

The Netherlands: A refuge and home to all?

A comparative study on the effect of the differing Dutch refugee policies in shaping the socio-economic integration of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees.

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Abstract

The invasion of Ukraine resulted into millions of Ukrainians seeking refuge in Europe. The mass influx resulted in the EU evoking the Temporary Protection Directive for the first time since its creation, granting Ukrainians the right to work and live in EU host countries, such as the Netherlands. The policies applied to Ukrainians is in stark contrast with policies applying to other refugee groups, such as the Syrians. Even though the Ukrainians are seen as temporary residents, they received a head start in socio-economically integrating into host-countries by gaining access to pillars of integration. In contrast to the Ukrainians, Syrian refugees are considered to reside permanently in the Netherlands and thus are obligated to integrate, however they are denied access to several integration domains until they have fulfilled the Dutch integration programme.

This contradiction calls for a thorough analysis of how Syrian refugees experience the differing policies on employment and language in shaping their socio-economic integration in comparison to the experiences of Ukrainians in the Netherlands. This will be done by applying the domains of employment and language from Ager and Strang's integration framework on the reviewed literature and on the twelve conducted interviews with refugees and experts on refugee integration. The research will be done by looking through the lens of the Human Capital Theory to contribute to the studies of refugee integration.

This research finds that the differing policies and their aims form structural barriers to the integration of Syrian and Ukrainians refugees and that even though the policies are different, the experiences of both refugee groups are similar. Syrians experience a negative effect of the employment and language policies on the shaping of their socio-economic integration, because of a delay in access to the labour market and insufficient translation support in learning Dutch. The Ukrainians, who gained immediate access to the labour market, experience the temporality of their refuge and the absence of systematically provided language courses as a structural barrier to their integration.

Key words: *Refugee integration, Human capital theory, Socio-economic integration, Ukrainian refugees, Syrian refugees, The Netherlands, Refugee policies*

Abbreviations List

ACM: Advisory Council for Migration

ASC: Asylum Seeker Centre

HCT: Human Capital Theory

KIS: Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving

TPD: Temporary Protection Directive

PIN: Personal Identification Number

Vw2000: Vreemdelingenwet 2000

WaV: Wet Arbeid Vreemdelingen

WEF: The World Economic Forum

Wi2013: Wet Inburgering 2013

Wi2021: Wet Inburgering 2021

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

“We did not want to come here, but we also did not want to die in our country.” – Ukrainian Refugee A

The quote above, taken from an interview I conducted with Ukrainian Refugee A, sheds light on the difficult situation that refugees are in.¹ It should serve as an important reminder that refugees were forced to flee the place that they called home, because of immeasurable danger to them and their families in the hope of finding a safe haven somewhere else. Thus their protection is of utmost importance.

The UNHCR defines refugees as “people who have fled war, violence, conflict or persecution and have crossed an international border to find safety in another country.”² I use this definition because the Dutch Government’s definition correlates with that of the UNCHR. The Government grants people asylum in the Netherlands, when they are seen as a refugee, which means among other things, that people “can be given asylum if the situation in their country isn’t safe enough, for instance if there is a war.”³ Using the UNHCR’s definition enables me to compare Syrians and Ukrainians as refugees, who share the ‘refugee experience’, which means that they were forced to flee their country, because of war.⁴

The ever-increasing number of refugees is causing heated debates worldwide, the Netherlands including, on how to deal with the mass influx, how to support these people and on how to include them in host societies, sometimes causing people to forget that refugees were forced to flee and seek protection.⁵ With 21.8 million forcibly displaced people in Europe by the end of 2022, the humanitarian crisis has also been a years-long important topic of discussion in the EU. Especially since 2015 when the humanitarian crisis intensified, as a result of the Syrian conflict that started in 2011 and escalated into a civil war forcing millions of Syrians to flee.⁶ This war contributed to the largest flow of refugees and forcibly displaced people of this century.⁷

¹ Ukrainian Refugee A. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Sliedrecht, June 26, 2023.

² UNHCR - The UN Refugee Agency. “What Is a Refugee?” UNHCR, n.d. <https://www.unhcr.org/what-refugee>. (Accessed on April 4, 2023).

³ I use the terms ‘refugee’ and ‘refugees’ as abbreviations for ‘people from a refugee background’ throughout this research. While their refugee background is one of my main selection criteria, I wish to emphasize that I do not intend to reduce the complexity of their identity to the single component of their refugee experience. Furthermore, there are general debates as to what a ‘refugee’ is, however I do not elaborate on these debates, as they are beyond the scope of my thesis. Using the UNHCR’s definition enables me to compare Syrians and Ukrainians as refugees, who share the ‘refugee experience’, which means that they were forced to flee their country, because of war. ; Government of the Netherlands. “When is someone granted asylum in the Netherlands? | Government.nl > Asylum Policy.”(n.d). <https://www.government.nl/topics/asylum-policy/question-and-answer/eligible-for-asylum-in-the-netherlands> (Accessed on June 7, 2023).

⁴ Linda Bakker. “Seeking Sanctuary in the Netherlands.” Phd. Thesis, (Rotterdam: Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2016). <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/79617>. p. 68-69.

⁵ J. Hainmueller, D. Hangartner, and D., Lawrence. “When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees.” *Science advances* 2, no. 8 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.1600432> p.1-5. ; A. Kuschel, N. Hansen, L. Heyse & R. Wittek. “Combining Language Training and Work Experience for Refugees with Low-Literacy Levels: A Mixed-Methods Case Study.” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* (2023). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-023-01028-6> p. 1.

⁶ USA For UNHCR. “Syria Refugee Crisis Explained.” *UN Refugees*, July 8, 2022. <https://www.unrefugees.org/news/syria-refugee-crisis-explained/>. (Accessed May 23, 2023).

⁷ J. Hainmueller, D. Hangartner, and D., Lawrence. “When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees.” p. 1-5. ; Mette Vreeken. “TOELATEN OF WEIGEREN? Parlementaire

The history of the Netherlands has been marked by high levels of refugee immigration and the country was once famed for its tolerance.⁸ However, the Dutch context has moved from a more multiculturalist setting to a more intolerant stance against newcomers, partly as a result of a rise in religious extremism, economic instability and insufficient housing.⁹ The start of the humanitarian crisis caused difficulties for the Dutch Government in providing proper assistance to refugees in general and in enforcing successful measurements on how to include them in Dutch society. In 2015 there were 56.9 thousand asylum seekers and following family members registered in the Netherlands, which is twice as much as the 21.8 thousand registered in 2014. 43% of the first asylum requests in 2015 were from Syrian asylum seekers.¹⁰

The arrival of Syrians, who are according to the CBS now the largest refugee group in the Netherlands, caused the refugee debate to become more heated.¹¹ Syrians who arrived in the Netherlands, after often having endured ‘the death trip’ to Europe, received a less than welcome reception and found themselves in a bureaucratic quagmire of long waiting processes, racial discrimination and tough asylum requirements. The majority of Syrians in the Netherlands fall under the *Wet Inburgering 2013* (Wi2013), a policy that regulates their integration in the Netherlands.¹² Their reception is in stark contrast with the reception of the second largest refugee group in the Netherlands: the Ukrainians.

The invasion of Ukraine in 2022 by the Russian military resulted in millions of Ukrainians fleeing and seeking refuge in Europe. This resulted in the *Temporary Protection Directive* (TPD) being put into place on the 4th of March 2022, which enabled Ukrainian refugees to cross borders easily and travel by train free-of-charge, while being welcomed by host countries all over the world, including the Netherlands.¹³

argumentatie inzake het vluchtelingenbeleid in 1992 en 2015.” Master Thesis (Utrecht University, 2016).

<https://studenttheses.uu.nl/handle/20.500.12932/23692> p.14-16.

⁸ Godfried Engbersen *et al.* “No time to lose: from reception to integration of asylum migrants.” *WRR Policy-Brief*, (The Hague, 2015). p.1-50. ; Linda Bakker, Sin Yi Cheung, and Jenny Phillimore. “The Asylum-Integration Paradox: Comparing Asylum Support Systems and Refugee Integration in The Netherlands and the UK.” *International Migration* 54, no. 4 (2016): p. 118–32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12251>. p. 119-125.

⁹ Selm, van Joann, “Migration in the Netherlands: Rhetoric and Perceived Reality.”, *Migrationpolicy*, May 1, 2019.

<https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/migration-netherlands-rhetoric-and-perceived-reality-challenge-dutch-tolerance>. (Accessed on May 29, 2023) ; Willem Huijnk, Jaco Dagevos, and Emily Miltenburg. “Een Staalkaart van Statushouders.” p. 243-250.

¹⁰ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. “In 2015 twee keer zo veel asielzoekers en nareizigers als in 2014.” *Centraal Bureau Voor De Statistiek*, January 27, 2016. <https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/nieuws/2016/04/in-2015-twee-keer-zo-veel-asielzoekers-en-nareizigers-als-in-2014>. (Accessed on May 28, 2023). ; Linda Bakker *et al.* “Beleidsontwikkelingen ten aanzien van de integratie van statushouders in Nederland sinds 2014.” *Verwey-Jonker Instituut*, November 27, 2020.

<https://www.verwey-jonker.nl/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Beleidsontwikkelingen-ten-aanzien-van-de-integratie-van-statushouders-in-Nederland-sinds-2014.pdf> p. 3-24.

¹¹ Willem Huijnk, Jaco Dagevos, and Emily Miltenburg. “Een Staalkaart van Statushouders.” *Mensch En Maatschappij*, December 1, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5117/mem2017.4.huij> p.359-362.

¹² The death trip refers to the dangerous journey that refugees often undertake, by crossing the Mediterranean sea on a boat to reach Europe. ; Sharma Gouri. “What Do Syrians Think about the Welcome for Ukrainian Refugees?”, *Al Jazeera*, March 31, 2022. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/31/what-do-syrians-think-about-the-welcome-for-ukrainian-refugees>. (Accessed July 17, 2023). ; Rijksoverheid. “Wet Inburgering 2013.” January 1, 2013. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0020611/2013-01-01> ; Paul Notelteers. “Oekraïners wel, Syriërs niet: waarom niet alle vluchtelingen op evenveel begrip kunnen rekenen.” *DeMorgen*, March 2, 2022.

<https://www.demorgen.be/nieuws/oekraïners-wel-syriërs-niet-waarom-niet-alle-vluchtelingen-op-evenveel-begrip-kunnen-rekenen.dpgmedia.be/>. (Accessed May 10, 2023).

¹³ Migration and Home Affairs. “Temporary Protection,” n.d. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en. ; RefugeeHelp, “Public Transportation in the Netherlands for Ukrainian Refugees.”, *Refugeehelp*, n.d. <https://www.refugeehelp.nl/en/ukrainian-refugee/article/100126-public-transport-in-the-netherlands>. (Accessed on June 1, 2023). ; Aylin Bilic. “Oekraïense vluchtelingen opvangen is niet racistisch.” *NRC*, March 3, 2022.

The arrival of the Ukrainians resulted in a radical turn in both the European refugee policy and Dutch refugee policy.¹⁴ While Syrian refugees must go to Ter Apel to start their asylum procedure and have to wait months for their *Personal Identification Number* (PIN) and integration process, Ukrainians, who are supposedly temporary residents, are allowed to register at local municipalities, while receiving their PIN almost immediately, opening pathways to participate and integrate in Dutch society.¹⁵

This thesis will focus on how the different refugee policies are composed and how these policies have shaped integration differently for these two groups. This will be done by analysing how the Dutch government has envisioned socio-economic integration for Syrians differently than for Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands, by looking at what the effect of these policies is on integration of the two groups and also by briefly looking at why Syrians, Ukrainians and experts think that the policies differ.

