 36).

*Students*

This type of migrant is not really relevant for the thesis as they fall outside the main focus. However, both EU and non-EU migrants can apply for this permit as long as they are enrolled in a certified Norwegian university, and skilled workers from a third country can as well, as long as the education is relevant for their qualification (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 25).

**Why economic integration is central for migrants, especially in Norway**

The immigration laws in Norway demonstrates how central labour market participation is for immigration. This is reflected in the conditions of residency, for both EU-migrants as well as non-EU migrants. While Eu migrants' access is less restricted, for permanent residency both non-EU and EU labour migrants needs to be somewhat self-supported and employed in some capacity (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§62 and 115). For family reunification there is also several conditions on being-supporting (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 18). There is in other words clear laws in place to prevent migrants from becoming dependent on the welfare state. Beside protecting the welfare model there are also immigration laws in place to preserve the Norwegian labour market as it is. Regardless of nationality, migrants' employment needs to match the same wage levels as Norwegians (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§23 and 24). Since there is no set minimal wage limit, and the wage structure is mostly dependent on collective bargaining and trade unions, immigrants can pose a potential threat to the compressed wage structure (Dølvik 2008; NOU 2011:7). If migrants do not unionise and are willing to do the same job as natives for less pay, they can potentially undermine the wages and collective bargaining resulting in bigger wage differences and diluted labour market. To prevent this the immigration laws has a criterion of a standard of wages. Additionally, for non-EU migrants who do not have the freedom of movement, the type of labour migrants that are desired and allowed in are those who qualify as skilled workers (NOU 2011:7), demonstrating that the

labour market do not view low-skilled employment as desirable, but rather a burden on the welfare state.

Of course, these conditions that has been presented do vary depending on their migration status. Beside labour migrants there is also family reunification or family establishment migrants, and those seeking residency for protection (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 14-17). Unlike labour migrants their residency is not dependent on employment, but there are still laws in place to preserve the welfare state from them. For family migrants their family needs to be self-supporting and for the past 12 months to not be financially dependent of welfare benefits (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 18). For migrants seeking protection, it is not their residence status that is affected but rather their integration. Their integration is focused on them becoming economically independent in the future and becoming employed. While the government cannot condition refugees or humanitarian immigrants to participate in integration programs, to receive financial support they do need to enrol in them and participate (NOU 2017:2; Norwegian Ministries 2020, 37; Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)). The perseverance of the welfare state and the labour market structure within the immigration laws is therefore within the integration period for refugees.

Based on all of these conditions within the immigration laws, it shows how regardless of the type of migrant, activation remains a central part of their immigration, whether it is a condition for their citizenship status or a part of their integration period. Here it can be seen how the politics from the previous NOUs and characteristics from the Norwegian welfare model (NOU 2017:2 ; NOU 2011:7) has helped shape these laws, and essentially restricts immigrants access to Norway in several ways.

For refugees specifically it is how their integration is presented within both the NOUs and the immigration laws as mainly an economic matter, both as a way to preserve the welfare model and to better their well-being. In terms of the activation strategy and their integration programs qualification becomes a main point of focus. Because many refugees struggle to enter the labour market, and without lower wages, the best option according to the Norwegian government is to help them gain skills better suited for the labour market (NOU 2017:2). Therefore, within the immigration laws financial benefits are condition upon participation in integration programs. The overall goal and success of integration being seen as economically independent from the state, usually in the form of long-lasting employment (NOU 2017:2;

Norwegian Ministries 2020, 37; Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)). Economic integration is in other words key to their integration journey as well as their access to the welfare state.

**Integration as defined by the state**

As seen in the immigration law, between three and five years if there are no extenuated circumstances the immigrants can apply for permanent residency (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§60 and 62). The introduction law that focuses on the integration of refugees is also centred on the first two years. This is because within that period refugees are eligible to apply for the introduction program, which is the core focus of the introduction law (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)). Based on this, the defined period of integration, at least when the state interferes, is within the first five years. However, participating within the introduction program does not always end in employment nor a continuation of studies. Some go over to other qualification programs, or on welfare after it ends. The current goal of the introduction program is to get at least 70% of their participants into either work or education, but this goal has yet to be met. In 2019 they maned to get 66%, which following their goal is still moderately successful. However, this leaves behind a large group, who have yet to find work or enrol in school (mangfoldsdirektoratet 2021). Then there has also been a trend of first increased employment during the first years and then a sharp decline for the following years (Norwegian Ministries, 51-52; NOU 2017:2). The introduction law states that one of its main purposes is to get immigrants economically independent and help them find employment (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)). By this standard, for many refugees the integration period can go on for much longer than the first five years, especially considering the challenges and trends connected to the labour market and immigration (Norwegian Ministries, 51-52; NOU 2017:2 ; mangfoldsdirektoratet 2021).

Most previous studies on activation policies and immigration within Scandinavia focus on the introduction program and programs targeting newly arrived immigrants (Breidahl 2017; Djuve and Kavli 2018; Hagelund 2020). However, since the integration process can for many refugees last beyond the first few years, it is relevant to look at other programs in addition to the introduction one. This will give a much better insight over the actual integration journey many refugees take.

**The state structures**

Before looking at the different qualification programs and the welfare benefits most relevant to refugees' integration, the state structure must be clarified. What has been looked at so far is policies mostly at the national level. It is at this level that the laws and the general outline of the integration strategies are made. However, it is at the local level these laws and strategies are implemented and executed. The municipality has the role of service providers within the state (Fiva, Hagen, and Sørensen 2017; Fimreite and Grindheim 2010). Local government is an essential part of the Norwegian welfare state (Baldersheim, Rose, and Sandberg 2020). For the implementation of welfare services they get some flexibility so that the programs best suit the local needs (Fiva, Hagen, and Sørensen 2017; Fimreite and Grindheim 2010).

How the municipalities are structured varies. There are two types of NAV offices; one explicitly tied to the municipality and one that is under the direct responsibility of the state. Which office is responsible for the welfare programs depends on the municipalities size and available resources. Smaller municipalities usually have a larger NAV state sector. Meanwhile bigger municipalities like Bergen, often have a smaller state sector (Hatland and Kuhnle 2019). However, previous studies suggest that how NAV programs being a part of either the state or the municipality has little significance (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020), 15). Then there is also the regional level of government which consists of the county municipality. While they are not directly involved in the introduction program, as this is the municipalities responsibility, their role in immigrants' integration has expanded with the new introduction law. The county municipality has always had some involvement as they are in charge of high schools and vocational training (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020), 22-25), but now their involvement also includes the settlement, guidance, and follow-up of municipalities qualification of newly arrived immigrants (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020), 37-48).

Then there is also the different agencies and ministries involved at all levels and across all institutions. They are all responsible for different areas of expertise (Fimreite and Grindheim 2010), and many are involved in the integration of immigrants. It can therefore be complicated to understand all the details of the state structures as there are many involved areas across different levels, all with their own responsibility. However, what is most relevant for the thesis is the role the municipality serve within the welfare state, and this will be the core focus going forward.

## Welfare benefits

As was previously shown, refugees' access to economic support in the beginning relies on certain conditions such as the participation within the introduction program and staying in an assigned municipality (NOU 2017:2; Norwegian Ministries 2020, 37; Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)). However, even with the introduction program many refugees still struggle in the labour market and becomes dependent on welfare benefits as a form of income (Norwegian Ministries, 51-52; NOU 2017:2 ; mangfoldsdirektoratet 2021). Therefore, it is necessary to look at not only qualification programs, but also the alternatives, which are unemployment and social assistance. Access to welfare can for many refugees be crucial, especially in the beginning and therefore it is important to look at both these benefits, since they are for those who cannot support themselves through work. Additionally, while the welfare regime establishes some of the core values, it does not account for how benefit schemes have different conditions attached to them (Knotz et al. 2022). These benefits are also good examples of how activation of passive labour market policies within the Norwegian welfare state focuses on employment as essential for peoples' well-being.

### *Unemployment benefits*

Unemployment benefits is referred to "dagpenger" in Norwegians. If someone has become unemployed, they can apply for this benefit. The main objective behind this financial assistance is to give a partial coverage of income loss (*Folketrygdloven* 1997, §4-1). This type of unemployment benefit falls under the "insurance based" kind (Picot 2012, 32).
The amount is calculated based on previous income, including not just wages, but also the additional support of either sickness benefits, care benefits, trainings money, maternity leave or parental support. The amount can also be reduced if the beneficent has partial support from other welfare schemes which has not been financed by the previous job such as the once mentioned above. However, the total amount of the financial support cannot be reduced below the minimum amount of benefit. If the beneficent has full support from other welfare schemes, again not financed by their previous job, they will have to choose between the benefits (*Folketrygdloven* 1997, §§4-1 – 4-28).

There are also conditions for receiving unemployment benefits beyond the loss of work, which I will now get into. They need to be an active job seeking (*Dagpengeforskriften* 1998, §§4-1 – 4-5), documenting this regularly, and not be entitled to other financial support from

NAV. However, they can still be eligible for other financial social help from NAV. The unemployment benefits is meant to be an aid for getting employed again, which is why the requirement to be an active job seeker is rather strict. This entails being open to accept any paid work, anywhere in Norway, be it part-time or full-time, and actively participate in the labour market. There are a few exceptions for this of course, such as if someone is dependent on their care and they are unable to both move and work full-time (*Folketrygdloven* 1997, §§4-1 – 4-28).

There are also some exceptions for immigrants. They are entitled to unemployment benefits is they participate in the Introduction programme and attends language training and social classes. However, unemployment benefits given under the condition of language training and social classes has a limited time period of one year (*Dagpengeforskriften* 1998, §4-3a).

*Social assistance*

As mentioned in the theory section, in addition to unemployment benefits there is also social assistance. While being unemployed is not a condition for applying, it is still a relevant benefit, not only unemployed people, but everyone who struggles to support themselves. It may be used instead of unemployment benefits and is not conditioned on previous income, which may be more relevant for those struggling to enter the labour market (Picot 2012, 33-34).

The social assistance, or "Sosialhjelp" as it is called in Norway, is meant as temporary support (*Dagpengeforskriften* 1998, §1), covering necessary expenses such as living expenses (*Sosialtjenesteloven* 2009, §§17-19). While everyone can apply and has the right to get an individual review (*Sosialtjenesteloven* 2009, §28) of their application, it is meant to be a last resort. NAV encourages the applicants to first seek help elsewhere before considering social assistance. Additionally, those with costly living expenses and low income can also apply for housing (*Sosialtjenesteloven* 2009, §§15 and 27).

While there are very few conditions for social assistance, beyond having no other viable option and being a legal residence, NAV can still place additional conditions. Because it is meant as temporary support, the main goal is to get the beneficent independent, and to do this they often include conditions of activity. These conditions can entail either the need to reduce expenses, increase their income, or participate in society, often through any of these tools;

guidance, job seeking, courses which are relevant for work, training, employment activity, or education. Either way, the applications are reviewed in consideration for the individual's situation, though are some guidance rules for the amount according to either the municipals or national guidelines (*Dagpengeforskriften* 1998, §§20-20a).