The difference in treatment by the Dutch government and the refugees' experiences with the contradicting refugee policies, are significant and thus it is essential to look at how these policies and experiences shape their socio-economic integration. Furthermore, it allows for a comprehensive understanding of which practices are the most successful in relation to refugee integration. This will be done by looking at the data through the lens of Human Capital Theory and using the analytical framework by Alistair Ager and Alison Strang to analyse the differing policies and the Syrian refugees' experiences in comparison to the Ukrainian refugees' experiences.

1.2 Research Puzzle

This thesis entails a comparative puzzle, as it will focus on the refugee policies for Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees and on how these groups experience the shaping of their integration. The Rijksoverheid, the Central Government of the Netherlands, emphasizes that integration is important, not only for the newcomers, but also for Dutch society as it enforces social cohesion and stability in a very culturally diverse country.¹⁶ Because the Rijksoverheid confers such importance to the integration of refugees, it is pertinent to look at how the differing refugee policies shape the integration of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees.

The comparisons will foremostly relate to the refugee policies on labour and language, as these are seen as two of the most crucial factors for successful integration.¹⁷ As these factors will be part of the main analysis, I have decided to focus on one element of integration namely, the socio-economic domain.

This research project addresses a fascinating contradiction at the heart of these policies, namely that Ukrainian refugees who are expected to be temporary residents are given immediate access to several domains of long-term integration, such as labour, while those applying for permanent residence, in this case Syrian refugees, are denied these domains until they have reached a certain position in their asylum procedure.

So many practical aids, such as directly being allowed to register at municipalities, are given to Ukrainians, that it looks like the Dutch Government actually does want them to integrate – and yet they are only on a temporary visa, which means that it is assumed that they

<https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2022/03/03/oeukraïense-vluchtelingen-opvangen-is-niet-racistisch-a4096214> (Accessed on June 13, 2023).

¹⁴ Notelteirs. "Oekraïners wel, Syriërs niet: waarom niet alle vluchtelingen op evenveel begrip kunnen rekenen."

¹⁵ Immigratie-en Naturalisatiedienst. "Richtlijn tijdelijke bescherming Oekraïne." *IND*, May 16, 2023.

<https://ind.nl/nl/oekraïne/richtlijn-tijdelijke-bescherming-oekraïne#inschrijven-bij-de-gemeente>.

¹⁶ Jeanine Klaver, Arend Odé, Willemijn Smit en Bertine Witkamp. "Synthesestudie beleidsdoorlichting integratiebeleid." *Regioplan*, October, 2016. <https://www.regioplan.nl/wp-content/uploads/data/file/2016/16035-Synthesestudie-beleidsdoorlichting-integratiebeleid-Regioplan-31okt16.pdf> p.1.

¹⁷ Alastair Ager and Alison Strang. "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 21, no. 2 (2008): 166–91. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>.

will return to Ukraine. Meanwhile, policies put many obstacles in the way of Syrian refugees, who are presumed to become permanent residents in Dutch society, which could suggest that the policy makers do not want them to integrate. Researching this contradiction will unveil the differences between the policies as well as uncover how these measures and experiences shape the socio-economic integration of both groups. The research question for this thesis is:

“How do the differing Dutch refugee policies shape the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees, who arrived between 2015 and 2021, in comparison to the socio-economic integration of Ukrainian refugees between March 2022 and May 2023?”

The following sub-questions will help answer the research question:

1. How and why have refugee policies for Syrian refugees and Ukrainian refugees differed in the Netherlands?
2. How do the experiences with Dutch refugee labour policies on economic integration differ between Syrian and Ukrainian refugees?
3. How do the experiences with Dutch refugee language policies on socio-economic integration differ between Syrian and Ukrainian refugees?

1.3 Academic Relevance

This comparative research contributes to the existing knowledge in the field of refugee integration, because it gives insight into how the policies of the TPD shape the integration of Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands, which is something that has not yet been done. This is important to research as the war in Ukraine will not be ending soon, which means that it is time to move on from supplying immediate life-saving aid to endorsing a more long-term approach, focused on including Ukrainian refugees in the economic and social spheres.¹⁸ By researching the effects of the TPD on the integration of Ukrainians into host societies, it will become clear which domains need to be re-evaluated to facilitate the long-term inclusion of Ukrainian refugees and to inform changing policy responses.

Having the Ukrainian refugees as a centre point of this thesis is also a strength, because this group is under-researched in the Netherlands, but also internationally. This is because the migration influx only escalated in 2022 so there has not been sufficient time or data collected to research this group. My research is thus of academic relevance, as it can possibly be of value for further research by expanding the body of literature on the topic.

Furthermore, this research is also of academic relevance because comparing the effect of and the contradiction in the varying policies in shaping the integration of Syrian refugees and Ukrainian refugees has not been done yet. This research could contribute to the debate on which policies and approaches are the most effective in facilitating or challenging the successful socio-economic integration of refugees into host countries.¹⁹ The examination of the effects of the policies on the integration of refugees, through their own eyes, will help further research identify which areas of integration need improvement, and therefore further advance the integration of refugees into host societies, which in turn helps social cohesion.

Also, the interviewing of refugees contributes to the field of *refugee integration* and of

¹⁸ International Organization for Migration. “The Path Ahead for People Fleeing Ukraine: IOM Toolkit on Facilitating Pathways to Inclusive and Cohesive Societies.” 2022. <https://www.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl486/files/documents/IOM-Toolkit-on-Facilitating-Pathways-to-Inclusive-and-Cohesive-Societies-The-Path-Ahead-for-People-Fleeing-Ukraine.pdf>

¹⁹ Michaela Hynie. “Refugee Integration: Research and Policy.” *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 24, no. 3 (August 1, 2018): 265–76. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pac0000326>; Elizabeth Ferris. “Making Sense of Public Policy on Refugee Integration.” *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 690, no. 1 (July 1, 2020): 200–224. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220941577>.

refugee policies in the Netherlands, as giving refugees agency to share how they experience these integration policies and how it affects them, can provide valuable insights on the shaping of their integration in the Netherlands. The academic relevance will further be elaborated on in Chapter 2, where the theoretical lens and analytical framework for this thesis will be discussed.

1.4 Methodology

This section outlines the methodology that has been employed in studying how the contradicting refugee policies have shaped the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees.

This research is based primarily on a literature review on the topics of refugee integration, integration policies and integration domains. Additionally, I have conducted twelve interviews with Ukrainian refugees, Syrian refugees, and experts on the topic of refugee socio-economic integration in the Netherlands. I chose a constructivist qualitative approach, as it helps understand the phenomenon of refugee integration policies from the perspective of those experiencing it.²⁰

I chose to compare the Syrian refugees with the Ukrainian, as the former is with 120,300 the largest refugee group and the latter is with 100,000 the second largest group of refugees in the Netherlands.²¹ My choice was further made by the Dutch societal debate about how Ukrainian refugees have had a warmer welcome from the host society than Syrian refugees have.²² Furthermore, my choice was also informed by my analytical framework and theoretical lens, as both groups have different rights in the integration domains of employment and language. My reasoning was that by comparing the two groups within these domains a better understanding would be gained on how the policies shape the socio-economic integration of refugees differently.

To identify the respondents for my research I employed several strategies to ensure the most diverse sample possible in the scope limitations of my thesis. Firstly, I used the snowball method by using my connections from my internship at peace organisation PAX to identify potential Syrian respondents, who in turn helped me come into contact with other respondents.²³ Using this method gave me an advantage, as it helped me reach Syrian refugees, who can be hard to connect with as they are often dispersed through the country.

Secondly, I used the strategy of purposeful sampling and network sampling by placing a targeted advertisement on LinkedIn to engage individuals, who have first-hand experiences with refugee integration or who are actively involved with supporting refugees in their integration.²⁴ This led to making connections with Ukrainian refugees and refugee integration experts. Thirdly, while reviewing literature I sought out Dutch researchers, who have written extensively on refugee integration, and contacted them via LinkedIn for an interview.

²⁰ Lisa Given, *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*. (California, 2008).
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412963909>.

²¹ Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek. "Bevolking; geslacht, lft, generatie en migr.achtergrond, 1 jan; 1996-2022."

²² RTL Nieuws. "Hebben we meer over voor Oekraïense vluchtelingen? 'Dubbele standaard,'" March 4, 2022.
<https://www.rtlnieuws.nl/editienl/artikel/5292499/vluchtelingen-oekraïne-hulpacties-meer-enthousiasme-dan-syrie>. (Accessed July 7, 2023).

²³ Mahin Naderifar, Hamideh Goli, and Fereshteh Ghaljaie, "Snowball Sampling: A Purposeful Method of Sampling in Qualitative Research." *Strides in Development of Medical Education* 14, no. 3 (September 30, 2017).
<https://doi.org/10.5812/sdme.67670>. p.1-4.

²⁴ John W. Creswell. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 1994.
http://www.revistacomunicacion.org/pdf/n3/resenas/research_design_qualitative_quantitative_and_mixed_methods_approaches.pdf.

For this research I interviewed four Ukrainian refugees, four Syrian refugees and four experts who work with or study refugee integration. I decided to anonymise all respondents, so that their privacy is protected and a sense of ease to answer the questions openly is fostered. These interviews were held in real life or via Microsoft Teams lasting between 20 and 90 minutes and informed consent was given on all occasions for recording and saving the interview via SurfDrive, and for using the collected data for my thesis.²⁵ I had a narrative approach to the interviews and used deductive coding, informed by the analytical framework of Ager and Strang. The interviews were semi-structured, as I had prepared several questions in advance, but made sure to leave room for any other relating topics that were broached during the interview.²⁶ This is a strength of my research as having semi-structured interviews can foster a sense of comfort between the participant and myself, which can result into more candid responses and the ability to capture the complexities of their situation.

It was ethically important to me to not ask the interviewed refugees about any traumatising experiences they endured such as their refugee journey. This is important as I do not have the position to give them any aftercare, which is necessary when talking about traumatising events. Also, these topics are not relevant for my research and so I could unnecessarily be hurting the participants by asking questions irrelevant to my research, but to them painful and real events.

There are several strengths and limitations in using interviews for my research. Firstly, it is a strength, as speaking with refugees and experts provides valuable insights on the effects of the policies on the daily life of refugees. However, by only having done twelve interviews, this research is limited as it cannot be seen as representative of the whole Syrian and Ukrainian refugee population in the Netherlands.

Having said that, the use of these interviews is not meant to be representative of the whole Syrian and Ukrainian refugee population and to draw robust conclusions, it is merely meant to give insight into the struggles and experiences in relation to refugee integration that those affected face. Furthermore, the interviews serve as a form of triangulation of the data collected from the literature review, because the interviews provide insights on how actual refugees are experiencing the differing policies.²⁷ This is a strength as the policies apply to refugees and therefore listening to what they have to say leads to more knowledge on which obstacles or advantages the policies bring with them and how it affects their socio-economic integration. Furthermore, the interviews with the experts help triangulate the data further, as it gives insights from people who work closely with refugees, who therefore have knowledge of the on-the-ground situation, and insights from people who have done extensive research on refugee integration, which helps with globally confirming the literature data.²⁸

However, there are also limitations of using interviews in research. Firstly, my positionality can be a limitation as I am a white and educated female from the Netherlands. I have to be aware that my research may be influenced by my surroundings, such as the ongoing migration debate, where one of the main views is that migrants should be deterred

²⁵ General Data Protection Regulation. "Article 5: Principles relating to processing of personal data." *EU-GPDR*, 2016. ; Jennifer Mason. *Qualitative Researching*. 3rd ed. (University of Manchester, 2017). p. 79-85.

²⁶ Nigel Newton. "The Use of Semi-Structured Interviews in Qualitative Research: Strengths and Weaknesses." *Exploring Qualitative Methods*, (2010). http://www.academia.edu/1561689/The_use_of_semi-structured_interviews_in_qualitative_research_strengths_and_weaknesses. (Accessed on July 5, 2023). ; Charles Kakilla. "Strengths and Weaknesses of Semi-Structured Interviews in Qualitative Research: A Critical Essay." *Preprints*, (June 21, 2021). <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202106.0491.v1>.; Mason. *Qualitative Researching*. p. 62-64.