**Qualification programs**

Since unemployment benefits in Norway are dependent on previous employment, not many refugees qualify. Many ends up on social assistance instead (Dokken 2015). However, because social assistance is meant as a temporary means, there are often conditions on job seeking to receive economic support (*Dagpengeforskriften* 1998, §§20-20a). This in combination with the integration laws who also condition economic support on participation in the introduction program (NOU 2017:2; Norwegian Ministries 2020, 37; Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)), which is a qualification program, shows how access to the welfare state for many refugees rely on qualification programs. Their integration process is therefore usually through enrolments in various qualification programs.

*The introduction program*

In 2003-2004 Norway implemented the introduction program to strengthen immigrants' participation within the labour market and in society, which would then help them become economically independent. Immigrants labour market participation has long been on the political agenda, and it continues to be central for immigration policies. Before the introduction program refugees and immigrants relied on social assistance alone, and for many refugees this was often their only means of income. There was also a lack of participation which persisted after settlement and a clear trend of immigrants struggling to enter the labour market emerged. There was no coordinated effort targeted towards newly arrived immigrants addressing these issues. While the proposed bill of the first introduction program in Norway stated that it was mainly immigrant's responsibility to find work, the state was still responsible for making the labour market accessible to them. This meant more targeted resources at newly arrived immigrants, mostly for refugees, humanitarian immigrants and their families through family reification resident permits (Ot.prp. nr. 28 (2002-2003)).
Since then, the introduction program has been through several changes. Recently the legal framework of the program which was previously known as the "introduksjonsloven" was

replaced by the “integregingsoven” as of 01.01.2021 (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020), 7)). One of the biggest changes in this reform is a more individualised focus. This meant a much more targeted mapping of competence which would then decide the necessary length of the program (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)). Within the new law there is now different recommended lengths of the program depending on the immigrants’ level of education. In the previous law the length of program was less dependent on educational levels and more on the amount of Norwegian and social studies lessons (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020), 79-87).

There are several factors which has motivated this change. One of them being the large gap in results in the municipalities. Both the quality of the program and whether or not they are equipped to offer it full time varies significantly. Additionally, there has been several reports made on the quality of the program which not only supports these findings, but after controlling for this difference they have found other areas of concern (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020), 15-17). While the introduction program has always had an individualised approach, it has not always been successful. More notably, immigrants with little to no education, often being illiterate, has struggled in the program which has failed to address their needs. Immigrants with higher education as well, has felt that the program has not been properly facilitated to them. Several participants with higher education prefer a shorter and more accelerated program instead. The new changes made to the law has addressed these issues in particular (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)).

While the “intergasjonsloven” concerns immigrants at large, it is mostly focused on asylum seekers and humanitarian immigrants. The introduction program is targeted towards asylum seekers, refugees, humanitarian immigrants and their families. In fact, asylum seekers living at the asylum-centre have a duty to attend the program if they are over 18 (Integreringsloven (2020), §5). There are some exceptions for those with extenuated circumstances, but the majority must attend. The program is also only for newcomers which means those who have lived in Norway for less than two years (Integreringsloven (2020), §§8-9).

The overall goal of the introduction program and the “integrasjonsloven” is to integrate immigrants into Norwegian society and help them become economically independent (*Integreringsloven* 2020, §1). The introduction program can therefore be categorised as a qualification program which will help immigrants either get work or an education. To do this the state is responsible for providing them with the necessary tools to learn the language,

understand Norwegian culture and society (*Integreringsloven* 2020, §§26-37), give them formal skills and a lasting attachment to work (*Integreringsloven* 2020, §11). It is also stated within the law the important role municipalities take on. They are the main actors responsible for providing the immigrants with these tools and offer those eligible the chance to participate in the introduction program. There are clear guidelines of what the municipalities needs to offer, such as mapping of skills, an individualised program, a limited length of the program with the possibility of extension, and certain lessons (*Integreringsloven* 2020, §3). Outside these guidelines there are some room for municipalities to act autonomously so they can adapt the program to the local environment (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020), 40-44).

Economic support is an important part of the introduction program as well, especially as newly arrived immigrants usually have limited resources in addition to an uncertain and unstable position within the labour market (NOU 2011:7 ; NOU 2017:2). For refugees and asylum seekers the cost of migration is usually high leaving them with little resources to support themselves migration (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen 2017). All participants in the program have the right to receive economic support. This support is twice the size of the basic amount, which is used in welfare benefits, but it can be reduced if the participant is also entitled to other benefits such as unemployment benefits, health benefits or parental leave. If the participants are under the age of 25, the economic support will also be reduced, either by 1/3 or 2/3 depending on whether they live with their parents. It can also be reduced if the participants have paid work during their time at the program. However, personal income and capital outside of paid work and welfare benefits does not affect the amount (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020), 106-110).

*The qualification program from NAV*

The qualification program is an important tool for combating poverty and inequality, especially for those struggling to enter the labour market. The program is for everybody within working age who struggles to find work and has significantly limited means of support. To participate NAV conducts an evaluation and assess their ability to work. This assessment is a crucial part of the program as they use an individual based approach, and this gives the participants the necessary follow-up and help they need (NAV 2013 ). The program is especially suited those who have previously received other forms of benefits without it leading to work (Bergen kommune 2022f).

The program is full time and lasts the whole year just like any other fulltime job. The total length of the program is usually one year, but for some it can be extended, depending on their needs. Everyone who participates receives qualification support which consist of double the amount of the basic support income level. Participation is also mandatory, and the rules for absence are similar to a fulltime job with economic sanctions for unapproved leave. While the program is individually suited according to their needs, the measures are targeted towards labour participation and the activities are work related (Bergen kommune 2022f).

According to previous research the results of this program has been somewhat successful across a broad group of people, regardless of age and citizenship. By comparing previous result of the program, they find a positive development with increased employment and a decreased amount of people dependent on benefits. However, the reason for this development is uncertain, as it could be due to the program, the labour market, or the recruited participants. Nevertheless, they regard the program as a valuable tool to decrease people depending on social assistance and other types of benefits. Additionally, over the years the program has seen an increase in immigrants participating, a majority of whom is reliant on social assistance. The program is available for migrants as long as they have a long-lasting attachment to Norway and legal residency. The length of residency among the participants varies, with both those who have lived in Norway for quite sometime and newcomers straight out of the introduction program (Lima and Furuberg 2018).

*«Jobbsjansen» a qualification program for migrant women*

"Jobbsjansen" is another qualification program which uses an individual based approach, but one targeting immigrant women exclusively (Bergen kommune 2022d) This group is overrepresented among the unemployed and underqualified. Even within the introduction program and the qualification program from NAV, immigrant women remain among the unemployed at a disproportionately higher rate than men (NOU 2011:7). The program therefore targets women, and the goal is to get them either employed or in an education program, which will further help them get a more permanent attachment to the labour market (Bergen kommune 2022d).

However, not everyone can apply and there are several criteria attached to "Jobbsjansen" beyond being an immigrant woman. Their background is limited to people from either Asia, Afrika, or Latin-Amerika, and the participants cannot be recipients of other social benefits

such as social assistance. They can, however, be the recipients of transitional benefits or dependent on welfare as a result of Covid-19 (Høgestøl, Lerfaldet, and Kristoffersen 2021). For educational background, everyone can apply (Bergen kommune 2022d), however the majority of participants across Norway, in addition to Bergen, has higher education (Høgestøl, Lerfaldet, and Kristoffersen 2021). Regardless of educational and immigration background, the common factor is having little or no work experience in Norway. Additionally, the participants must have lived in Norway for at least a year, have permanent residency or some form of permanent attachment to Norway, and it must be at least two years after the introduction program took place. There is also a language requirement where they need to be at a level where they no longer depend on an interpreter. The program has a rather long waiting list in Bergen, which limits who can participate (Bergen kommune 2022d).

The program is fulltime and participating in internships is a crucial part of it. Of course, for women with the caregiver role there are childcare options they can use (Bergen kommune 2022d). There is also economic support in form of a minimum amount, which can be reduced with unapproved absence (Integrering og mangfoldsdirektoratet 2022). Unlike other qualification programs, this is project based and financing depends on previous results, but these have generally been positive and across Norway the success rate has been high. In 2020 the results were as high as 70% of participants either entered in work or education after the program. However, the participants within the program is in a relatively good place regarding the labour market, because while there are clear challenges for migrant women, these women have higher education and are not necessarily dependent on the welfare state, which gives them an advantage (Høgestøl, Lerfaldet, and Kristoffersen 2021).

*"Ny sjanse" workrelated measures for immigrants*

The "Ny Sjanse" program was the previous name for "Jobbsjansen" which changed names in 2013, however, it is now two semi-separate programs (Høgestøl, Lerfaldet, and Kristoffersen 2021). "Ny Sjanse» is a municipality measure (Bergen kommune 2022c). Unlike "Jobbsjansen" it has a wider range, which includes all immigrants who fulfil the conditions of for the qualification program in NAV. Unlike the qualification program the work-related activities and lessons are more adjusted to immigrants needs. They have a partnership with the Nygår school where they receive Norwegian lessons and several other measures directed at language learning. Internships are also a crucial part of the program, and they communicate regularly with people in relevant fields, mostly in cleaning, caregiving, and childcare. There is

also a food program where they work in a café to gain experience within that industry which also gives the participants the opportunity to introduce their culture while gaining valuable qualifications (Bergen kommune 2021).

*NorA*

NorA which stands for Norwegian and Employment is another qualification program (Bergen kommune 2022b), but one that is unique for Bergen (Interview 3). Because of a long waiting list among qualification programs such as "Jobbsjansen" and "Ny Sjanse" NorA was established to work alongside with them. They also function as a transition for participants in the introduction program, leading to either work or other forms of welfare benefits. However, the program is not just reserved for participants in the introduction program (Interview 3), it is for all immigrants struggling to find work. Like most qualification programs targeting immigrants it consists of work-related activities in combination with language lessons. They also have additional measures such a walk and talk which socialises and helps language training, lessons on health, and teachings of data and computer programs (Bergen kommune 2022b). For most this is meant to increase the chance of getting employment, but for some it is also about getting to know the systems, and whether they are qualified for other programs or benefits. For some it can transition to healthcare benefits for example (Interview 3).

*Civil society*

Civil society is an important part of the Norwegian welfare state, and it reflects much of the same ideals. The large voluntary sector is based on the idea of a shared responsibility (Kuhnle and Ervik 2019, 53-55). Without being a direct part of the state, civil society fulfils a lot of the roles and responsibility that helps promote the welfare state. Outside being a channel for political purposes, it is a social arena that integrate and includes people (Grindheim, Heidar, and Strøm 2017, 278-282). For refugees this can be helpful in their integration, and a place to learn Norwegian and social norms outside of the state and on completely voluntary terms. While most volunteer organisations are not focus on employment or qualification, they can still help refugees integrate in the labour market. Networking and socialisation are important for work and so is knowing the norms and culture. One of the indicators for integration, as described by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDI), is "everyday integration", something which measures inclusion in society through social and political areas (mangfoldsdirektoratet 2021, 42-58). The voluntary sector can therefore in many ways help contribute to the integration of refugees.

In Bergen there are voluntary services targeting immigrants. One of them being the “Robin Hood Huset”, a place for those struggling economically. There they have a range of activities that focuses on socialisation, help finding work, and language lessons. All of these are relevant for refugees, and it helps their integration in numerous ways (Robin Hood Huset 2022). Then there is “flyktningsguiden”, a program within “Røde Kross”, that is specifically for refugees. The program connects a volunteer with a refugee and helps them establish a connection. This is meant to help guide the refugees through Norwegian society by providing them with a network, a place to freely socialise, and practice their Norwegian (Røde Kors 2022). Both options help provide refugees with a service that is separate from the state, but still involved with the welfare state. They provide an alternative which is optional and more social when compared to the qualification programs and can be a valuable resource in their integration journey.

## 6. Interview analysis

To go more into depth for each of the qualification programs presented above, I interviewed 6 people, five om who are employed within the municipality and one from the volunteer sector. The interviews are semi-structed which means that the questions were adapted during each interview. However, there were some structure and preparation. In appendix 2 I provide an overview of the interview guide. There is a range of topics which I used for each interview as can be seen in appendix 2.

In the analysis these topics has been used to compare the answers. The next section is therefore divided into different topics where I present the data. The data in question, being the interviews, which was originally conducted in Norwegian. I transcribed the data word for word at first, then I sorted the answers according to each category and in the process both anonymous and translated it into English. What is presented below is the highlights of the data. I paraphrase what has been said in the interviews and have constructed it as a singular text to show how it all connects.

*The role of the welfare state in the integration of migrants, specifically refugees*

When asked about the welfare states role in integration, there was a large consensus among the interviews that it plays an important role (Interview 5 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 6 ; Interview 1), and that there is a big support system in the welfare state for refugees (Interview 3). The role of the introduction program was especially pointed out as important for refugees' integration within the welfare state (Interview 1 ; Interview 5).

There was also a larger discussion regarding the length of refugees' integration. When talking about the introduction program and the integration law, it sets up the first five years in Norway as the length of integration, and it is therefore at this stage that the state gives economic support for this. However, some refugees might still need a little more time than the first few years to integrate (Interview 1).

Seeing as how integration can take longer for some, I also wanted to discuss how successful integration is not only defined but also measured. During one interview it was brought forward how the directorate of integration and diversity has two ways of measuring this, one right after the introduction program has ended and then again one year later. The problem

with measuring on the last day of the integration program is that these results are not very representative, and when compared to the results of one year later, the success rate has usually improved significantly, and these results are therefore much more accurate. However, what both measures fail to include in education is the people who enroll in primary school after the program has ended. For while, primary education might be taken for granted in Norway, there are still several refugees who has no formal education, so this is a category that is missing among those who enroll in further education (Interview 6). So, while the length of the integration process according to laws and some institutions are at five years, for many it will take much longer and it will be an ongoing process. This is also what makes it so hard to define what successful integration is, and there is also the question of when you stop being an immigrant and become a Norwegian citizen, not just in terms of laws, but also regarding how included they are in society. The length often varies quite a bit between refugees.

What is concerning, however, are the refugees who after the introduction program goes over to social assistance. For some this might be because, as stated, they simply need more time, maybe they are still not sufficient in Norwegian yet. This can become an issue if they do not get the follow-up they need and if they do not continue to enroll in qualification programs. The main concern is not the length they might take, but rather if they are still moving forward (Interview 6).

While there are many factors for what constitutes integration, employment is perhaps the most important one (Interview 4). To be included in society means to work, and if you are unemployed, it is much easier to be isolated from society. The workplace is an important part of integration, not just in terms of income, but also as in terms of socialisation. The workplace is a social arena where immigrants get to interact with Norwegian colleagues and learn the language that way. However, this of course depends on the workplace, for some being employed might not do much in terms of integration if they have little contact with others for example (Interview 4).

In terms of integration within the welfare state, employment is an important goal, which makes activation a central tool for integration. However, while most expressed a positive attitude concerning the support of the welfare state, one interview also expressed some concerns regarding the generosity of the benefits. They talked about how economic support could almost be a resting place rather than providing incentives to find work, and that the

process and all the programs within the welfare state simply take too long (Interview 5). In some scenarios the welfare state can therefore help enable the integration process and actually slow it down. There is therefore many ways to interpret the integration process and what constitutes success and failure, and different opinions as to how long it takes.

*Activation within the welfare state*

When asked more specifically about the activation within the welfare state and why work was important for refugees, many answered the same. There was a large consensus that work is key for integration. They talked about how work in terms of becoming financially independent was important and how it helps refugees feel included and motivated. Additionally, many also discussed the workplace as a social arena where people build networks, make friends, learn the language, and the culture. This way of learning is different from the classroom and to be able to actually participate and interact with others at work is often more efficient, which is why it is so important (Interview 1 ; Interview 6 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5). Most programs therefore focus on qualification with the goal of employment in mind. The introduction program for example is structured similar to work because of this (Interview 6).

Additionally, the activation within the welfare state also makes employment important in terms of what benefits are available to the refugees. The qualification program NorA in addition to helping their participants into the labour market, they also help them transition to other benefits, such as unemployment or disability. For refugees who have health problems they might struggle to get benefits because they have not "tried" enough in the labour market, so it is important to get their participation down on paper for this. There is also some participants who should be on unemployment but are not, because they do not know how to properly advocate for themselves, and this is something that NorA works with. For some refugees the goal is not always employment, but labour market participation is still often necessary (Interview 3).

While there is a lot of programs and economic support in terms of helping refugees find employment, something that has been missing from NAV is the possibility of a start-up business. The rules NAV have makes this difficult for immigrants, and this is something that could in turn help more immigrants get employed, since an immigrant run businesses might be more inclined to help (Interview 3).

The interviews essentially back up a lot the previous research and discussion on employment in terms of integration, and how necessary it is. This is also reflected in the integration and immigration laws (*Integreringsloven* 2020; *Utlendingsloven* 2008) and show how most programs working for integration centres around employment.

*Economic independence, what does it mean?*

While a majority of refugees' integration centres around work, what constitutes successful integration is more than just employment. The type of job matters too (Interview 1 ; Interview 3). The best outcome that most qualification programs hope to achieve is a job which can finically support them. So, a part time job where they still rely on social assistance is not really a good end result. There is also the matter of the participants goal too, and if the job matches both what they want and their needs (Interview 1). The qualification programs therefore also care about what type of work they find, and if it is secure and long-lasting. Economic independent is important in terms of living standards as well and refugees' overall well-being. If refugees make significantly less than everyone else, it can make them feel like an outsider in society (Interview 4).

*The participants*

In all the interviews, there is an agreement that refugees consist of a rather diverse group (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). However, there are some common challenges despite different educational background and skill levels such as a language barrier, and a lack of Norwegian experience and references (Interview 1). This is mainly what most of the qualification programs deal with "NySjanse" is one of these qualification programs, and while they are not exclusively for women, they do focus on that particular group and a majority of their participants consist of them. Most of the measures they use are best suited for women, many of whom do not have formal education. One of these measures are "food and talk" (mat og prat), which gives women a chance to use their informal skills and previous experience, something which could later lead to work within the food industry (Interview 1). This is a pretty good example of how a program meets the challenges of refugees such as a lack of formal qualifications, and how it adapts to a specific group, in this case women with an immigrant background.

While "NySjanse" do work with a broad group of immigrants, many of them are refugees and have previously been in the introduction program. However, it varies how long it has been

since the introduction program. Some participants have been in Norway for the past 20 years without getting into the labour market for example, though the majority has not been in Norway for long. Additionally, because "NySjanse" has a long wait list, the transition between the programs can take up to half a year. Some also have participated in other programs and used several other measures for integration (Interview 1). All of this further demonstrates how the integration process can take time, sometimes due to wait list, or because they make use of several programs.

The other program "Jobb Sjansen" while it does not exclude refugees it less relevant for them. Apparently, most of the participants are often married to labour migrants, and not necessary refugees. This is because the program focuses on stay-at-home women who are economically independent from the state and have a support system. What is interesting however, is how this program is also rather popular. Recently there was a decision nationwide that the program would be open to those who receive a little economic support from NAV, as long as they were not qualified for the qualification program in NAV. However, when the interviewee talked about this it came forth that this was not really relevant for Bergen municipality, while they did expect some participants from NAV now, this change was mostly for smaller municipalities who struggled with finding participants (Interview 1). Based on both the long waiting list and how popular "Jobb Sjansen" is, it is obvious how integration programs in Bergen have a high demand.

"NorA" has many of the same type of participants as "NySjanse" and "Jobb Sjansen". Some has for example stayed in Norway for a long time, and there is a large diversity among language skills and in educational background as well. However, unlike the other programs, "NorA" also includes those on social assistance in addition to people who enrol in the qualification program in NAV. They work with a bigger group, and much more diverse. Some of these people who do not qualify for the qualification program because of too good workability but are still on social assistance can therefore participate in this program (Interview 3). For the qualification program, struggling with the language is for example not a good enough reason to qualify for the program (Interview 4).

Additionally, "NorA" also has a closer cooperation with the introduction program where they serve as the next step in their integration journey. They actively recruit participants who are about to end their time in the introduction program (Interview 3). This helps refugees have a

much smoother transition and avoids the waiting list and any unnecessary extra step trough NAV. The program therefore works well together with both “Jobb Sjansen” and “NySjanse” being both a good alternative and something new as well.

Though “NorA” does work as the next step after the introduction program, some may also go over to the qualification program in NAV. It varies if refugees go straight over to the qualification program or if there are years in between them. Now with the new laws, the introduction program is supposed to be extended upon need, but some will probably go straight over to social assistance or other programs (Interview 4). The refugees might need more than what the introduction program offers.

As one can see by these interviews the integration journey can look very different depending on the individual. For some it lasts longer than the initial introduction program, and these additional qualification programs also seem rather popular, and many refugees do take part in them. All of this supports that the integration process often lasts beyond the introduction program, and that it is a long-term process in many ways. But what does this have to say for the introduction program?

When talking about the introduction program with an employee at the centre, they expressed how most participants find the program with structured days and similarities to work positive. Most refugees are also in their productive age and are rather resourceful, especially considering that they manged to make it to Norway. A majority of the participants are under 30, which makes it easier for them to find work and restart their lives. However, because the program takes in everyone within working age, there is going to be some who are not ready for the program and get less out of it. Those above 50 too, they might have a harder time restarting their lives, and struggle more at the labour market. Essentially, while most wants employment, it takes time to get qualifications and obtain the long-lasting and more secure jobs (Interview 6).