²⁷ Roberta Heale and Dorothy Forbes. "Understanding Triangulation in Research." *Evidence-Based Nursing* 16, no. 4 (August 13, 2013): 98. <https://doi.org/10.1136/eb-2013-101494>. ; Mason. *Qualitative Researching*. p. 66.

²⁸ Mason. *Qualitative Researching*. p. 62-80.

from entering Europe.²⁹ By being aware of this, I tried to actively search for other sides of the migration debate, leading to a more well-rounded understanding of the issue, which helped me challenge my own preconceived notions and minimise their impact on the research process.³⁰

Another limitation is that when interviewing refugees in Dutch or English, there were at times problems with language barriers. This could lead to me misinterpreting what they were trying to say, which could result into data verification problems.³¹ To ensure that I understood what they were trying to say, I often used a combination of repeating what they said, using Google Translate and letting them write down what they meant.

For this research I identified relevant literature by making use of electronic databases, such as Jstor, and key words such as ‘refugee integration’ and ‘refugee policies’ to narrow down the scope of database results. I made use of several criteria, such as timeframes (2010-2023) and languages (Dutch and English), to select relevant sources for my research. Furthermore, I compared my research’s main objective, namely the effect of refugee integration policies in shaping the socio-economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands, to the sources found in the database results and narrowed the selection by looking at the title and abstract first, and thereafter doing a screening of the entire source. Lastly, I researched which scholars are the most knowledgeable about refugee integration in the Netherlands, read their published materials on the subject and even consulted and interviewed some of them for my research, which led to a different perspectives of the Dutch arena on refugee integration.

The collected literature and the interviews provided me a great, but incomplete insight into how the integration of refugees are shaped by the differing policies. More interviews and more use of literature is necessary to gain a representative view of the situation. This was not possible for me due having less time and space to delve deeper into these integration complexities.

1.5 Thesis Overview

In the following chapters I will investigate the research question by firstly discussing the theoretical and analytical framework. The theoretical lens through which this research will be done is the Human Capital Theory. Furthermore, the debate on the definition of integration will be assessed, whereafter the analytical framework by Ager and Strang will be explained. These frameworks will help lead the analysis of the collected qualitative data in the analytical chapters. After this theoretical chapter the differing refugee policies will be discussed in relation to how and why they differ from each other. Thereafter I will focus on the analysis of the data on how refugees experience the policies in relation to the shaping of their socio-economic integration. The thesis will end with a concise summary and an answer to the research question.

²⁹ Roxane Soudagar. “We zijn niet xenofober geworden, waarom lijkt dat zo?” *OneWorld*, November 28, 2022. <https://www.oneworld.nl/mensenrechten/we-zijn-niet-xenofober-geworden-waarom-lijkt-dat-dan-zo/> (Accessed on July 3, 2023).

³⁰ Mason. *Qualitative Researching*. p. 2-103.

³¹ Kakilla, “Strengths and Weaknesses of Semi-Structured Interviews in Qualitative Research: A Critical Essay.” p. 1-3.

Chapter 2: Theoretical and Analytical Framework

In this chapter, I discuss the theoretical framework by intertwining the lens through which refugee integration will be studied, a thorough literature review with the explanation of important concepts and the analytical framework, which will guide the analysis of the collected data.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

For my theoretical framework I have chosen to use the lens of the Human Capital Theory (HCT) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors and dynamics that shape refugee socio-economic integration, as it makes it possible to explore the interplay of how differing Dutch refugee policies relate to different integration outcomes, while recognizing the inherent complexities and multifaceted nature of refugee integration.

The HCT, initially formulated by economist Gary Becker, claims that individuals have human capital, a set of skills, abilities and knowledge, that can be improved through investing in their capital via training or education.³² The general assumption of HCT is that an individual's human capital determines their labour market access and success.³³

When researching the economic integration of immigrants, or in this case specifically of refugees, the HCT is an important explanation for their participation in the host country's economy. It is important to note that there is a distinction between human capital that refugees attained pre-migration and post-migration.³⁴ Andrey Tibajev substantiates this distinction by saying that human capital does not always perfectly transcend national contexts, as it is often specific to a nation's setting, so the knowledge and skills that immigrants bring with them from pre-immigration can be a mismatch with the domestic labour market compared to knowledge and skills acquired after arrival or to the human capital of members of the host society. This is important to note for this research, as this human capital transfer problem can result into, for example, highly-educated refugees working in a profession below their skillset, as a consequence of educational qualifications from pre-migration not being fully recognised in a post-migration setting, which can result into motivation loss for integration.³⁵

Gregg Bucken-Knapp *et al.* argue that HCT emphasizes that the refugee integration outcomes in the host country's labour market are influenced by the human capital they have attained pre-migration and post-migration. He substantiates this by drawing on a research done by Thomas de Vroome and Frank van Tubergen, who say that host country-specific work experience, education and language proficiency can have a positive effect on the employment chances of refugees, as the language and education barriers are less prominent.³⁶

Not only does HCT emphasize that successful socio-economic integration necessitates the acquisition of post-migration employment, but it also underscores the importance of

³² Gary S. Becker. "Investment in Human Capital: A Theoretical Analysis." *Journal of Political Economy* 70, no. 5, (1962): 9-49. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1829103> ; Gary S. Becker. "Human Capital: The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics." *Library of Economics and Liberty* n.d. <https://www.econlib.org/library/Enc1/HumanCapital.html>. ; Barry R. Chiswick and Paul D. Miller. "A Model of Destination-Language Acquisition: Application to Male Immigrants in Canada." *Demography* 38, no. 3 (2001): 391-409. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3088354>. p. 391-408.

³³ Andrey Tibajev. "The value of immigrants' human capital for labour market integration." PhD. Thesis (Linköping University Electronic Press, 2022). p. 20-36. ; Thomas de Vroome, and Frank Van Tubergen, "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands." *International Migration Review* 44, no. 2 (June 1, 2010): 376-403. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1747-7379.2010.00810.x> p.378-279.

³⁴ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands." p.378-382.

³⁵ Jasmin Char. "Explaining the Different Direct Socio-Economic Integration of Afghan and Syrian Refugees in the Netherlands." Master Thesis (University of Leiden, 2019). <https://studenttheses.universiteitleiden.nl/access/item%3A2603730/view> p. 13-15.

³⁶ Gregg Bucken-Knapp Vedran Omanović, and Andrea M. Spehar. *Institutions and Organizations of Refugee Integration : Bosnian-Herzegovinian and Syrian Refugees in Sweden*, 2019. p. 26-32. ; De Vroome, and Van Tubergen. "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands." p. 376-397.

language proficiency and knowledge of the host-country's culture as it enhances their employability, which promotes long-term integration as it positively influences contact with the host-society, enlarges social networks and results into self-sufficiency and the regaining of a sense of dignity.³⁷

HCT is a valuable lens to analyse the socio-economic integration of refugees, because it reflects on how their human capital can be a barrier or stepping stone to the labour market of the host country, which then can enhance social connections and expand language and cultural knowledge. However, there is an important critique to keep in mind. Human capital is perceived as something inherent to an individual. Marxists and sociologists argue that conceptualisation of human capital ignores the social and structural conditions of where human capital is gained. This can be a problem, according to these perspectives, as human capital does not only depend on the individual, but also depends on the surrounding social context in the way that some skills, for example, knowledge of behavioural codes are intrinsically social. This can be a disadvantage for the social domain of a refugee and therefore negatively impact their integration. However, this problem can be solved by keeping the social structures in mind when analysing their socio-economic integration.³⁸

Although there are critiques on the HCT, I believe that this is the correct lens to use, because it will help explore how the differing Dutch policies, shape the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees by exploring their access to employment and language acquisition.

By using this framework, and keeping the critiques in mind, I hope to contribute to the knowledge base on socio-economic refugee integration and provide a foundation for informed recommendations for future policies aimed at fostering successful integration outcomes for refugees.

³⁷ Kuschel, Hansen, Heyse, & Wittek. "Combining Language Training and Work Experience for Refugees with Low-Literacy Levels: A Mixed-Methods Case Study." p. 1-3. ;

³⁸ Donald Tomaskovic-Devey, Melvin E. Thomas, and Kecia R. Johnson, "Race and the Accumulation of Human Capital across the Career: A Theoretical Model and Fixed-Effects Application." *American Journal of Sociology* 111, no. 1 (July 1, 2005): 58–89. <https://doi.org/10.1086/431779>. ; Tibajev. "The value of immigrants' human capital for labour market integration." p. 23-25.

2.2 The Integration Definition

For this research it is important to explicitly state which integration definition will be used, as according to Stephen Castles *et al.* there is no generally accepted definition of refugee integration.³⁹ Naming the used definition of integration will allow consistency and coherence to be maintained. This is important as ‘integration’ is often used interchangeably, which can lead to problems with the contextualisation of research and unnecessary conceptual confusion.

The reviewed literature suggests that integration is commonly viewed by academics, such as Roxy Damen *et. al.*, and Ager and Strang, as a two-way process that begins upon arrival in the host society. Refugees must be willing to adapt to the host community's lifestyle to integrate, while the host society must try to facilitate their integration.⁴⁰ This two-way approach to integration leads to a shared responsibility between refugees and the host society, which helps with the long-term integration of refugees into a host society, while cultivating more social cohesion.⁴¹

The Council of Europe corroborates that ‘integration’ is a contested term because concepts of what integration means differ per context as these contexts are strongly influenced by the understandings of ‘integration’ in national integration policies.⁴² This is substantiated by V. Robinson, who argues that the definition of integration depends on the context and on how it is individualised by the person or group using it.⁴³ Even though the exact definition of integration is debated and depends per context, there are, according to the Council of Europe, three main dimensions of integration that are undisputed namely, economic, cultural and social roles that refugees have in their host country.⁴⁴

As integration is a very broad concept, this thesis will specifically look at a combination of two of the above named dimensions, namely: ‘socio-economic integration’. Sawitri Saharso, who researched the integration definition debate, argues that refugee integration is seen by academics, such as Bakker *et al.*, as the socio-economic incorporation of refugees in host societies, and to the refugees’ socio-cultural adjustment to those societies.⁴⁵ Some critics, such as Willem Schinkel, say that this concept is too normative,

³⁹ S. Castles, M. Korac, E. Vasta, and S. Vertovec. “Integration: mapping the field.”, *Report carried out by the University of Oxford Centre for Migration and Policy Research and Refugee Studies Centre* (2002). p. 113-125. ; Rinus Penninx, Rinus, and Blanca Garcés-Masareñas. “The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept.” In *IMISCOE Research Series*, 11–29. Springer International Publishing, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-21674-4_2. p. 11-15.

; D. Shapiro, and R. Jørgensen. “‘ARE WE GOING TO STAY REFUGEES?’ Hyper-Precarious Processes in and beyond the Danish Integration Programme.” *Nordic Journal of Migration Research* 11, no. 2 (January 1, 2021): 172–87. <https://doi.org/10.33134/njmr.151>. p. 173-175

⁴⁰ Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 170-185. ; Sylvia Da Lomba, “Legal Status and Refugee Integration: A UK Perspective.” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 23, no. 4 (November 22, 2010): 415–36. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feq039>. p. 415. ; Bakker, Cheung, and Phillimore, “The Asylum-Integration Paradox: Comparing Asylum Support Systems and Refugee Integration in The Netherlands and the UK.” p. 4-8. ; Roxy Damen, Jaco Dagevos, and Willem Huijnk. “Refugee Reception Re-Examined: A Quantitative Study on the Impact of the Reception Period for Mental Health and Host Country Language Proficiency Among Syrian Refugees in the Netherlands.” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23, no. 1 (March 28, 2021): 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00820-6>. p. 1-10

⁴¹ Da Lomba, “Legal Status and Refugee Integration: A UK Perspective.” p. 415-417.