*Challenges of integration and for qualification programs*

Some of the challenges refugees face has already been mentioned. There is a strong agreement that language and a lack of qualification is one of the bigger issues, in addition to cultural differences. These are the most common challenges that all refugees face, and this includes all educational backgrounds (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ;

Interview 5 ; Interview 6). While refugees with higher education do have an easier time learning the language (Interview 1), are more used to having structured days (Interview 6), and often has some work experience, they also struggle in the Norwegian labour market. Beside language, the education refugees have may not fit into the labour market, such as a degree in literature or law is probably not very useful because it is too different from the Norwegian degree (Interview 1). Having Norwegian references is also key in the labour market (Interview 3). Even with previous formal education and experience, refugees will probably still struggle in the labour market, and need additional support regardless (Interview 1).

Regarding cultural differences, there are a lot of challenges beside knowing how a work day functions (Interview 6 ; Interview 1), there are a lot of small things as well that can potentially make a big impact. One example an interviewee used was about teeth and dental health. They talked about how some had poor dental health and how this could make a negative first impression in a job interview (Interview 4). Therefore, it is important for refugees to get an introduction into Norwegian society, considering how small cultural differences such as this can impact their job search later on. However, the main focus of most qualification program remains on employment, and some of these cultural differences are not always obvious. Beside cultural differences, there is also the issue of racisms and discrimination. For example, having a different and foreign name can also negatively impact the job search (Interview 2). Also, while there are a lot of good cooperation with companies and employers regarding job training for refugees (Interview 1 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 5), one interviewee talked about the issue of discrimination among them. Sometimes refugees do get discriminated and stereotyped. Some employers actively look for refugees of a certain background, and from a certain country because of these stereotypes. There are also those employers who are only looking for free labour without considering hiring them after the job training is over (Interview 5). Therefore it is the job of those working within qualification programs to consider whether or not the job training can lead to long-term employment, and how inclusive the workplace is (Interview 1). Despite this, it is still a difficult topic to talk about for those working in the municipality, especially openly, even if it is a big part of the refugees integration (Interview 6).

There is also the issue of when discrimination happens both ways. One example that was brought up is how immigrants from countries were women have less rights, can treat female

case workers badly and fail to take them seriously (Interview 5). This can make it much more difficult to help them as the qualification programs builds on a cooperation between the participants and the case workers. Issues such as these often do not get talked about openly, because it is not allowed to group people together like that and make generalisations. There cannot be negative talk about the cultural differences, and this makes it much harder to handle cases such as this (Interview 5). Racism and discrimination going unmentioned can be a challenge for both refugees and those working within the qualification program.

Most of the challenges that has been discussed so far have been general for most refugees, however, they are a diverse group. Women for example tend to have a bigger care burden and if they are alone in taking care of their children, this can limit their options within the labour market. For them it can be more difficult to be flexible and take on late night shifts and work in the weekends when kindergarten and school is closed (Interview 1). The there is also different needs according to age, and old people have a more difficult time restarting their lives compared to younger people, and because of this their integration can take longer, and they might need more time in the introduction program (Interview 6). Then there is also those with health problems who might not handle certain jobs and unable to work full-time (Interview 1 ; Interview 3). Beside the more common challenges, there is also a lot of different needs among refugees, which the qualification programs need to consider.

*An individualised approach*

Since the groups of refugees are rather diverse in several aspects all qualification programs have an individualistic approach. Within this approach, mapping of competence is key. All the programs do this (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). They try and find out the participants previous experience, education, needs, and wishes, and based on this they make a plan together. This plan builds on the participants qualifications, and creates a program which best suits their needs (Interview 1 ; Interview 3). This approach also actively involves the participants, and meets them on their premisses, including them in the process (Interview 3). There is a strong consensus that this is necessary for many reasons, and successful integration depends on getting to know the participants and their particular challenges (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6).

However, this approach is not without any challenges, there is several administrative issues attached to this. While close follow-ups are necessary, many case workers within NAV simply have too many cases and there is just too little capacity (Interview 4). As a result NAV usually have long waiting periods (Interview 1), which can make a close follow-up for each participant difficult. One interviewee also mentioned how case workers having a background in social sciences can be an advantage. While they are all at NAV dedicated to their job and wants to help, a degree within social science can help better communicate with the participants and give them a better understanding of the group as a whole (Interview 4). However, not everyone agrees. In another interview, they talked about how having diverse backgrounds could be beneficial, and how it has led to more creative solutions and valuable perspectives among the workers (Interview 5). Regardless, case workers and employees within the qualification programs does play an important role, and the communication with the participants are crucial, especially with the individualistic approach.

Communication within the introduction program can be rather challenging, as it is the first step of the integration process. There is this idea that refugees need to start the introduction program as early as possible and begin with a mapping of competence right at the start. This is to get the refugees established in Norway quicker and make the transition into the labour market easier later on (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020), 34-35). However, while there are good intentions for this, it does not always work that well in practice. For some refugees the mapping of competence and career counselling might be a bit drastic and not necessarily ideal. While many of those who have higher education is more used to this, and probably has gone through something similar. For those without much formal education this can be more overwhelming. Additionally, many refugees have gone through a lot, and are probably not in the right place for career counselling. There is this dilemma of trying to get things done as soon as possible, but in doing so it wastes resources with little return on those who simply are not ready (Interview 6). Also, to get the best mapping of competence the employers need to know the participants well, which takes time. Without knowing much about the group they are counselling, the communication might consist of more superficial questions (Interview 5). Having an individualised approach is clearly necessary for the qualification of refugees, but as the interviews reveals, there are many challenges attached to this method. The issues are mostly administrative in regard to capacity and the methods rely heavily on communication, which can be challenge in of itself. So, while there are many good ideas and reasons for

mapping of competence and career counselling on an individual level, the actual implementation of it is difficult.

*Cooperation with other programs and within the municipality*

Within all the qualification programs, job training is central, which makes the cooperation between them and employers very important. Finding the right job that matches with the participants is a key measure (Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6 ; Interview 1). However, before they find the right job and can stand on their own, some refugees go through several programs (Interview 1). To get a better understanding of how the programmes all connect and which role they play in refugees' integration, it is necessary to ask about the cooperation between them.

The integration journey for refugees starts with the introduction program. They have a close cooperation with NAV, who also have a responsibility for finding employment and helping refugees adjust to society. The introduction program has a team together with NAV where they work with the participants and try to match them with an employer, using measures which NAV has available such as wage subsidy. Over the years this cooperation has gotten much stronger with clearer responsibility. They have managed to work in good routines so that regardless of whether the NAV office is a part of the state or the municipality they have the same services available, so no matter which part of NAV is responsible. Based on previous research, it shows that whether the introduction program is a part of the state or the municipality it has little significance, what matters more is the procedures in place, agreements, how the program is formed, and the type of contact with the participants (Interview 6).

For the refugees who do not find employment after the introduction program and still needs additional help, they will ideally go over to some other program. For when this is necessary, it is important to have a smooth transition. The danger with a long a waiting time is that the refugees end up falling between the two programs. However, the introduction program does give an advantage for the refugees even if they do not succeed the first time around. Still, there are some administrative challenges. Within the NAV system for example, they might change case workers more often since they have more cases, which can feel like unnecessary stops for the participants with little flow between the programs. This is something which they are working on to overcome (Interview 6). NorA is usually the next step in their integration

process. For refugees in the introduction program, they act as a transition counsellor and recruit participants while they are still in the introduction program. This gives the refugees a much smoother transition and reduce the waiting time. The reason that NorA has these transition counsellors is because there are many who get stuck in NAV, and maybe end up on social assistance with little follow-up. Having this position which helps communicate and coordinate between two parts of Bergen municipality can help refugees continue the plan they established in the introduction program (Interview 3).

NorA is not just for refugees within the introduction program, as mentioned, they also work with participants in the qualification programs and those on social assistance. Therefore, they also cooperate with other programs as well (Interview 3). “Ny Sjanse” works parallelly with NorA (Interview 1) and do in some ways compete for the same participants (Interview 3). There is not much direct cooperation between the two programs, but they might share information regarding employment deals and some participants, but for the most part it is NAV who decides where a participant should apply (Interview 3) and there is limited communication between the two programs (Interview 5).

There are a lot of similarities between NorA and “NySjanse” as both are qualification programs for immigrants. While NAV has some language courses and means targeting immigrant groups, their programs usually have a required language level, meanwhile NorA and “NySjanse” do not (Interview 1 ; Interview 3). However, if the language levels are very low, the participants might not get much out of the programs (Interview 1). They also both use a lot of the same measures such as job training, fulltime programs, group talks, language training, and so on (Interview 1 ; Interview 3). However, there are also some notable differences. “NySjanse” is more focused on women (Interview 1), and they do not have the same transition counsellor position as NorA does. NorA helps ease the capacity at “NySjanse” by being an alternative for many, and unlike “NySjanse” they do not have a waitlist and works much broader (Interview 3).

All the program therefore works together in some capacity and each have their role in the integration journey of refugees, and often many ends up going to more than one program. However, as it shows there are some administrative challenges when a refugee transitions between these programs. One interview went much more into depth about this. They talked more about how the plans in the introduction programs gives the refugees a good head start,

but sometimes after the introduction program ends, they fail to follow up on this plan. There is a lot of bureaucracy and very complex administrations within the municipality. Because there are so many qualification programs spread across several agencies and institutions it creates an unnecessary complex system. It makes it difficult to communicate with other programs, and it is unclear who has what responsibility. Even some employees find this difficult, so one cannot expect the participants understand it either. This slows down the transition between programs and creates unnecessary waiting time for the refugees. The employees also do too much reporting because of how the systems are build, and often there are many separate data systems which leads to the employees having to write the same reports several times. This takes away the time they could have potentially spent talking to the participants, which is key in these programs due to the individualistic approach they all have. Also when there is little communication and longer waiting time between the qualification programs, many refugees needs to go through an unnecessary amount of mapping of competence. While all programs acknowledge this as an essential part of their approach, it fails to understand that for some, they have already gone through this numerous of times. Instead of building on an already existing plan and oversight of qualifications, the refugees ends up being extensively questioned about their life experience, which can be draining for many (Interview 5). So, while the state is working on making the integration of refugees much more efficient and invest a lot of resources into the programs, there are still many administrative challenges standing in the way.

*What makes Bergen municipality distinct?*

To better understand how representative Bergen is for other municipalities, I asked questions about how distinct Bergen from an institutional perspective. Because of the sample of interviewees, I have not included much about local politics of Bergen municipality as this seemed to be outside the reach of their expertise when asked about it.

As stated earlier in the case study section “NySjanse” used to be project based but became a part of the municipality programs. This is because there was a request after the initial project was over that there should be a specific program in Bergen that would focus on strengthening the qualifications of immigrants. Since then it has proven to be rather popular, often having a waiting period (Interview 1). Based on this one can see that Bergen have a strong need for qualification programs specific to immigrants. When asking another interviewee if something about Bergen stood out, they could not think of anything in particular. Rather this demand for

qualification programs seems to be because Bergen is a big municipality with a large immigrant population, and most programs and services exists in other large municipalises such as Oslo, Stavanger, and Trondheim. Having the integration programs as a part of Bergen municipality's responsibility rather than NAV state, is also because Bergen is large (Interview 4).

One thing that does stand out however, is NorA. This program started in 2019 and only exists in Bergen at this time (Interview 3). One of the reasons for this, was as a response for the long waiting list over at "NySjanse", who was overwhelmed and led to many refugees waiting for longer periods, and many of them started in the qualification program while waiting because they needed the income in form of welfare benefits. Additionally, NorA has also taken on the responsibility of those on social assistance who do not qualify for the qualification program. They also help refugees transition between different measures and programs, and therefore interacts more across agencies and institutions. This does make Bergen somewhat distinct. However, when I asked if this could be relevant for other municipalises, it was a clear yes, and especially considering how NorA aids in the coordination between institutions, which is clearly needed (Interview 5).

While the focus is on Bergen, the county municipality is still relevant, especially concerning their cooperation with Bergen. The county municipality, Vestlandet as it is called, has always had a responsibility for career qualifications, high school, and adult education, but the focus has been pretty general. What has changed with the new introduction laws is that now they are more directly cooperating with the introduction program and is specifically focusing on refugees. This leaves room for Vestlandet to know more about the participants, the refugees, and take more direct responsibility, something which has previously been lacking. This relationship between the county municipality and the municipality and their responsibility sharing of refugees is something which is more specific to Bergen. Still it shows that a common responsibility with the county municipality regarding the employment and education of refugees is needed (Interview 6).

Based on the interviews, Bergen is representative in several ways, especially for big municipalities with a large immigrant population. Additionally, what makes Bergen distinct, can also be of use for other cases, especially regarding NorA and the role of the county municipality. NorA plays a unique role within refugees' integration which other programs do

not. For other municipality who struggle with much of the same challenges, which does not seem district to Bergen, especially the administrative issues, the program might of interest. For smaller municipalities Bergen is probably less relevant as they are usually structured differently and might have other more pressing challenges because of it.

*The new integration law*

It is not long ago since the new integration law got implemented, so there is still a lot of uncertainty around it. It is too early to draw any conclusions yet (Interview 3 ; Interview 6). However, there is some scepticism on shortening the length of the program for those with higher education. Refugees with higher education do have an advantage over those with lower education, but they still need help integrating. They still face a language barrier (Interview 3 ; Interview 6), and lack knowledge and qualifications suited for the Norwegian labour market. It takes time to build a network and gain work experience which suits their previous education. Shortening the program can therefore lead to refugees with higher education entering the labour market too soon, and end up with jobs they are overqualified for which could have gone to those with lower education instead (Interview 3). The length which is now recommended for those with higher education is also too short to learn Norwegian, but on the other side the introduction program is only meant to give the refugees a good start. Still, such a short program is probably not long enough to get the refugees independent with either a job or further education (Interview 6). As it currently stands, those with higher education might struggle with the new laws, but it is still too early to tell if that will be the case or not and whether the change is for the better or not. Some also expressed that it could be a positive change (Interview 5). However, while all this talk about development method is nice, NAV is a huge bureaucracy and it will take time to get everything adapted to the new laws (Interview 3). There is still a lot of organisation that must be done, and currently the introduction centre is operating under two laws, which can be challenging. For now it seems to be going well, but it is still very early (Interview 6).

*Ukrainian refugees*

Due to the war in Ukraine, there is now a new wave of refugees arriving in Norway. When asked about it, the interviewees said pretty much the same, that it was still too early to know much about it (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). In a best case scenario the war will end, and the Ukrainian refugees could go back home (Interview 2). For now the focus is on housing for these refugees, but if the war persists,

qualification programs such as NorA might be relevant for them (Interview 3). “NySjanse” might also be a fit for some, but the interviewee also added that for many of them the program will not be relevant. This is because many from Ukraine has higher education, previous experience, and knows English so it is expected that they will be included quickly (Interview 1). Unlike NorA, they only accept participants who can qualify for the qualification program in NAV, and struggling with the language alone is not enough reason to participate (Interview 1 ; Interview 4). Additionally, if Ukrainian refugees remains in Norway and eventually enters the labour market, they will probably have easier time being included because of their ethnicity. One interviewer brought forward how a lot of refugees often experience racisms when seeking employment, and how this would not be an issue for the Ukrainians. It could also present a challenge if they end up competing for the same jobs as other refugees as they are likely to be prioritised (Interview 5).

*Voluntary organisation*

The volunteer organisations have several programs and means for immigrants and refugees, but unlike the qualification programs they are not as focused on employment. Since the volunteer section is separate from the government they are not obliged to focus on economic independence and employment when working with integration (Interview 2). However, while they are a separate entity from the government, civil society is still an important part of welfare (Grindheim, Heidar, and Strøm 2017, 278-282). The strong culture of volunteerism in Norway does in many ways increase distribution across society as those with time and resources volunteer to help their community. Civil society as an area for integration provides the refugees with options the government is not able to offer them. In the interview with someone employed in civil society, they emphasised how volunteer organisations are a social arena. For unlike the state program, they are optional, and their volunteers are there not because they get paid but because they want to be there. This makes it easier for refugees to make friends, especially Norwegian friends. The social environment also makes it easier for the volunteers to get to know the participants at a more personal level. For the participants this also makes it easier for them to ask questions about the norms and culture which may seem insignificant or simply obvious to Norwegians. It is therefore a good support system to have outside the government, as it provides a space to learn the language and about Norwegian society outside a classroom. Many of the programs therefore use volunteer organisations as refer some of their participants to them (Interview 2).

*Labour market access*

So far there has been a lot of discussions regarding the qualification programs. However, as mentioned work is a central goal within each of these programs, and job training is a key aspect of it. But how do these qualification programs help refugee find work, what are some of the means they use? This has already been brought up is several of the previous categories, but to get a clearer picture, I will now summarise some of it.

Cooperation between employers and the programs helps establish job trainings for the participants. However, the job training cannot be just at any workplace. What they are looking for is the so called "whole package" with an inclusive work environment, follow-up, and a chance for employment after the training has ended. Additionally, it must suit the participant. While the end goal is employment, the participants can have their own goals for job training. For some it is their first training, and for them it is more important that they are well received, feel included, and get a lot of support and follow-up. Meanwhile, for those who have had training before, it is more important to be placed where there is a high demand for workers (Interview 1). Employment is very individualised, it has to suit the skills and wishes of the participants (Interview 3). Without properly knowing the participant and what they are best suited for there is a chance they could end up in the "wrong" job (Interview 5), which has less of a chance for lasting, and is probably not good for their well-being. This is why it is necessary to have an individualised focus and build on a mapping of competence.

Also, the process of finding a stable job can take time. Sometimes the job training does not lead to employment, and instead it helps refugees figure out what they need to work on. It is not necessary to know Norwegian perfectly to participate, often one can learn better through working. Usually early in the process the goals of job training is about getting expertise and learning more about the culture and the language. Not everyone succeeds after the introduction program ends. After all the introduction program is just that, an introduction, and for many getting integrated can take much longer. It is a challenge getting a long-lasting attachment in a secure job. It is a process which will take time, and therefore the introduction program focuses more on formal qualifications. The introduction program is much like the integration process, long-term. It can take a few years before the refugees are integrated and knows the language enough to realise their potential.

## 7. Discussion

*The institutional barriers*

In the discussion of refugees' lower socioeconomic status, most focus on a lack of skills and qualifications as the main explanation, but as one can see, there are additional institutional barriers as theorised by Hooijer and Picot. In their study, they found that a lack of access to both the welfare state and the labour market could also be used to explain refugees' socioeconomic status in Europe (Hooijer and Picot 2015). This is also further supported by Ruhs' research indicating that immigrants also face restrictions within their admission policies (Ruhs 2013). Within Europe, there is a clear relationship between the welfare state, the labour market, and admission policies in the way that they all restrict immigrants' rights. These institutional barriers are also present in Norway as well.

The fact that an in-depth case study shows the same relationship without any significant deviation from the theory shows strong support for the previous studies and theories. What this indicates is that there are institutional barriers in place that affects immigrants' integration and restricts their rights. However, the restriction of immigrants' rights is not equal for all migrants. Immigrants are, after all, a diverse group, and there are many different types. Whether the migrants are from the EEA area or from what is labelled a third country affects their access to rights and services (Norwegian Ministries 2020). So does the reason for their migration. More importantly, whether a migrant is categorised as skilled or low-skilled also affects their rights. Ruhs shows how admission policies within high-income countries are open to skilled migrants and closed off to those who are not (Ruhs 2013). This is very much the case with Norway.

Within the immigration laws of Norway, there are different conditions attached to the types of migrants. There is also clear evidence of restrictive policies based on whether an immigrant is categorised as skilled or low-skilled. This is most evident among labour migrants. For non-EU labour immigrants, the borders are open to those who are "high-skilled" and heavily restricted for the ones that are "low-skilled". Then there are EU migrants who are protected by the EEA agreement and have the freedom of movement, preventing their admission from being restricted based on skill level (Norwegian Ministries 2020; *Utlendingsloven* 2008). However, the immigration laws do limit their access to both the welfare state and the labour market. If they become a burden on the welfare state, which can be understood as completely dependent

without the likelihood of becoming employed within the near future, they can lose their right to stay (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§62 and 115). Additionally, to protect the Norwegian labour market model and the wage structure, there are laws in place that states that any employment must correspond to a Norwegian standard of wages within the sector (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§23-34). This is to prevent social dumping and low-skilled labour migrants, both non-EU and EU ones, from lowering the wages and causing a larger wage gap between high- and low-income earners (NOU 2011:7).

This perfectly reflects Ruhs's argument about the relationship between openness to migration and their access to rights (Ruhs 2013). The rights of labour migrants in Norway are differentiated depending on who is perceived as skilled. Low-skilled migrants from a third country, which is understood in this context as non-EU migrants, do not get residency based on work (Norwegian Ministries 2020, 20-21). Then there are also the restrictions on wages and limited welfare access (*Utlendingsloven* 2008). While these restrictions are for all types of labour migrants, it is lower-skilled migrants who are vulnerable to social risks and likely to accept lower wages due to a lack of demand within the labour market (Emmenegger and Careja 2012).

This shows that the countries in Europe operate on the same logic when it comes to immigration policies regardless of welfare regime. However, this is not to say welfare models are insignificant. Rather it is more accurate to say that regardless of welfare type, it is likely that within Europe, there will be institutional barriers in place for immigrants at the national level. How these barriers operate, on the other hand, is quite dependent on welfare regimes. How the institutional barriers differentiate rights will, in all probability, vary depending on the different types of the labour market and welfare model. The case of Norway reflects much of the theories presented so far, demonstrating how important it is to study the effects welfare can have on immigration. To only look at how immigration affects welfare is quite limiting, and it fails to understand that for immigrants, the welfare state is an important area for their integration. How these institutional barriers include or exclude immigrants within the welfare state will have a significant impact on their overall integration. Especially considering how immigrants have, on average, a lower socioeconomic status that cannot be fully explained due to skills and qualifications (Hooijer and Picot 2015).