⁴² Council of Europe. “Measurement and indicators of integration.” *Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs*, January 1, 1997.

⁴³ V. Robinson, “Defining and Measuring Successful Refugee Integration” *Proceedings of ECRE International Conference*, November, 1998. p. 118-125.

⁴⁴ UNHCR, “The Integration of Refugees: a Discussion Paper.” UNHCR, 2014). https://www.unhcr.org/cy/wp-content/uploads/sites/41/2018/02/integration_discussion_paper_july_2014_EN.pdf (Accessed on June 10, 2023) ;

⁴⁵ Sawitri Saharso, “Who Needs Integration? Debating a Central, yet Increasingly Contested Concept in Migration Studies.” *Comparative Migration Studies* 7, no. 1 (May 1, 2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-019-0123-9>. p. 1-4 ; Huijnk, Dagevos, and Miltenburg, “Een Staalkaart van Statushouders.” p. 360. ; Linda Bakker, Jaco Dagevos, and Godfried Engbersen, “The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees. A

because the notion of a ‘society’ is problematic, as it suggests that the host population is homogenous and socially cohesive wherein only ‘others’, namely refugees, must integrate – although no host country has a homogenous population.⁴⁶ However, the concept of host society will be used for this thesis, as the Dutch Government argues that newcomers “should follow the citizenship requirements that are imposed on all citizens in the Netherlands ... to participate into [Dutch] society.”⁴⁷ The Government implies that there is a normative society, in which newcomers have to internalise citizenship requirements to become part of this society.

Rinus Penninx and Blanca Garcés-Mascareñas write that the socio-economic dimension focusses on the social and economic position of all people in a country and that it can give insight into whether a refugee has equal access to and participation in domains relating to finding work, housing, and education by making comparisons between refugees and host citizens. They argue that measuring a refugee’s position comparatively is possible because the socio-economic domains are universal and relate to basic needs.⁴⁸

The Government also defines integration as a two-way process and centre their integration policies largely around the socio-economic domains of employment and language, which are according to the HCT important factors for economic integration.⁴⁹ However, in contrast to academics like Damen and Bakker, the Government argues that integration can only begin once the refugee status has been granted to an asylum seeker.⁵⁰ I disagree with the Government’s view as I believe that refugees cannot avoid direct integration, because interactions with locals and planting roots start immediately. This is substantiated by Ukrainian Refugee D that I interviewed for this thesis, “Life is not temporary, life goes on every day. Our integration started automatically on arrival”.⁵¹ And so this thesis will build on the definition of integration being a two-way process that begins upon arrival in the host society, while focussing specifically on the socio-economic incorporation of refugees in host societies by looking at and comparing the access and participation of Ukrainian and Syrian refugees in the domains of employment and language.

Study on the Impact of Length of Stay in Asylum Accommodation and Residence Status on Socio-Economic Integration for the Four Largest Refugee Groups in the Netherlands.” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 15, no. 3 (July 23, 2013): 431–48. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-013-0296-2>. p. 433-434.

⁴⁶ Willem Schinkel. “The Virtualization of Citizenship.” *Critical Sociology* 36, no. 2 (March 1, 2010): 265–83. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920509357506>. p.265-270. ; Saharso, “Who Needs Integration? Debating a Central, yet Increasingly Contested Concept in Migration Studies.” p. 1-5.

⁴⁷ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Integratie Agenda.”; Rijksoverheid. “Memorie van Toelichting.” November 16, 2011. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33086-3.html#gerelateerd>

⁴⁸ Penninx and Garcés-Mascareñas, “The Concept of Integration as an Analytical Tool and as a Policy Concept.” p.14 – 17.

⁴⁹ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Integratie Agenda 2013 | Uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl > Documenten.” March 1, 2013.

<https://www.uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl/documenten/publicaties/subsidies/europees-integratiefonds-cif/aanvragen/integratie-agenda-2013> (Accessed June 21, 2023); De Vroome, and Van Tubergen. “The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands.” P.X

⁵⁰ Damen, Dagevos, and Huijnk. “Refugee Reception Re-Examined.” p. 2-5. ; Bakker, “Seeking Sanctuary in the Netherlands.” p.15.

⁵¹ Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

2.3 Analytical Framework

The analytical framework that will be used in this thesis is called: *A Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration*, formulated by Ager and Strang.⁵² They describe their framework as a ‘middle-range theory’ that provides a structured and systematic basis in the analysis of what a normative understanding of successful integration. The framework consists out of ten core domains relating to four overall themes namely, markers and means, social connections, facilitators and foundations.⁵³ Ager and Strang partially articulate the rights and responsibilities in the integration domains that refugees should share with members of the host-society to become full members of society, which enables comparisons to be made within the domains by looking at the access and participation of refugees in, for example, the employment domain. These comparisons can show how policy regulations influence the process of integration of refugees and therefor provides insight in how refugee policies impact integration.⁵⁴

Ager and Strang’s framework is seen as a prominent model in refugee integration studies and according to the Scottish Refugee Council it is “the most rounded basis from which an empirical study of integration can flow.”⁵⁵ The framework is often used to make integration comparisons, to formulate frameworks pertaining to the context of a specific country or to structure research on integration. An example of the former is the study by Scott Feinstein *et al.*, who researched the experiences of Syrian refugees in Germany, France and Switzerland by using the integration domains of Ager and Strand for comparison. They concluded that Syrians experienced discrimination in all countries and across all domains and found that the outsourcing of refugee services by the state increased integration barriers.⁵⁶ Another research that used the framework is the study by Sandra Pertek *et al.*, on gender-based violence, refugees and integration. They use the framework as an analytical structure to examine the relationship between integration and gender-based violence. They conclude that the integration domains can act as a shield from abuse, however the domains can also further expose women to gender-based violence as a result of being embedded in structural inequalities.⁵⁷

As this thesis focusses on the socio-economic integration of refugees through a human capital lens, I have decided to focus on two core domains, namely: employment and language. These domains will help answer how the Dutch policies shape the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees. In addition, this framework will lead the analysis of the experiences of these refugee groups with how the Dutch policies shape their integration. I chose the employment domain, belonging to the theme of markers and means, because employment is a key area of socio-economic integration as it can foster a sense of belonging and produce social connections between refugees and host-societies,

⁵² Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 166-191.

⁵³ Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 166-182.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Scottish Refugee Council. “Integration Literature Review” February, 2010.

<https://www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Integration-Literature-Review-Feb-2010.pdf>

⁵⁶ Scott Grant Feinstein, Cristina Poleacovschi, Riley Drake, and Leslie Ann Winters. “States and Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of France, Germany, and Switzerland.” *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 23, no. 4 (January 7, 2022): 2167–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12134-021-00929-8>. p. 2167-2170

⁵⁷ S. Pertek, J. Phillimore and L. Alidu. “Sexual and gender-based violence and refugees: the impacts of and on integration.” *Research Output* (University of Birmingham, 2018).

<https://research.birmingham.ac.uk/en/publications/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-and-refugees-the-impacts-of-and->

contributing to the two-way integration process.⁵⁸ Researching this domain is useful for my analysis as policy documents are often structured around the labour market.

The second domain is language, which belongs to the theme of facilitators. Language is important for my analysis of the socio-economic integration of the two refugee groups, also in accordance with HCT, as being able to speak the host society's main language facilitates refugees in navigating their way through the host country and surpassing other barriers of integration.⁵⁹ Learning the host country's language and culture has also proven to contribute to a better and sometimes higher economic integration for refugees, as it can offer higher chances of employment.⁶⁰

Although, Ager and Strang's framework has provided an influential and comprehensive model of integration, there are also some important critiques to keep in mind.⁶¹ An important critique is made by several academics on the subject of adding domains to the framework. In the Dutch context this is being argued by Amanda Alencar, who states that the role of social media should be added as a domain to the framework. She argues that the use of social media helps refugees with their language proficiency and with making social connections, which positively influences their integration.⁶² Alencar makes an interesting point, however I argue that social media does not play that big of a role in integration for the whole refugee population, when elderly and children, who often do not use social media, are taken into account.

According to Linda Tip *et al.* and to Jenny Phillimore the labelling of the four themes in the framework suggests that there are interdependencies between the domains. However, they argue that there is insufficient understanding of the interplay between domain linkages and how progress or regression influences other domains.⁶³ This is something that Ager and Strang themselves have emphasized and stated that further research is needed on these interlinkages.⁶⁴ This has been done by, for example, Bakker *et al.* who draws on Ager and Strang, and researched how the length of staying in an ASC impacts the mental health of an asylum seeker in the Netherlands.⁶⁵ Also Anne Kuschel *et al.* use Ager and Strang's model to research how the integration of refugees with low-literacy in the Netherlands can benefit from more interconnectedness between language and intergroup contact. They argue that integration programs should combine and implement contact with the Dutch, language training and work experience to stimulate integration, as progress in one domain, may influence progress in other domains.⁶⁶ With my research I aim to add to the body of literature on the interlinkages between domains, by focussing in Chapter 5.1 on how language

⁵⁸ Courtney G. Brell, Christian Dustmann, and Ian Preston. "The Labor Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries." *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 34, no. 1 (February 1, 2020): 94–121. <https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.34.1.94>. p.95-96.

⁵⁹ Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, "The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees." p. 15.

⁶⁰ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands." p. 395-400.

⁶¹ Hynie. "Refugee Integration: Research and Policy." p. 267-270.

⁶² Alencar, Amanda Paz. "Refugee Integration and Social Media: A Local and Experiential Perspective." *Information, Communication & Society* 21, no. 11 (June 21, 2017): 1588–1603. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118x.2017.1340500>. p. 1598-1601.

⁶³ Linda K. Tip *et al.*, "Improving Refugee Well-Being with Better Language Skills and More Intergroup Contact," *Social Psychological and Personality Science* 10, no. 2 (August 21, 2018): 144–51.

<https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617752062>. p. 147-149. ; J. Phillimore. "Implementing Integration in the UK: Lessons for Integration Theory, Policy and Practice." *Policy & Politics* 40, no.4, (2012): 525-545. 10.1332/030557312X643795. p. 540-545.

⁶⁴ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." p. 184-186.

⁶⁵ Bakker, Cheung, and Phillimore, "The Asylum-Integration Paradox: Comparing Asylum Support Systems and Refugee Integration in The Netherlands and the UK." p. 118-129.

⁶⁶ Kuschel, Hansen, Heyse, & Wittek. "Combining Language Training and Work Experience for Refugees with Low-Literacy Levels: A Mixed-Methods Case Study." p. 1-23.

proficiency can have a positive influence on the employability of Syrians and Ukrainians in the Netherlands. This is something that, in this context, has not been researched and may contribute to a better understanding of how policies can form a key or barrier to the socio-economic integration of refugees.

Taking these critiques into account, I still believe that the framework is the correct one to use as it is composed out of ten core domains, which together form what the Dutch Government sees as successful integration. Furthermore, Ager and Strang's inductive approach to integration and their developed framework on what constitutes 'successful integration' is not only a basis to apply to different contexts, but can also be used to analyse the same single setting over time, making comparison possible. This is fundamental for my research as the setting of my thesis stays consistent namely, the Netherlands, but is spread over a time span of eight years, wherein contexts have changed.

And so the domains of employment and language will be used in my analysis and comparison of the differing Dutch refugee policies by systematically testing the content of policies regarding employment and language to see how they shape the socio-economic integration of both refugee groups. Furthermore, these two domains will lead the analytical chapters on how Syrian and Ukrainian refugees experience how the policies shape their socio-economic integration into the Netherlands

2.4 Refugee Integration in the Netherlands

In this section I will briefly shed light on refugee integration in the Netherlands, by focussing on the discussions pertaining to employment and language acquisition.