*Refugees compared to labour migrants*

It has already been discussed how these institutional barriers function differently for refugees when compared to labour migrants. While the relationship between admission policies, the welfare state, and the labour market is still present. It affects refugees' admission less. Instead, it is their integration which is mostly targeted (NOU 2017:2; Norwegian Ministries 2020, 37; Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)). Refugees are often perceived as low-skilled (Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020), which according to the logic of the admission policies, makes them undesirable. This, together with the Norwegian labour market model, is not an ideal combination. As explained by the institutional barriers, having a highly regulated labour market makes it difficult for those with low skills to enter, and this, in turn, makes them more dependent on welfare (Hooijer and Picot 2015; Emmenegger and Careja 2012). This creates incentives for the government to limit refugees' access. However, at the same time, this contradicts the values of the social democratic model. As a response, the government centres refugees' integration on activation, meaning that the welfare benefits available to them are mostly qualification programs (NOU 2011:7 ; NOU 2017:2). The other available option for refugees is social assistance, which can sometimes be conditioned on labour market participation (*Sosialtjenesteloven* 2009). The institutional barriers, therefore, push refugees' integration towards finding employment and condition much of their access to benefits on labour market participation as a result.

*The limitations of the welfare regime's explanatory power*

While the activation strategy for refugees' integration and the social democratic model is closely connected (NOU 2011:7 ; NOU 2017:2), the welfare regime alone is not sufficient to explain how integration happens within the welfare state. This is probably best exemplified within the previous comparisons of the Scandinavian countries: Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. Despite having the same welfare model and similar labour markets, they differ in their immigration policies. Because of this, these countries are commonly used as comparative case studies, and many try to explain why they deviate. Denmark, in particular, stands out with very strict immigration policies (Hagelund 2020; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018). Unlike Norway, which uses an activation strategy to handle the challenges of refugees (NOU 2011:7 ; NOU 2017:2), Denmark has gone in a different direction. To preserve their welfare model, they restrict refugees' access to welfare benefits based on their migration status in addition to increased conditions for work (Hagelund 2020; Kramer, Sampson Thierry, and van Hooren 2018).

This just goes to show that there are other explanations beyond the institutional barriers that can help explain immigration policies. This is not unexpected as ideal types and models have limited explanatory power. The welfare model is helpful in terms of how the institutional barriers unfold within a Norwegian context and explains some of the groundwork for the inclusion of refugees through the activation strategy. However, to get a complete understanding of how the Norwegian welfare state promotes the integration of refugees through activation, I have looked beyond regime types. A central part of the thesis is, therefore, the interviews I have conducted, where I show more in detail how the qualification programs promote integration through various institutions. But before I can get into that, I need to establish what successful integration is.

*What is successful integration?*

So far, this topic has already been explored quite a bit. In the theory section, it was established how there are various ways of interpreting just what successful integration is and, more specifically, how it should be measured. It is also important to note that while integration consists of several aspects beyond what has been discussed within this thesis, economic integration is one of the more central aspects, and more importantly, it is often the main concern of the government. This can be seen several times over in the case study as economic independence and employment are the main goals of any integration program within the state. It is also included within the integration law showing how this is both a concern for and a responsibility of the state (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)).

In the theory section, two main approaches for measuring economic integration were introduced: By either comparing the mean income levels between refugees and natives (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Wang and Naveed 2019), or by measuring income levels between natives and refugees within a similar skillset (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). There is no clear answer for which is best. Both approaches have merit to them. When comparing the mean income level, it becomes clear that immigrants have, on average, a lower socioeconomic status than natives. However, the reason for this difference is less obvious. By comparing immigrants to natives with a similar skillset, the difference between the two becomes much smaller, showing that immigrants' lower socioeconomic status is not due to wage discrimination but rather their occupational choices (Siebers and van Gastel 2015; Dustmann and Frattini 2011).

The question then becomes; how do these measures fit into a Norwegian context? Since most of the refugees' integration happens through the welfare state, the social democratic model will be used as a base for this discussion. The model lays down the framework of what values economic integration should promote.

Seeing as equality is a central value within the welfare model (Esping-Andersen 1989), this needs to be considered. Refugees overrepresenting lower-income work can undermine equality and thus present an issue for integration. A group within society who have, on average, a worse socioeconomic standpoint can be isolating in many ways (Interview 4). This can be socially excluding as they will not have access to the same goods and services as everyone else. Additionally, as a group, they will have fewer resources available to mobilise and organise compared to others. Essentially, having big economic differences between social groups can be stigmatising.

Besides less access to goods and services, there is also the issue of access to the labour market. Because of how the labour market in Norway is structured and highly regulated with compressed wages, it is harder for people with low skills to find work (Dølvik 2008; OECD 2019; Løken, Stokke, and Nergaard 2013). Refugees, therefore, usually end up as "outsiders" within the labour market, taking on more unstable and less well-paid jobs. While I cannot call the labour market in Norway dualised, the type of occupations refugees end up in are similar to so-called "outsider" work (Emmenegger and Careja 2012). Even after going through the qualification programs, refugees are still overrepresented within lower-paid occupations. It can be argued that this is a failure of economic integration. When using the first measure, comparing average income, it accounts for equality between the social groups and shows how a big gap in resources can negatively impact integration.

This issue is clearly a concern for labour market within Norway. Besides the issue of the sustainability of the welfare state, the Norwegian government is also concerned about immigration as a challenge to social inclusion (NOU 2011:7). Having a large group categorised as "outsiders" are not only a burden on welfare, but it can lead to larger socioeconomic differences when the welfare state can no longer afford to cover the social risks this leads to. Both the labour market and the welfare model are built on the principle of equality, which is why besides high levels of employment, having an inclusive labour market

is just as important. This is, in part, why admissions for lower-skilled migrants are so restrictive in Norway.

To have an inclusive labour market getting people into work is not enough. The type of work available to refugees matters too. Up-skilling in combination with activation is used to help protect the compressed wage structure and the sustainability of the welfare state. This is why the integration programs at large focus on qualifying refugees. The alternative that the government wishes to avoid is to lower wages and create a two-tier labour market with drastic wage differences (NOU 2011:7, 87-111). One can see how the principles of the welfare state alongside the labour market are focused on equality and how this, in turn, protects a high standard of living.

However, looking back at the immigration laws, the goal of integration is clearly economic independence and employment (*Integreringsloven* 2020). It does not say that work has to lead to similar socioeconomic levels between natives and refugees. It is acknowledged that despite the activation strategy, refugees will, in all likeliness, still be overrepresented among low-skilled workers. However, unlike labour migrants, this is not presented as an issue. Therefore, refugees having lower socioeconomic levels are not interpreted as a failure of integration (NOU 2017:2 2017). As long the job pays enough to support them and provide them with basic needs, it meets the standards of integration.

As a result of this view, the qualification programs in Bergen have a specific goal for employment (Bergen Kommune 2022e, 2022a, 2022c, 2022d). The way that they help refugees find work is simply not about being employed. Their focus is on finding long-lasting and stable work, which falls within the refugees' wishes and their qualifications. Once again, one can see that economic integration extends beyond finding a job (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). The individualised focus all of the qualification program uses just goes to show that successful integration is something that balances refugees' well-being, their needs, wishes, and finally, economic independence. Defining successful integration this way falls more in line with the second approach for measuring integration. Interestingly enough, this does not contradict the social democratic, in fact, it even encourages equality. The government's primary solution for overrepresentation among low-skilled workers is to have a highly redistributive welfare state and high intergenerational mobility through education, ensuring that this difference in income does not

persist (NOU 2017:2, 19-21). The compressed wage structure also ensures that despite having lower-paid work, there are no dramatic wage differences between refugees and natives (Løken, Stokke, and Nergaard 2013; Dølvik 2008; OECD 2019). However, this strategy relies on a combination of restrictive admission policies and a generous welfare state. The refugees within lower-paid work must therefore stay a minority according to this strategy.

*Integration beyond work*

The qualification programs for immigrants mainly focus on the economic aspects of integration, namely finding employment (Interview 6). However, as discussed, integration can mean many things. It is not just about economically independent. The social aspects of integration are not really a main concern for the qualification programs, though it is not completely absent either. The individualised perspective and some means give the immigrants room to socialise and, more importantly, it provides them with additional support (Interview 1 ; Interview 6 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5). However, the type of socialisation they get, through work or the programs, is not necessarily the same as making friends, as their participation is obligatory (Interview 2).

Many of the qualification programs cooperate with voluntary organisations and can refer their participants to their services. Unlike the qualification programs, they are more focused on the social aspects of integration. They provide an environment that is more open to socialisation and a place for immigrants to talk more freely. Since their participation is optional, it makes it easier to establish friendly connections, especially since the volunteers are also there because they want to be and not because they get paid to do so. For many refugees' this can be a welcoming alternative to their otherwise controlled day (Interview 2).

While the qualification programs are generous and provide refugees with a lot of resources to find work (Interview 3), for some refugees, this can feel less helpful and more controlling. It has already been talked about how the welfare state is not just a tool for integration but also a means to control immigration. As a result of activation, several welfare benefits require labour market participation (Pedersen and Kuhnle 2020). Many refugees do not have many options of income, and to rely on welfare benefits, they must often participate in qualification programs. These programs rely on obligatory participation, and with close follow-up, it can feel a bit controlling. It can be argued that this is an issue and that strict control leads to demotivation, a feeling of distrust, and stigmatising, which would be socially isolating.

However, whether this is the case or not is hard to argue based on the analysis I have conducted. Whether it is right to put such conditions on refugees' income and integration is another discussion to have. To properly answer this, one would have to include refugees' perspectives and talk to them about their experiences, something I have not done. Though, I can mention that in one interview, they talked about how conditions are not only necessary but also quite motivating (Interview 5). However, to what extent this is true is beyond the study's ability to answer. The refugees' perspective is necessary, and it shows less about how integration happens within the institutions and more about the actual effect of these programs. Nevertheless, what I can conclude is that the welfare state does provide a big support system for refugees and that voluntarism is a big part of it.

*Integration as a process*

It has already been established that while the integration period is initially the first five years according to the immigration laws (*Utlendingsloven* 2008, §§60 and 62), for many refugees' it can take much longer. When considering successful integration, as was established in the previous section, one can see that many refugees fail to meet this standard after the introduction program ends. In an interview, it was brought forward the various ways of measuring integration; the day after the introduction program ends and then one year later. They talked about how the latter measure is much more accurate because it takes time to find work and adjust (Interview 6). This further supports the claim that integration is something that happens over time and needs to be measured as such.

The ideal goal of the introduction program is to get 70% of its participants into either work or education, measured one year after the program ends, but this has still not been achieved (mangfoldsdirektoratet 2021). With the new changes (Prop. 89 L (2019–2020)), it is uncertain if the success rate will improve or not, but it is interesting that they set the goal at 70% and not something closer to 100%. Why is that? Based on the interview analysis, I would argue that there are various reasons for this. One is that the introduction program includes everyone, and since many refugees depend on it for income, they might participate even if they are not ready. The government tries to have the refugees enter the program as early as possible, and for some, this is not ideal. For others, the reason for not finding work might be more personal, and maybe they require other forms of support besides finding employment. For example, some might have health issues that stand in their way. However, in the interviews, this was

not presented as a huge issue since some might need additional help. Rather, what is concerning is when refugees go over to social assistance without any follow-up (Interview 6).

When considering the goal of integration as economic independence and stable employment, many of the interviewees talked about how this is a process which happens over the long term. Many refugees do not succeed the first time around for various reasons and enrol in multiple programs over the years (Interview 1 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 6), showing that integration goes beyond the introduction program. It is also important to note that, while the programs' overall goal is employment, sometimes the programs, rather than finding work, they instead help them transition over to other benefits or additional programs (Interview 3).

*The activation strategy as both including and excluding of refugees*

For some refugees getting access to health benefits, unemployment, or the qualification program in NAV may be more important than finding work. This is something that the program "NorA" works with. What is special about their program is that they have transition counsellors who are more focused on immigrants' transition between welfare benefits, programs, and institutions. Sometimes the refugees may use their program to get enough work experience to qualify for additional benefits, which is why they need a transition counsellor (Interview 3). In cases such as these, the activation within the welfare state restricts access for the refugees in question. For them, the activation strategy and work-focused welfare model are more exclusive rather than inclusive. This is also the case for those who enter the introduction program despite not being ready yet. Even though the integration journey through the welfare state is centred around employment, for some, this might delay their integration and require additional follow-up as a result (Interview 6).

However, despite this, employment remains important to many refugees. In the interviews, they express an overall positive attitude toward having a work-focused integration (Interview 1 ; Interview 6 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5). For Bergen, which has a large immigrant population, the qualification programs are quite popular (Interview 1 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4). For instance, "NySjanse" has previously had a long waiting list. To help with the capacity, an additional program, "NorA", was established (Interview 1 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 5). So, there is no question that there is a need for qualification programs specifically targeting immigrants. For these refugees who are ready and motivated to work, the activation within the welfare state may be more inclusive. The fact is, these qualification

programs are rather generous. The introduction program, while important, is just one of several support systems for integration. Additionally, while the programs do condition active participation, they also use an individualised approach with close follow-up (Bergen Kommune 2022e, 2022a, 2022c, 2022d). This method allows the programs to adapt to the refugees' specific needs and living situations. So, there is a large focus on being inclusive across a diverse group of people.

*Individualised follow-up*

There are many obvious reasons why the qualification programs use an individualised approach. The most obvious is that their participants consist of very diverse groups. The refugees who enrol in these programs come from different educational backgrounds and have lived in Norway for various lengths of time (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). To best meet the refugees' needs, which can vary quite significantly, it is important to adapt the program.

Women, for example, often have a bigger care burden and might need a program that accommodates them. Some also arrive from countries where women were excluded from education and, as a result, have more informal skills. This is also, in part why both "JobbSjansen" and "NySjansen" focuses on women exclusively (Interview 1), acknowledging that they have specific challenges connected to their gender. Then there are also differences in educational attainments between the participants, regardless of gender. This affects the type of work they would be suited for and how they learn the language and other skills as well (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). So, within a group of refugees, there will naturally be different challenges in addition to the more common ones. They all have different life experiences and needs which must be addressed in order to help them integrate. Not to mention, the wishes and motivations of the participants play a big role in the program, which they incorporate into their plan (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6).

As the integration process happens over the long term, it is useful to look beyond the introduction program and the first few years. As previously shown, integration is a multidimensional concept which can happen in various ways. After all, finding employment is not just about skills and qualifications. It is also about knowing the culture and being aware of how Norwegian society operates (Interview 6 ; Interview 1). Two examples which were used

by the interviewees were dental hygiene (Interview 4) and showing up to work on time (Interview 6), demonstrating how minor yet important cultural differences can impact refugees' job search.

Integration is also a two-way process (Kelm, Lasek, and Brzozowski 2019). Finding employers for job training who meets the refugees' needs, such as providing follow-up and additional support, is an important part of the qualification program. Not to mention, finding an inclusive and welcoming work environment can be crucial for many refugees trying to enter the labour market, especially early on (Interview 1 ; Interview 3). Issues such as discrimination are therefore relevant as they can be an additional barrier to refugees' integration.

It is necessary for the qualification programs to follow-up closely as the integration process can be complicated (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). While the programs do primarily focus on employment, with the goal of economic independence, they do so in regard to their participants' well-being (Interview 6 ; Interview 4). For many refugees finding employment do require additional support. Things such as discrimination, cultural differences, and work environment may not seem like an obvious issues at first, but they are quite significant for refugees' integration. Having a close follow-up and getting to know the participants makes such problems easier to handle and more visible.

There are, however challenges to this approach. It is a rather ambitious strategy. Having such close follow-up and individually adapted programs requires high capacity from their workers. It is not easy to get to know the participants, and it can take time which some caseworkers do not have (Interview 4 ; Interview 1).

The method also relies on communication between the participants and the employees, which is not always easy, especially with a language barrier. Then there is the issue of when discrimination comes from the participants. Some are from countries where women have fewer rights, and this makes it hard for them to respect a female employee, even if she is trying to help. However, there is not a place for employees within the municipality to discuss such issues openly. The problem with this is that it is important to discuss cultural differences within the integration process, but at the same time, the municipality wants to avoid the

generalisation of any group (Interview 5). Nevertheless, this makes it harder to communicate with the participants.

*Challenges more specific for higher educated refugees*

It has been established that the refugees participating in the qualification programs come from diverse backgrounds, which include educational attainments (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). This is despite the fact that the biggest issue for refugees' integration is a lack of qualifications and skills, a fact that has been established by both previous studies and a document analysis done by me. This does not mean that they are wrong. Even the interviews support the fact that lack of skills and qualifications are one of the main challenges (Interview 1 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). What it means is that there are additional issues. One of them is difficulty in getting previous education and work experiences acknowledged in Norway. This is not an uncommon problem in Europe either (Bailey and Mulder 2017). Sometimes the education simply does not fit into Norway, such as a law or literature degree in a foreign language and society, making it less relevant in a country (Interview 1). Other times, foreign experiences are not well regarded. Within the qualification programs, there is an emphasis on attaining Norwegian references (Interview 3), showing how important this is for finding work and how well less regarded foreign experience can be for some employers.

However, even if their education is less relevant in the labour market, it does not mean it is insignificant. Many of the interviews do bring forth some of the benefits higher education brings (Interview 1 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 6). For instance, they are more used to structured days and making their own decisions (Interview 6). In that capacity, it is easier for them to plan and possibly adapt much quicker to the labour market. They also have an easier time learning the language compared to those with lower or no education (Interview 1).

At the same time, language skills are a common issue among refugees, and even if it is easier, it can still be a challenge. Many people with higher education still struggle to learn Norwegian, even after the introduction program (Interview 6). One issue that an interviewee brought up was how immigrants with higher education who still struggle with finding work often do not qualify for the qualification program in NAV, which also happens to be a condition for additional qualification programs such as "NySjanse". Struggling with the langue is not enough to qualify for additional support and follow-up, and as a result, refugees

with higher education who cannot find work are often left behind. This is also, in part, why the program "NorA" is open to participants who are just on social assistance (Interview 3).

What this demonstrates is that the qualification and integration of refugees can be quite complicated and require a lot of support. It shows that the institutional barrier of the labour market is very much present, not just for those with little education. Refugees who are skilled do not always get them transferred in their migration process. One large issue with this is when these skills identify the refugees with strong workability, but at the same time, the skills do not correspond with the labour market, get acknowledged, or require a high language level to be useful. The welfare state, which is meant to help the people who fall outside the labour market, is not necessarily available to this specific group of higher educated refugees. The program "NorA" is also specific for Bergen alone (Interview 3), so it is uncertain what happens to this group in other municipalities. This issue is even more relevant with the new changes to the introduction program, which shortens the length for those with higher education. Some interviewees have expressed explicit concern about this. This is especially concerning the language, and the new length is too short to learn it properly (Interview 3 ; Interview 6). Having low language skills might get them access to lower-skilled work, but for the type of jobs that corresponds with their education and skill level, it is probably not enough (Interview 3). In the future, it can therefore be necessary to look more closely at how the new changes to the introduction program have affected higher educated refugees. More specifically, if more have ended up in other qualification programs, become stuck on social assistance, or work in more lower-skilled occupations.

*Administrative challenges*

Some of the administrative challenges behind Norway's activation strategy have already been addressed, particularly in the individualised follow-up section. The way Norway follows up on the activation of refugees is to provide them with a large support system (Interview 3), and this falls in line with the social democratic model. One can see how the programs try to include everyone and not leave anyone behind. Of course, this has not been perfect in many ways, and some still do get left behind and excluded. Nevertheless, the goal of these programs is to prevent this and to accommodate as many as possible they have individualised follow-up, programs, and mapping of competence (Bergen Kommune 2022e, 2022a, 2022c, 2022d; Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)). Beyond the issue of capacity that follows this approach, there is also a problem of coordination between these programs (Interview 5).

Seeing as integration is a process, many refugees go through several programs. It is, therefore, necessary for them to have a smooth transition between the programs so they can keep following their integration plan without too much waiting in between (Interview 6 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 5). The issue is when they go through a mapping of the competence for every program, it takes an unnecessarily long time, and they do not get to follow up on their previous plans (Interview 5). While it is understandable that they might have changed and have different goals, restarting within every program makes the integration process longer. This brings me to one of the core administrative issues of the activation strategy in Norway, which is a lack of communication and cooperation (Interview 5 ; Interview 6).

Looking back to how the state is organised around integration shows how many levels of government and institutions are involved, in addition to several departments (Fimreite and Grindheim 2010; Hatland and Kuhnle 2019; Fiva, Hagen, and Sørensen 2017; Baldersheim, Rose, and Sandberg 2020). When there are so many actors involved, all working towards a common goal, it is important to cooperate with each other. For Bergen, this has been an issue not only with the qualification programs but also between the introduction program and Vestland county municipality. It is only now, with the new introduction law, that there have been clearer responsibility roles divided between the two government levels (Interview 6).

*Activation in a comparative perspective*

Both the theory and the case study demonstrate how the countries in Europe focus on the economic aspects of integration, namely finding employment and measuring integration in terms of labour market participation and income. While I have shown that integration is more than just employment, Norway focuses explicitly on work and qualifications. Even though the other aspects of integration, such as cultural differences and socialisation, are still present within the qualification programs, they are secondary and often included in terms of how this affects the refugees' labour market participation.