As discussed in section 2.2, the Government emphasizes that it is important for refugees to integrate in Dutch society by e.g. learning the language, which according to the Government and academics like Arend Odé and Jaco Dagevos, has a positive effect on their integration. Odé and Dagevos, who researched the Dutch labour market position of Syrians, argue that the refugee policy on language acquisition has a positive influence on the economic integration of Syrians and that having social connections with the Dutch has a positive influence on their participation.⁶⁷ However, Moos Pozzo and Adina Nerghes, who researched the impacts of the language policy on refugee integration, critique the Dutch language policy. They argue that the mandatory language acquisition rule is paradoxical for refugee integration, as it generates inclusion and exclusion by restricting the opportunities for refugees to connect with locals, as the policy does not allow participants to study Dutch with the Dutch, but only with the teacher and other refugees.⁶⁸ Roxy Damen *et al.* research the perspectives of Syrian and Eritrean newcomers on integration in the Netherlands. They conclude from the newcomers' experiences that the implementation of the integration policies' aims, such as acquiring Dutch language proficiency, is inadequate.⁶⁹ These studies are interesting for my thesis, as the Dutch Government emphasizes that "language proficiency ... is the basis to function in Dutch

⁶⁷ Arend Odé and Jaco Dagevos. "Statushouders aan het werk. De moeizame positieverwerving op de arbeidsmarkt en de betekenis van beleidsfactoren." *Mens en maatschappij* 92, no. 4 (2017): 447-468. 10.5117/MEM2017.4.ODÉ. p. 449-456.

⁶⁸ Moos Pozzo & Adina Nerghes, 'Dutch without the Dutch: discourse, policy, and program impacts on the social integration and language acquisition of young refugees (ages 12–23)', *Social Identities*, 26 (2020) 6, pp. 842-860, here: pp. 843-857. 844-857. DOI: 10.1080/13504630.2020.1814721

⁶⁹ Roxy Damen, Meta Van Der Linden, Jaco Dagevos, and Willem Huijnk. "About but Not without: Recently Arrived Refugees' Understanding of and Expectations for Integration within a Local Policy Context in the Netherlands." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, January 10, 2022, 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15562948.2021.2023720>. p. 1-9.

society.”⁷⁰ However, by reviewing the above discussed literature and looking at the refugee policies, I argue that the policy aims are detrimental to refugee integration, and that the actual implementation of the policies does not foster the right circumstances for refugees to integrate into the Netherlands.

With regard to employment, there are again differences in policies. Ukrainians are allowed to start working immediately, while Syrian refugees are only allowed to start working when their asylum request is at least six months pending.⁷¹ According to Tesseltje de Lange and Ezgi Özdemi several elements, such as the six months waiting period, of the refugee policy on employment hinders the labour market access of refugees.⁷² Peter Scholten argues that the waiting barrier hinders the socio-economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands and that the longer refugees are excluded from participating, the bigger the refugee gap is, which is according to Bakker the employment and wage gap between refugees and other migrants.⁷³

According to the World Economic Forum access to the labour market contributes greatly to the integration of Ukrainian refugees in host societies.⁷⁴ This is substantiated by Mihaela Robila who argues that employment is the most important variable to secure the integration of refugees, because it enables interactions and increases language proficiency.⁷⁵ However, Roman Vlasenko argues that the language barrier is the biggest integration hurdle for Ukrainian refugees in host-countries, because it limits not only day-to-day tasks, but also their labour market position.⁷⁶ This is also true in the Dutch context and is corroborated by Ukrainian Refugee D, with whom I conducted an interview. She explained that she cannot get a job according to her qualifications, because she does not know the language.⁷⁷

The Dutch Advisory Council for Migration (ACM) argues that it is important for Ukrainians, who are often highly educated, to do work that fits their qualifications to prevent capital loss.⁷⁸ However, the OECD writes that Ukrainians often have low-skilled jobs in host-countries, as these jobs have less problems with skills transferability and language barriers. The skills-mismatch is also prevalent in the Netherlands, where most of the employed Ukrainians work in low-skilled sectors and on a temporary basis.⁷⁹ According to Robila and Bakker

⁷⁰ Rijksoverheid. “Memorie van Toelichting.” November 16, 2011. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33086-3.html#gerelateerd>

⁷¹ Tesseltje de Lange and Ezgi Özdemi. “Asielzoekers & Daadwerkelijke Toegang tot Werk in Nederland.” *Centrum voor Migratierecht*, (Radboud Universiteit 2020). <https://hdl.handle.net/2066/220303> p. 6-33 ; Migration and Home Affairs. “Temporary Protection.”

⁷² de Lange and Özdemi. “Asielzoekers & Daadwerkelijke Toegang tot Werk in Nederland.” p. 29-33.

⁷³ Peter Scholten, *Policy Innovation in Refugee Integration. A Comparative Analysis of Innovative Policy Strategies to Refugee Integration in Europe*. (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2017) <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/122531> p. 8-16, 43. ; Bakker, Dagevos and Engbersen. “Explaining the refugee gap: a longitudinal study on labourmarket participation of refugees in the Netherlands.” <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1251835> p. 1775-1780.

⁷⁴ World Economic Forum. “Enabling the Economic Integration of Refugees: Lessons learned on refugee employment and employability from the rapid response to Ukraine.” WEF-Briefing Papers, January, 2023. https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Enabling_the_Economic_Integration_of_Refugees_Lessons_learned_on_refugee_employment_and_employability_2023.pdf p. 1-3.

⁷⁵ Mihaela Robila. “Refugees and Social Integration in Europe.” PhD. Thesis (University of New York, 2018) (https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf) p.11.

⁷⁶ Roman Vlasenko. “Overcoming the Language Barrier for Ukrainian Refugees.” *GLOBSEC*, February 17, 2023. <https://www.globsec.org/what-we-do/publications/overcoming-language-barrier-ukrainian-refugees> p. 1-2.

⁷⁷ Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

⁷⁸ Adviesraad Migratie. “Tijdelijke bescherming voor Oekraïense ontheemen op de lange termijn.” *Signalering*, September, 2022. p. 9-10

⁷⁹ CBS. “Oekraïners in Nederland - Asiel en integratie 2023.” CBS, April 13, 2023. <https://longreads.cbs.nl/asielenintegratie-2023/oekraïners-in-nederland/>. (Accessed on July 5, 2023).

Adriaan de Jonge. “Taallessen voor Oekraïense vluchtelingen,” *Binnenlands Bestuur*, n.d. <https://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/sociaal/gemeenten-gaan-taallessen-voor-oekraïners-regelen>. (Accessed July 28,

overqualification can cause downward professional mobility, resulting in losing human capital, which can negatively influence the motivation to work and have a negative effect on the labour market participation of a refugee.⁸⁰

By looking at the Dutch refugee integration context, it becomes clear that both policies hinder and progress the integration of Syrians and Ukrainians into the Netherlands. Even though there are some negative aspects to the labour access of Ukrainians, such as skills-mismatching, the TPD gives Ukrainians an advantage over the Syrians in economically integrating into Dutch society. In contrast to the Ukrainians, the Syrians do receive Dutch lessons from the Government, who argue that language is the key to participating in the Netherlands. However, the reviewed literature shows that the policy aims are not properly implemented, causing language acquisition barriers for Syrians. Both policies seem to have a negative effect on the human capital of these refugees, as both groups are being hindered in gaining post-migration capital, because of restrictions in labour market access or language acquisition.

In the next chapter I will elaborate more on the differences between policies and briefly shed a light as to why there are differences, according to the respondents I interviewed and to reviewed literature.

2023). ; OECD. "What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine." *OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine*, January 6, 2023. <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/what-we-know-about-the-skills-and-early-labour-market-outcomes-of-refugees-from-ukraine-c7e694aa/#sr-heading-d1e926-0>

⁸⁰ Linda Bakker, Jaco Dagevos and Godfried Engbersen. "Explaining the refugee gap: a longitudinal study on labourmarket participation of refugees in the Netherlands." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no.11 (2017): 1775-1791. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1251835> p. 1775-1776.

Chapter 3: The Dutch Refugee Policy

In this chapter the differences between the refugee policies on employment and on language for Syrians and Ukrainians are discussed and compared. Furthermore, I briefly touch upon possible reasons as to why the policies differ by reviewing literature and using twelve conducted interviews with refugees and experts.

The main policy that applies to Syrians is the Wet Inburgering (Wi2013), while the primary policy for Ukrainians is the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD).⁸¹ On the first of January 2022 a new Wet Inburgering 2021 (Wi2021) came into effect.⁸² However, I explicitly made the decision to focus on the Wi2013 and not on the Wi2021, as most of the Syrian refugees in the Netherlands fall under the old policy and because the majority of the Syrian refugees who came after the 1st of January 2022 are still in the asylum procedure.

3.1 The Wet Inburgering 2013 and the Integration Agenda

The asylum legislation of the Netherlands is not a self-standing law and has been subject of revision many times. It is partly based on the *Vreemdelingenwet 2000* (Vw2000), which manages the immigration and legal status of all foreigners in the Netherlands.⁸³ The Vw2000 applies to third-country nationals wanting to live in the Netherlands for a longer period of time, which is only legally possible with a residence permit. To be eligible for such permit, the law states that individuals must undergo the integration process, which is further elaborated on in the Wi2013 and in the Integration Agenda 2013, a policy document entailing all main objectives relating to the integration of newcomers.⁸⁴ The Dutch integration framework is not targeted specifically at refugees, but applies to all third-country nationals, who have to integrate and so this section will use the term ‘newcomer’, as it applies to all third-country nationals arriving in the Netherlands, including refugees.⁸⁵

The Wi2013 governs the integration process of newcomers by setting out laws on the requirements and obligations for newcomers who want to stay in the Netherlands for a longer period of time. Its main goal is the successful integration of newcomers, so that they can participate as quickly as possible in Dutch society.⁸⁶ To be able to participate in society, the law requires individuals to complete the mandatory integration programme, which focusses on acquiring the Dutch language, on civic education and orientation of the labour market and Dutch society. Newcomers are responsible for their own integration programme and passing the integration exams.⁸⁷ In article 7 and 16 of the Wi2013 it is stated that newcomers can

⁸¹ Government of the Netherlands. “Kamerstuk 32824, Nr. 380 | Overheid.NL > Officiële Bekendmakingen.” December 22, 2022. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-380.html>. (Accessed on June 4, 2023).

⁸² Rijksoverheid. “Wet Inburgering 2021.” January 1, 2022. <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0044770/2023-01-01>

⁸³ Nederlands Jeugdinstituut, “Wet- en regelgeving vluchtelingenkinderen”, *Nederlands Jeugdinstituut*, n.d. <https://www.nji.nl/vluchtelingen/wet-en-regelgeving#europees-verdrag-voor-de-rechten-van-de-mens>. (Accessed on July 1, 2023). ; Rijksoverheid. “Vreemdelingenwet 2000.” March 9, 2013.

<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0011823/2013-03-09>

⁸⁴ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Wet Inburgering 2013.” Inburgeren in Nederland | Rijksoverheid.nl, December 30, 2022. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/inburgeren-in-nederland/wet-inburgering-2013>. ; Rijksoverheid. “Wet Inburgering 2013.” <https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0020611/2013-01-01> ; Rijksoverheid. “Vreemdelingenwet 2000.” ; Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Integratie Agenda 2013 | Uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl > Documenten.”

⁸⁵ European Website on Integration. “Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection into the Labour Market: Policies and Good Practices,” October 21, 2004. <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/library-document/integration-beneficiaries-international-protection-labour-market-policies-and-good-en>. (Accessed on June 1, 2023).

⁸⁶ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Wet Inburgering 2013.”

⁸⁷ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Wet inburgering 2013.” ; European Website on Integration. “Governance of Migrant Integration in the Netherlands,” July 13, 2023. https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-netherlands_en#integration-strategy. (Accessed on June 1, 2023) ; Peter Scholten *et al.* *Policy Innovation in Refugee Integration. A Comparative Analysis of Innovative Policy*

receive a loan from the Government to pay for these courses, if newcomers acquire the oral and written skills at least at A2-level, then the loan does not need to be paid back.⁸⁸ The logic behind the integration programme is that when individuals develop sufficient language proficiency and cultural knowledge, they will be able to integrate successfully.⁸⁹

The Wi2013 was implemented alongside the Integration Agenda 2013 under the Rutte-Asscher cabinet 2012-2017.⁹⁰ Asscher, the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, presented the Agenda to the House of Representatives and said “Integration is a matter for all of us. Integration means adapting and letting go. That is necessary to become part of this society.”⁹¹ Asscher further explains that integration is a two-way street: it should be a mutual effort from both the migrants and from the host society, however migrants are obligated to put more work in the integration process.⁹²

The Agenda states that a stable Dutch society and successful integration necessitates building on a foundation of shared core values and this is why newcomers should internalize the core values of Dutch society as their own, while being allowed to maintain their cultural and religious identity. Furthermore, the Agenda states that is important that everyone, newcomers and people who are born and bred in the Netherlands, participates in society and is self-reliant. To be able to participate in Dutch society, knowledge of the Dutch language is necessary, because language proficiency makes people independent, connects people and creates new opportunities.⁹³

As one of the Agenda’s starting-points is self-reliance, it is the newcomer’s responsibility to arrange that they gain the appropriate language classes to pass the integration exam. The logic behind this is that by giving newcomers the responsibility to arrange language classes, agency is put into their hands, resulting in to self-reliance.⁹⁴ The Government does not provide Dutch language courses to asylum seekers, who are still in the asylum process, as offering these lessons by the Government can create expectations about their chances to gain a permit.⁹⁵

The Agenda also discusses that labour participation is essential for integration and

Strategies to Refugee Integration in Europe (Erasmus University Rotterdam, 2017) <http://hdl.handle.net/1765/122531> p.46.

⁸⁸Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Wet Inburgering 2013.”; Bakker *et al.* “Beleidsontwikkelingen ten aanzien van de integratie van statushouders in Nederland sinds 2014.” p.8. ; Alexander Wolffhardt, Carmine Conte and Sinem Yilmaz “The European Benchmark for Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of the National Integration Evaluation Mechanism in 14 EU Countries” *National Integration Evaluation Mechanism Report*, 2020. <https://www.migpolgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/The-European-benchmark-for-refugee-integration.pdf> p. 149-150 ; Scholten et al. *Policy Innovation in Refugee Integration*. p.46-50.

⁸⁹ Han Entzinger. “The growing gap between facts and discourse on immigrant integration in the Netherlands.” *Identities: Global Studies in Power and Culture* 21, no. 6 (2014). 10.1080/1070289X.2013.828616.

⁹⁰ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Integratie Agenda 2013.”; Mark Rutte & D. Samsom. *Bruggen slaan. Regeerakkoord VVD - PvdA. 29 oktober 2012*. Regeerakkoord voor de periode 2012 – 2015, (2012). <http://www.rijksoverheid.nl/documenten-en-publicaties/rapporten/2012/10/29/regeerakkoord.html> ; Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Wet inburgering 2013.” <https://www.uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl/documenten/publicaties/subsidies/europees-integratiefonds-eif/aanvragen/integratie-agenda-2013> (Accessed June 21, 2023).

⁹¹ Government of the Netherlands. “Kamerstuk 32824, nr. 7 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen,” February 21, 2013. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-7.html> (Accessed on June 2, 2023)

⁹² Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Integratie Agenda 2013 | Uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl > Documenten.”

⁹³ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. “Integratie Agenda 2013 | Uitvoeringvanbeleidszw.nl > Documenten.”

⁹⁴ Government of the Netherlands. “Kamerstuk 32824, nr. 7 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen,” February 21, 2013. ; Government of the Netherlands. “Kamerstuk 32824, nr. 79 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen,” November 28, 2014. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-79.html>. (Accessed June 2, 2023)

⁹⁵ Government of the Netherlands, “Kamerstuk 19637, nr. 2073 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen,” October 29, 2015. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-19637-2073.html>.

emphasizes that language acquisition is important to participate in the labour market. Newcomer's employment and access to the labour market is regulated in the *Wet Arbeid Vreemdelingen* (WaV). Article 11.2 states that asylum seekers, who are still in the process of receiving their permit, are only allowed to work for 24-weeks per year.⁹⁶ Asylum seekers are further restricted as working for 24-weeks per year is only possible when the employer has requested and received a *tewerkstellingsvergunning*, a permit that allows an employer to employ someone from outside the European Economic Area. This permit can only be requested when the asylum seeker has been at least six months in the asylum procedure.⁹⁷

As discussed above, the aim behind the Wi2013 and the Agenda Integration is enabling newcomers to master the language and to gain knowledge of society and the labour market, so that they are able to build a self-reliant existence. However, only when asylum seekers have gained the permission to stay in the Netherlands and have successfully completed the language and integration exams, do they get full access to the labour market, to education and to social security.⁹⁸ The WRR describes this sequenced approach as a 'loss of time', because learning Dutch can take up to three years, which means that newcomers do not have access to the labour market for three years, which therefore hinders their economic integration.⁹⁹

The rules and obligations applied to refugees, who are seen to be permanent residents, are in stark contrast with the Ukrainian refugees, who fall under the TPD and are seen as temporary residents in the Netherlands. Ukrainian refugees are not constrained by regulations obligating them to complete the integration process to be able to participate in Dutch society. In contrast, even though they are here temporarily, the TPD gives them immediate access to integration domains such as the labour market and social security.

3.2 The Temporary Protection Directive

The second biggest refugee group in the Netherlands is composed of Ukrainian refugees, who have been arriving in the Netherlands since the 24th of February 2022. On the 14th of April 2023 there were 91.930 Ukrainians registered in the Dutch Personal Records Database.¹⁰⁰

Due to the large scale of displaced Ukrainians, the European Commission activated the TPD, which was adopted in 2001 following the conflicts in former Yugoslavia, which resulted in a mass influx of displaced people in Europe. The TPD is used when the European Council determines that a mass influx of refugees may overflow the standard asylum system, which could have a detrimental effect on the system's ability to function effectively, resulting in negatively affecting the people who are applying for international protection.¹⁰¹ When the TPD is activated, member states are obligated to offer temporary protection and effective

⁹⁶ Tesseltje de Lange. "Asylum Seekers' Limited Right to Work in the Netherlands." In *Towards a Decent Labour Market for Low Waged Migrant Workers*, edited by Tesseltje de Lange and Conny Rijken, 169–86. Amsterdam University Press, 2018. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv6hp34j.10>. p. 170-173.

⁹⁷ Scholten et al. *Policy Innovation in Refugee Integration*. p. 47-48. ; Bakker, Cheung, and Phillimore. "The Asylum-Integration Paradox: Comparing Asylum Support Systems and Refugee Integration in The Netherlands and the UK." p.7.

⁹⁸ Bakker, Cheung, and Phillimore. "The Asylum-Integration Paradox: Comparing Asylum Support Systems and Refugee Integration in The Netherlands and the UK." p.6-7. ; The Dutch Government, "Kamerstuk 32824, nr. 118 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen," December 21, 2015. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-32824-118.html>.

⁹⁹ Engbersen et al. "No time to lose: from reception to integration of asylum migrants." p.15, 25-39.

¹⁰⁰ Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid. "Verzamelbrief opvang Oekraïne april 2023." Kamerstuk | Rijksoverheid.nl, July 26, 2023. <https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/opvang-vluchtelingen-uit-oekraïne/documenten/kamerstukken/2023/04/14/tk-verzamelbrief-opvang-oekraïne>.

¹⁰¹ Migration and Home Affairs. "Temporary Protection," n.d. https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies/migration-and-asylum/common-european-asylum-system/temporary-protection_en.

assistance to the people that fall under the Council's specific directive. Member states must provide these displaced people, among other things, a residence permit, access to the labour market and shelter.¹⁰²

In the Netherlands the TPD is also upheld, however the Dutch Government implemented it in the Vw2000 under article 43a as a *besluitmoratorium*, a decision in which the period for taking decisions on asylum is extended to a maximum of 21 months for a specific category of asylum seekers, because there is uncertainty about the situation of the country of origin.¹⁰³ Ukrainians do not receive a residence permit, but do have legal residence based on their submitted asylum application.¹⁰⁴ Treating people that fall under the TPD as asylum seekers, meant that they would be housed in asylum seeker centres (ASC) and that they could only work if the employer has a tewerkstellingsvergunning. Just like other asylum seekers, such as the Syrians, a tewerkstellingsvergunning may be issued after being six-months in the asylum procedure for 24 weeks per year.¹⁰⁵

Even though the Netherlands has chosen to legally see Ukrainians as asylum seekers, in practice they are treated very different. The Ukrainians have not been officially asked to apply for asylum. At the moment it is sufficient for Ukrainians to register themselves at an appointed municipality under the Personal Records Database, where they receive a PIN.¹⁰⁶ This is in contrast with Syrian refugees, who have to go to Ter Apel, the central reception location for asylum seekers, and start the official asylum procedure, whereafter they are moved to a different ASC.¹⁰⁷ Furthermore, as Ukrainians do not have to go through the whole asylum process, they are for the most part residing in emergency shelters solely for Ukrainians, which is in contrast with other asylum seekers, who are housed in multiple ASC's for the duration of their procedure.¹⁰⁸

Not only does the Dutch policy for Ukrainians differ in registration and shelter from the policy for other refugees, but it also differs in policies relating to labour. The TPD states, "The rights of beneficiaries of temporary protection include: The right to work as an employee or as a self-employed person."¹⁰⁹ And so the TPD resulted into Ukrainians gaining access to the Dutch labour market as of the 1st of April 2022 by amending the WaV.¹¹⁰ Additionally, employers do not need a tewerkstellingsvergunning for Ukrainian refugees,

¹⁰² Verblifblog, "Tijdelijke bescherming van Oekraïners in Nederland", Verblifblog, June 9, 2022. <https://verblifblog.nl/tijdelijke-bescherming-van-oekraïners-in-nederland> (Accessed June 3, 2023).

¹⁰³ Rijksoverheid. "Wet arbeid Vreemdelingen 2013." January 1, 2013.

<https://wetten.overheid.nl/BWBR0007149/2023-01-01>; Verblifblog, "Besluitmoratorium." *Verblifblog*, November 19, 2016. <https://verblifblog.nl/Woordenboek%20van%20het%20migratierecht/besluitmoratorium/>. (Accessed June 3, 2023); Sia Dhian Ho, *Opvang van Oekraïners in Nederland: een kwestie van lange adem*. p.1-15.

¹⁰⁴ Verblifblog, "Tijdelijke bescherming van Oekraïners in Nederland." ; Rijksoverheid. "Vreemdelingenwet 2000."; Sia Dhian Ho, *Opvang van Oekraïners in Nederland: een kwestie van lange adem*.

¹⁰⁵ Verblifblog, "Tijdelijke bescherming van Oekraïners in Nederland." ; Bakker, Cheung, and Phillimore. "The Asylum-Integration Paradox: Comparing Asylum Support Systems and Refugee Integration in The Netherlands and the UK." p.6-7

¹⁰⁶ Raad Van State. "Tijdelijke wet opvang ontheemden Oekraïne." n.d. <https://www.raadvanstate.nl/adviezen/@136660/w16-23-00078-ii/>. (Accessed on June 5, 2023).

¹⁰⁷ Bakker, "Seeking Sanctuary in the Netherlands." p. 16-23.

¹⁰⁸ Municipality of Den Haag. "Oekraïne: veelgestelde vragen." December 19, 2022.