The focus on employment as a responsibility of the state falls in line with the general idea of the welfare state, which is to cover social risks (Kildal and Kuhnle 2019). As one can see, the institutional barriers: the admission policies, the welfare state, and the labour market have produced unfavourable conditions for refugees (Ruhs 2013; Hooijer and Picot 2015; Emmenegger and Careja 2012). Within the Norwegian context where there is a strong

emphasis on joint responsibility and a wish to protect the institutions. Activation is a solution that addresses the dilemma of wanting to both keep the institutional barriers in place while including refugees (NOU 2011:7 ; NOU 2017:2). As one can see, the integration of refugees through activation is in many ways a direct result of the institutional barriers and how they operate within a Norwegian context, namely the social democratic model.

The way this has unfolded is demonstrated through the various qualification programs. While there are some issues and not all refugees are equally included, as I have discussed, I can say with certainty that there is a strong support system for refugees' integration in place, including not only the welfare state but the volunteer section as well (Interview 2 ; Robin Hood Huset 2022; Røde Kors 2022). Throughout the discussion, I have mostly linked these programs to the welfare model and shown how integration is best understood through the model's values. Still, at the same time, it has been established that welfare regimes have limited explanatory powers (Knotz et al. 2022), and this comes forth during the discussion. The state organisation, for example, affects some of the administrative issues behind the activation strategy. Then there are the labour market and the admission policies, which both affect and are affected by the welfare state. What the case study and the interviews show is that there are several but significant factors outside the welfare regime.

If one were to compare Norway's integration with Denmark, which many previous studies have done, it shows that they have a different strategy for integrating refugees. This is despite both being a part of the social democratic model. Unlike Norway, Denmark restricts refugees' and immigrants' access to the welfare state based on residence status (Hagelund 2020). To study integration, it is, therefore, necessary to look beyond just welfare regimes and look at how the relationship between the labour market and admission policies affects border openness. It is also important to note that for further studies, a comparison between the Scandinavian countries could benefit from looking at refugees' inclusion within the welfare state beyond just the introduction program. Having a long-term perspective has shown a much more complete picture of refugees' actual integration journey and the challenges this brings.

*The scope of the thesis*

The same institutional barriers that were identified in the theory section, which focuses on Europe, can be found in Norway and in Bergen as well. This indicates that there is a clear pattern of similarities with the immigration policies across Europe regardless of welfare

regime and labour market differences. It also shows how there are general restrictive policies which suit the theory regarding costs and benefits of national interests (Ruhs 2013). However, while the case study does reflect the same institutional barriers, with a clear relationship between the welfare state, the labour market and admission policies, how this relationship is presented does differ according to the types of welfare regimes. In this case, the social democratic model.

The theory section also shows how even within the social democratic model, there is some variance in how immigrants are restricted access to the welfare state, particularly how Denmark restricting access to the welfare state according to residence status is different from Norway's approach, which relies on activation of immigrants integration instead (Hagelund 2020; NOU 2011:7 2011). This is best reflected in the introduction law and the benefits of unemployment and social assistance.

This also indicates that the welfare state in Norway is used both as a tool to control refugees and a way to include them. The welfare benefits and programs that are available to refugees are fairly generous but also controlled with conditions of labour market participation. Based on the interviews, this can be a positive thing as work is essential for integration, and due to the labour market model and additional challenges, refugees struggle to find work (Interview 1 ; Interview 2 ; Interview 3 ; Interview 4 ; Interview 5 ; Interview 6). However, this is not the case for everyone, and for some refugees, these conditions attached to financial support can be more exclusive rather than inclusive. Take the introduction program, for example. Not only is it the first step for refugees, but it also starts relatively early, and not everybody is ready for it (Interview 6). Then there are those who struggle to work and should rather be on other benefits, but because they are conditioned on previous work, they need to first attempt to work and participate before getting access (Interview 3). However, the overall impression of the interviews is that for the majority, these programs do work well, and it is a necessary alternative.

The activation strategy as it is in Norway is dependent on the welfare regime, and these findings show how the activation approach, in combination with a generous welfare state, can be inclusive for refugees. Therefore, an activation strategy within a different welfare regime will probably get different results and function differently, not to mention across the same welfare regimes, such as Denmark and Sweden.

While part of the research is on Norway in general, such as the laws, welfare benefits and the welfare regime, I have also conducted a case study in Bergen and the qualification programs there. While the challenges of refugees do not stand out in either Bergen or in Norway, how the state and the local municipality deal with them do differ. Bergen is very representative of large municipalities with a large population, but not necessarily as much for the smaller ones. It is also difficult to compare municipalities due to the organisational differences between them. While it is not very relevant how much the state or the municipality controls the programs, how the municipality has decided to implement integration programs can be significant. The municipalities receive flexibility within their role as service providers as they need to adapt the programs and resources to the needs of the locals (Prop. 89 L (2019-2020)). This makes it harder to compare within Norway. For while, refugees do have many of the same challenges regardless of where the amount of refugees and the resources of each municipality can impact the integration programs. It is not impossible to compare, of course, and there is merit in doing so. Especially considering how Bergen doesn't stand out much besides how some of the programs have adapted to high capacities, such as with the establishment of "NorA" as a new program (Interview 3). However, for these comparisons to work, it is important to consider the underlying variables I have just presented.

## Conclusion

There is an overall large support system designed to include as many refugees as possible. Refugees are not directly excluded from any welfare benefits either, but as a result of the institutional barriers, which are present in Norway, they do face unique challenges distinct from both labour migrants and natives. Refugees, therefore, have qualification programs and benefits specifically targeting them. After researching immigration policies in Norway and the relevant qualification programs and welfare benefits for refugees through an exploratory case study, I can conclude with four main findings.

Despite the fact, the main issues for refugees' integration, as identified by previous studies and the government, is a lack of skill and qualifications, many higher educated refugees still struggle to find work and integrate. While it is true that sometimes their education does not fit into the labour market, it is not a sufficient explanation. What the finding shows is that there are significant challenges for integration beyond skills and qualifications. For some, it is a language barrier, but for others, it can also be the labour market as an institutional barrier. Entering the Norwegian labour market requires more than higher education for refugees in, and the fact is that Norwegian references are often more highly regarded than foreign ones. This finding supports the arguments about institutional barriers and shows that lower socioeconomic status among refugees is not simply because of lower skills. Activation and inclusion within the welfare state can, therefore, be helpful for this group, but with the new changes to the introduction program with a shorter length for those higher educated, it is uncertain how this will affect their integration. However, based on the interviews and the fact that they still participate in qualification programs even after the introduction program ends, this change can potentially affect their integration poorly.

All the qualification programs that I have investigated use an individualised approach. This approach fits in with the welfare model as it is generous but also conditioned on labour market participation. It is an inclusive method which accounts for refugees' diversity and adapts the program to their needs accordingly. This promotes integration in various ways, and despite having a main focus on employment, providing close follow-up also makes it possible to include other aspects of integration, though only to an extent. How open communication is with the participants can depend on multiple factors, and not every topic is open for discussion within this space either. However, those working within the qualification programs

when finding a job training, think about factors such as how inclusive and welcoming the workplace is. There are, however, some drawbacks to this approach. It is rather ambitious and requires high capacity, which has resulted in a few administrative issues. One of the more notable issues is a communication problem and a lack of cooperation between the various programs. These issues also hinder the integration of refugees by having them restart in every program and providing them with little coordinated follow-up.

However, despite the challenges mentioned above, the Norwegian welfare state promotes refugees' integration through activation by generous means. The conditions of work are, for many refugees, a way to be included within the welfare state and society. Activation is used to preserve the welfare state while covering the social risks for those most vulnerable, a category in which refugees are overrepresent. Looking at successful integration not as refugees having the same income as natives but as them being economically independent, it fits within the welfare model. Overrepresentation among low-skilled workers is not an issue as long as refugees' welfare is preserved due to the welfare and labour market models' high distribution rates.

On the other hand, activation and labour market participation as a condition for welfare access can, for some, be more exclusive. The group of higher educated refugees, for example, who fail to find work and do not qualify for the programs because of too strong workability are often left behind on social assistance. While Bergen has "NorA" which is open to them, this program is specific for that municipality alone, and it is uncertain if they are included in other cases. Then there are those who should qualify for other benefits, such as disability but do not get it due to a lack of labour market participation. Not to mention there are also those refugees who are not ready to start these programs but, due to a lack of income and with few options, are forced to attend. For these groups, the activation within the welfare state would be more exclusive and the welfare state would then fail to promote integration.

All of these findings bring me to the final one, which is how one should study integration. What these conclusions show is that integration is something that happens as a process and over the long term. It is only by studying integration through a variety of programs and benefits that follow the refugees beyond their first few years that I can see all the various ways in which the state promotes integration.

What the thesis have provided is with an institutional look at how the Norwegian welfare state includes refugees and promotes their integration. The findings have implications for future studies, and it shows how studying integration should not only be seen in the long term, but also it can happen within a specific welfare regime. For further research I would then be interesting to look at how the institutional barriers are presented in another case, possibly in Denmark seeing how despite similar institutions have a completely different outcome. It would also be interesting to include refugees' perspective as a next step and see how their inclusion in the welfare state has affected them.

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**Appendix 1: List of Interviews**

| Interview: | Date: | Occupation: |
|---|---|---|
| Interview 1 | 28.03.2022 | JobbSjansen and NySjanse employee |
| Interview 2 | 29.03.2022 | Volunteer organisation employee |
| Interview 3 | 04.04.2022 | NorA employee |
| Interview 4 | 05.04.2022 | Municipality employe |
| Interview 5 | 08.04.2022 | Municipality employe |
| Interview 6 | 23.04.2022 | The Introductioncenter employee |

**Appendix 2: Interview guide**

| Topic: | Suggested questions: |
|---|---|
| Introduction | "The purpose of my research is to better understand how the welfare state helps refugees into the labour market. I am currently looking at the different programs and benefits the welfare state has to offer, specific for refugees and immigrants. My focus is on the institutions and how they fit into all of this." |
| Consent | Informing about consent and the use of data. |
| The welfare state | What role does the welfare state play in the integration of migrants, specifically refugees? |
| Activation within welfare | Does the focus of employment within the welfare state promotes integration?<br>What does economic independence mean as a goal for integration? |

| | |
|---|---|
| | What type of work do the refugees get through the qualification programs? |
| The participants | Who are the participants?<br>Is there a lot of diversity among them in age, gender, educational attainments or country background?<br>Is this program relevant for refugees?<br>What are some of the challenges refugees faces in their integration and within the qualification programs? |
| Individualised approach | How does the individualised approach work, and is it necessary? |
| Cooperation with other programs | Is there a lot of cooperation with other programs?<br>Are there any cooperation with the volunteer section or the municipality?<br>What is the cooperation like with the employers? |
| Representativeness | Is there anything distinct about the program which sets it apart for others?<br>Are there any distinct challenges for Bergen? |
| New introduction program | What are your thoughts on the new integration law?<br>Will these changes affect your program? |
| Ukrainian refugees | Is the program relevant for Ukrainian refugees? |