<https://www.denhaag.nl/nl/bestuur-en-organisatie/oekraïne/oekraïne-veelgestelde-vragen.htm> (Accessed on June 5, 2023).

¹⁰⁹ Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken. "Tijdelijke Beschermingsrichtlijn | ecer.minbuza.nl > Asiel en Immigratie." (n.d.) <https://ecer.minbuza.nl/ecer/dossiers/asiel-en-immigratie/gemeenschappelijk-asielbeleid/tijdelijke-beschermingsrichtlijn>

¹¹⁰ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen 2022." March, 2022. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/stb-2022-130.html#extrainformatie>

which contrast the regulations applied to Syrian refugees.¹¹¹ This major discrepancy in policies has a differing impact on the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees in contrast to Ukrainian refugees, because Syrian refugees' access to the labour market is impeded for the first six months, while Ukrainians have immediate and unrestricted access to the labour market.

The effect of this discrepancy is substantiated by statistics of the UWV, an institute that helps people search for employment. The UWV shared in November 2022 that almost 80% of the Ukrainian refugees have found employment in the Netherlands. This high economic participation, is in stark contrast with the labour participation of other refugee groups. Research centre Divosa published that of the refugees who arrived in the Netherlands from 2014 onwards, in particular Syrians, only one third has paid employment.¹¹² This is foremostly a consequence of the labour restrictions, like the tewerkstellingsvergunning, from which the Ukrainians are exempt.¹¹³

And so, the TPD offers Ukrainians immediate access to the Dutch labour market and therefore has a positive effect on their economic integration. According to Ager and Strang, being employed helps with the integration of refugees, as they interact with locals, participate in society and become self-sufficient. Although Ukrainians have access to the employment domain, they do not have durable access to the language domain. This is because, in contrast to Syrian refugees, Ukrainian refugees do not have to go through the integration process as they are supposedly here temporarily, and so they are not eligible to follow the language courses of the Government's integration programme. However, since February 2023, the Government has allocated €15 million to municipalities to organise free and optional language courses for Ukrainians, because of a growing demand for language support.¹¹⁴

According to Ager and Strang having knowledge of the host society's language improves the integration of refugees, as they are able to make connections with locals, navigate through the social landscape and better their economic position on the labour market.¹¹⁵

Although the Rijksoverheid states that Ukrainians do not have to integrate, they do receive several of the Ager and Strang integration domains, such as employment. This enforces the heart of my research paradox, as Syrians who are here on a permanent basis are delayed in receiving access to these domains. Even though the Rijksoverheid states that Ukrainian refugees are in the Netherlands temporarily and therefore do not need to integrate, a research from the Opora Foundation states that one third of the Ukrainians in the Netherlands want to stay permanently, one third wants to go back when Ukraine is safe and one third is not sure.¹¹⁶ This research implies that the Government should start thinking about possible long-

¹¹¹ Vluchtelingenwerk. "Veelgestelde vragen over Oekraïne." *Vluchtelingenwerk* (n.d).

<https://www.vluchtelingenwerk.nl/nl/steun-oekraïense-vluchtelingen/veelgestelde-vragen-over-oekraïne#:~:text=Moeten%20vluchtelingen%20uit%20Oekraïne%20asiel,de%20BRP%20bij%20de%20gemeente>.

¹¹² Marije van Dodeweerd. "Factsheet statushouders: rapportage werk, onderwijs en inburgering 2021." *Divosa* (n.d.)

<https://www.divosa.nl/publicaties/factsheet-statushouders-rapportage-werk-onderwijs-en-inburgering-2021/factsheet#:~:text=Statushouders%20zijn%20asielmigranten%20die%20een,in%20de%20Divosa%20Benchmark%20Statushouders>.

¹¹³ Marieke de Ruiter. "Oekraïense vluchtelingen vinden massaal werk op krappe arbeidsmarkt." *De Volkskrant*, November 22, 2022. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/nieuws-achtergrond/oekraïense-vluchtelingen-vinden-massaal-werk-op-krappe-arbeidsmarkt~b1337ccf/> (Accessed on May 23, 2023).

¹¹⁴ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Meer ondersteuning voor Oekraïense vluchtelingen." Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl, February 23, 2023.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/02/23/meer-ondersteuning-voor-oekraïense-vluchtelingen>.

¹¹⁵ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." p.170-190.

¹¹⁶ Roline Hoorntje. "Gevluchte Oekraïners jaar na oorlog verdeeld over toekomst in Nederland." *NOS*, February 23, 2023. <https://nos.nl/collectie/13924/artikel/2464908-gevluchte-oekraïners-jaar-na-oorlog-verdeeld-over-toekomst-in-nederland>. (Accessed June 10, 2023).

term residency of thousands Ukrainians in the Netherlands.

Furthermore, research institute Clingendael argues that this temporariness is unlikely because of several factors: 1.) The war is taking longer than initially thought, which influences the return options of displaced Ukrainians. Previous wars have shown that the longer a war lasts, less and less refugees eventually return home; 2.) The intensity of the war also influences the return option, because the escalation of the war causes more victims and destroys infrastructure further; 3.) If the Russian military annexes more territory from Ukraine, there will be an increase of displaced Ukrainians and the return of fled Ukrainians will be complicated.¹¹⁷ Because of the above-named factors Clingendael argues that the Government should acquire a longer-term approach in regards to the housing, education and integration of Ukrainians in the Netherlands.¹¹⁸

3.3 Why Do the Policies Differ?

In this section I briefly consider some views on why the policies differ by using literature and the conducted interviews with Syrians, Ukrainians and experts.

According to Clingendael, the EU decided to implement the TPD for the first time, because the Ukrainian influx would be the biggest protection challenge in the region, since the WOII. Invoking the TPD would prevent the European asylum frameworks to overflow and it would give the Ukrainians relatively quickly clarity on their rights in host countries.¹¹⁹ The activation of the TPD came as a surprise for observers of the EU migration policy, as it was not implemented to help manage the increased influx in 2015, where 1.3 million people, mostly Syrians, fled to Europe.¹²⁰

According to Beirens, director of the Migration Policy Institute, one of the reasons as to why the EU's response to the Ukrainians differ, is that policymakers are not seeing the situation in Ukraine as a refugee crisis, but more as a geopolitical conflict in their own region, of where the EU has positioned itself on Ukraine's side by showing solidarity to its refugees.¹²¹ This corroborates the Dutch Government's reasoning, who sees the Netherlands as part of this region.¹²² This is further substantiated by one of the experts I interviewed. The Project Leader Ukraine of a Dutch NGO said, "It is in the own region of the country where the war is taking place. Many Dutch people believe that their own region should support the reception of refugees [from their own region]. We are the own region, more than Syria or Eritrea are." The Project Leader goes on by saying, "However, you can't escape the thought of [that Ukrainians] are more similar to us, e.g. in appearance or religion."

Syrian Refugee D agrees with Beirens and the Project Leader and said, "It's because of the general policy and EU agenda.... Who is inside the borders has different policies than ... those outside, because it is closer to our culture and way of thinking, the other is different"¹²³ The former quote brings me to the second viewpoint of why the policies differ, namely: Cultural similarity. Lucassen, director of the International Institute of Social History,

¹¹⁷ Sia Dhian Ho, *Opvang van Oekraïners in Nederland: een kwestie van lange adem*. p.1-15.

¹¹⁸ Sia Dhian Ho, *Opvang van Oekraïners in Nederland: een kwestie van lange adem*. p.1-15.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ Eric Reidy, "What the EU's Policy toward Ukrainians May Mean for Other Refugees," *The New Humanitarian*, November 8, 2022, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/04/21/what-the-EUs-policy-toward-ukrainians-may-mean-for-other-refugees>. (Accessed June 18, 2023)

¹²¹ Reidy, "What the EU's Policy toward Ukrainians May Mean for Other Refugees."

¹²² Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Meer ondersteuning voor Oekraïense vluchtelingen." Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl, February 23, 2023.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/02/23/meer-ondersteuning-voor-oekraïense-vluchtelingen>.

¹²³ Syrian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 9, 2023.

argues that history shows that it is easier to identify yourself with people of whom you think have the same culture as you. Even more so when these similarities are emphasized by the media and politicians.¹²⁴ This viewpoint is shared by several of my respondents, such as Syrian Refugee B, who says, “I think it’s logical ... We have a saying: My brother and I against my cousin, my cousin and I against the others. Ukrainians are of the same culture, so they deserve to get more.”. However, he goes on by saying that other Syrian refugees find this painful and demotivating, because they thought that Dutch culture was open and honest for everyone, and now it seems to be a lie.¹²⁵ Syrian Refugee C is partly in accordance with Syrian Refugee B, he says, “I think it’s great, [the Ukrainians] got it done ... I am not jealous, I hope that other refugees [will benefit]. ... I think it’s because they are closer than Syria is.”¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Iñaki Oñorbe Genovesi. “Waarom gaan grenzen nu wél open? ‘Vluchtelingen die op ons lijken zien we als echte vluchtelingen’” *Volkkrant*, March 1, 2022. <https://www.volkskrant.nl/columns-opinie/waarom-gaan-grenzen-nu-wel-open-vluchtelingen-die-op-ons-lijken-zien-we-als-echte-vluchtelingen~b54c5b4c/> (Accessed on July 20, 2023).

¹²⁵ Syrian Refugee B. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 11, 2023.

¹²⁶ Syrian Refugee C. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 7, 2023.

Chapter 4: Employment and Integration

4.1 Research Analysis and Summary of Results

In this chapter I present the results of my analysis of the effects of the differing policies on shaping the integration of Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees. I did this by analysing integration aims, employment policies and lived experiences. My research demonstrates that the differences in employment access delays and, over time, reduces Syrians' opportunities to invest in their human capital, which can impair their socio-economic integration. Furthermore, my research revealed that the lack of a long-term perspective can impair the employability of Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands.

In the first stage of my analysis I researched the policy aims for the integration of Syrian refugees. In this analysis I discovered that the Government's aims are that refugees should integrate quickly, participate fully in and contribute to Dutch society by providing for themselves through work, becoming proficient in Dutch and having knowledge of society.¹²⁷ These aims are based on the Government's notion that, "Society can only function if everyone who is here for a longer period participates and shares the basic principles of society."¹²⁸ This aim is consistent with Ager and Strang's theory of integration, which argues that access to employment is one of the key integration domains because it contributes to important factors including economic independence, connections with the host society, language acquisition and self-reliance, which assist the integration of refugees.¹²⁹

In the second stage of analysis, I investigated the integration policy measures, which are partially contained in Wi2013. The results show that these measures contradict the stated aim of the Government to integrate Syrians; because of restrictive measures compromising the Syrians access to the labour market, which prevent rapid economic integration. This can be seen in the fact that the WaV, the refugee employment policy, states that refugees are only allowed to start working after their asylum application is at least six months pending and their employer has requested and received a tewerkstellingsvergunning. Furthermore, with a tewerkstellingsvergunning refugees are only allowed to work for 24-weeks per year.¹³⁰

In the third stage of analysis I studied the interviews I had conducted with Syrians and field experts, and observed how the refugees experienced their labour market restriction as impairing their socio-economic integration in the Netherlands. The interviews highlighted the individual experiences which resulted from policy makers implementing measures which are not congruent with the overall stated integration aim.

I also applied these three stages of analysis to the refugee policy on employment for Ukrainians and observed in the first stage that the WaV was amended for Ukrainians to fulfil the Government's aim of providing them a safe, but temporary shelter and a means of living to recover from fleeing from armed conflict.¹³¹ During the second stage of analysis it became clear that the Government's aim of providing livelihood to Ukrainians was upheld, by offering them direct access to the Dutch labour market, without the restrictions of the six-months waiting period and the 24-weeks rule.¹³² In the third stage, I used the data gathered from my interviews with Ukrainians and field experts to analyse the shaping of the

¹²⁷ Rutte and Samsom. *Bruggen slaan. Regeerakkoord VVD - PvdA. 29 oktober 2012*, p. 29.

¹²⁸ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Integratie Agenda 2013."

¹²⁹ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." p. 170-172.

¹³⁰ Raphaël Nouwen, "Een appel voor een arbeidsgericht asielproces" *Untapped Talents* (2023).

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/17gpgejkkqFziXAopQjduWucg5Hiu4IhZ/view>

¹³¹ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen 2022." March, 2022.

¹³² Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Besluit uitvoering Wet arbeid vreemdelingen 2022." March, 2022.

Ukrainian's integration. The data showed how rapid access to the labour market had had a positive effect on their socio-economic integration, which is in line with the theory of de Vroome and van Tubergen, who draw on the HCT and argue that post-migration work experiences positively effects the socio-economic integration of refugees.¹³³ However, the collected qualitative data from the interviews also informed me of how the temporality of their residence status hinders the further shaping of their socio-economic integration.

My analysis sheds light on the contradiction in policies: Syrian refugees are obligated to integrate, as they are seen as permanent residents; but they are not given immediate access to employment. This is in contrast with Ukrainians refugees, who are supposedly only temporarily here but are allowed immediate access the Dutch labour market. In the next section, I will provide the details of my findings above, setting them in the context of Ager and Strang's framework, the reviewed literature and first-hand accounts from refugees and experts. These details will reveal how Ukrainians and Syrians experienced different policies in shaping their socio-economic integration. I will pay special attention to the 24-weeks rule for Syrians and the temporary status for Ukrainians and how these affected their socio-economic integration; and to two key themes which emerged from the qualitative data via a coding process. These are: the consequences of the waiting barrier experienced by Syrian refugees; and the consequences of the lack of long-term perspective experienced by Ukrainian refugees. These themes, including excerpts from in-depth interviews, will provide insights into the contradictions between the policies and the Government's vision of the socio-economic integration of Syrians in comparison to Ukrainians. By examining these themes in this framework, I will reinforce and critique the relevance of HCT to integration by revealing how structural barriers such as, waiting barriers and non-existent long-term perspectives influence the human capital attainment of both groups, which has not been done in this context before.

4.2 The Waiting Barrier

According to the UNCHR, fast access to the workplace contributes immensely to the socio-economic integration of refugees into host society. The World Economic Forum (WER) substantiates this and states that the workplace is an important pathway through which refugees can integrate into and contribute to the host society. However, there are several access constraints such as, legal barriers, skill matching difficulties and language requirements.¹³⁴ These constraints are also present in the Dutch context. The Government's stated aims are in line with Ager and Strang's viewpoint that employment access is one of the key domains for integration and that it contributes to economic independence, connections with the society, language acquisition and self-reliance.¹³⁵ However, as a result of comparing my 3-stage analysis of both refugee groups I have observed several inconsistencies with the desired policies aims.

The first two stages of my analysis confirmed that these policy differences have resulted in visible differences in employment access between both groups. As introduced above, the waiting-barrier only applies to Syrian refugees, as the amendment of the WaV for Ukrainians provided them with direct access to the Dutch labour market, while Syrian refugees are restricted by the six-months rule and the 24-weeks rule. This delays the access of

¹³³ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands." p. 379

¹³⁴ World Economic Forum. "Enabling the Economic Integration of Refugees: Lessons learned on refugee employment and employability from the rapid response to Ukraine." *WEF-Briefing Papers*, January, 2023.

https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Enabling_the_Economic_Integration_of_Refugees_Lessons_learned_on_refugee_employment_and_employability_2023.pdf p. 1-3.

¹³⁵ Rutte and Samsom. *Bruggen slaan. Regeerakkoord VVD - PvdA. 29 oktober 2012.* p. 29.

Syrians to the labour market and impedes their socio-economic integration. This impediment came up several times in my interviews with Syrian refugees and experts; who also reported that the most important obstruction to their integration is the waiting barrier. This will be highlighted in the third stage of my analysis below.

Jens Hainmueller *et al.* describe the waiting barrier as the period that refugees are waiting for a decision on their asylum claim and where their lives are put on hold. In their definition they take into account that some European countries, like the Netherlands, allow refugees to work, with restrictions, while waiting. Hainmueller *et al.* argue that the length of waiting can affect the subsequent integration of refugees into the host-society.¹³⁶ In this thesis the waiting barrier definition is derived from Hainmueller *et al.*, with the addition of the waiting pertaining to the period of six months for which refugees have to be in the asylum procedure before they can start working with a tewerkstellingsvergunning. Hainmueller *et al.* argue that prolonged waiting lowers the refugees' chances of subsequent labour market participation, because skills can atrophy; prolonged time out of the labour market can lead to devaluation of pre-migration occupational skills; and because waiting can affect their psychological wellbeing including stress, depression and loss of motivation.¹³⁷ The policy's waiting barrier and its effects on the psychological health and employment chances of refugees came up in my interview with an Integration Coach. He said,

“You can see the fire in [the refugees'] eyes fade. People are slowly but surely dying inside ... They feel as if they don't have purpose and that there is no light at the end of the tunnel.”¹³⁸

This quote highlights how policies can directly affect the mental health of waiting refugees and thus their integration; as according to the research of Bakker *et al.* refugees with mental health issues can struggle to participate in integrative activities, such as seeking employment.¹³⁹ By missing out on these activities, refugees may miss employment opportunities, chances to connect with locals and the possibility of practicing navigating through Dutch society, which are important aims of the refugee policy.

The Integration Coach further explained that “waiting is the worst, because these people are losing the best years of their life” that from a human relations perspective, it is an immense form of capital loss.¹⁴⁰ Francesc Obiols-Holms and Virginia Sánchez-Marcos theory corroborate the Coach's view: Being unemployed for a longer period of time results in the depreciation of occupational skills, negatively affecting human capital and lessening the chances of being re-employed. Furthermore, a lower level of human capital results in lower wages and can contribute to a loss of motivation to re-enter the labour market.¹⁴¹ Similarly, de Vroome and van Tubergen argue that policy makers should provide opportunities for waiting refugees to gain post-migration capital; because waiting reduces their human capital, reduces their employment chances, and has a negative effect on their economic integration.¹⁴² Bakker

¹³⁶ Hainmueller, Hangartner, and Lawrence. “When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees.” p. 1-7.

¹³⁷ Hainmueller Hangartner, and Lawrence. “When lives are put on hold: Lengthy asylum processes decrease employment among refugees.” p. 1-7.

¹³⁸ Integration Coach. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 2, 2023.

¹³⁹ Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, “The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees.” p. 432-434.

¹⁴⁰ Integration Coach. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 2, 2023.

¹⁴¹ Francesc Obiols-Holms and Virginia Sánchez-Marcos. “Human Capital Destruction during Unemployment Decreases Participation.” *BSE Focus*, February 14, 2023. <https://focus.bse.eu/human-capital-destruction-during-unemployment-decreases-participation/>. (Accessed on June 5, 2023). ; Council of Europe. “Measurement and indicators of integration.” *Directorate of Social and Economic Affairs*, January 1, 1997.

¹⁴² De Vroome and Van Tubergen. “The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands.” p. 390-401.

et al. studied the effects of the Dutch waiting barrier in combination with the ‘refugee entry effect’, defined as the disadvantage refugees have at the start of their labour market participation, on the socio-economic integration of refugees in the Netherlands. They argue that refugees are more likely to have a lower labour market position than other types of migrants, because refugees are often less prepared and have mentally suffered from traumatic experiences. The waiting barrier reinforces this position, because it obstructs gaining post-migration work experience and language proficiency.¹⁴³ The refugee entry effect shows that the policy is not in line with its presented aims, as the waiting barrier causes refugees to miss out on building their human capital post-migration, which can constrain their ability to acquire other resources, such as salary, needed to integrate economically according to the Government.

Bakker *et al.* state that being in the asylum procedure restricts gaining employment and education, leading to lack of economic resources and uncertainty about the future, which can result in economic dependence, mental health problems, motivation loss and passiveness.¹⁴⁴ Thus the waiting barrier contradicts the Integration Agenda’s goals of refugees becoming economic independent and self-reliant, as the employment restrictions can cause refugees to rely on the Government for their basic needs and become passive, resulting in integration difficulties.

Syrian Refugee B showed me how Hainmueller and Bakker *et al.*’s theory on waiting is consistent with his experiences:

“When I arrived I had many ambitions and I wanted to reach my goals, but suddenly I had to wait 1.5 years. This happens to everyone, they are enthusiastic and have ideas but the waiting makes these ideas turn to negative ideas.”¹⁴⁵

The above discussed literature and excerpts from the conducted interviews show how the forced inactivity of Syrian refugees can have a negative effect on their ambitions and on their mental health, which in turn can slow down the socio-economic integration of refugees.¹⁴⁶ This is because poor mental health can lead to loss of motivation and negatively influence their overall work performance, which according to de Vroome and van Tubergen can then affect the refugees’ position in securing employment and their occupational mobility.¹⁴⁷

Meanwhile, Ukrainian refugees socio-economic integration is not obstructed by the waiting barrier, due to the special amendment of the WaV. The WER states that lessons are to be learned from the European policies put in place in response to the Ukrainian refugee crisis, which resulted into their rapid labour market integration, to progress the economic integration of other refugees.¹⁴⁸

Ager and Strang shed light on the importance of employment for the integration of refugees into host countries, and how progress in the employment domain can affect other integration domains, such as that of social connections.¹⁴⁹ According to the WRR and to

¹⁴³ Bakker, Dagevos and Engbersen. “Explaining the refugee gap: a longitudinal study on labourmarket participation of refugees in the Netherlands.” p. 49-54.

¹⁴⁴ Bakker, Dagevos and Engbersen. “Explaining the refugee gap: a longitudinal study on labourmarket participation of refugees in the Netherlands.” p. 49-51. ; Da Lomba, “Legal Status and Refugee Integration: A UK Perspective.” ; Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, “The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees.” p. 432-436.

¹⁴⁵ Syrian Refugee B. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 11, 2023.

¹⁴⁶ Odé and Dagevos. “Statushouders aan het werk. De moeizame positieverwerving op de arbeidsmarkt en de betekenis van beleidsfactoren.” p. 452-456.

¹⁴⁷ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. “The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands.” p. 381-393.

¹⁴⁸ World Economic Forum. “Enabling the Economic Integration of Refugees: Lessons learned on refugee employment and employability from the rapid response to Ukraine.” p. 1-4.

¹⁴⁹ Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 178-182.

Feinstein *et al.* being employed post-migration fosters self-respect, self-development and empowerment, which can positively impact the ability of a refugee to navigate foreign environments and participate in society. By increasing these elements the overall integration and social inclusion of refugees is improved.¹⁵⁰ The importance of being able to work is also clear for Ukrainian Refugee A, “I think it's good that we have another status, not like asylum seeking refugees [that are] just sitting and waiting It helps also mentally. Yeah, you can do at least something in your life.”¹⁵¹ This excerpt lights up the theory of Bakker *et al.*, who draws a clear link between employment and the overall mental health of refugees.¹⁵² Bakker *et al.* and Ager and Strang elaborate by saying that employment provides economic independence and self-sufficiency, which enables refugees to take care of their and their family's basic needs.¹⁵³ Regaining lost agency can have a positive effect on the well-being of refugees, as it helps foster a new sense of purpose in their new environment and can improve their socio-economic integration.

In our interview, the Project Leader of a Dutch NGO substantiated the importance of employment and says that the ability for Ukrainians to work has a substantial positive effect on them and on their position in Dutch society. She argues that “being able to work distracts them [from what's happening in their home country], which is important for their mental health.”¹⁵⁴ Secondly, it helps them with developing networks, which is an important factor for social integration, as it produces social connections, bridging inter-ethnic gaps. Furthermore, being able to work when you arrive in the host country results into directly coming in contact with the Dutch language, which can improve language acquisition. Additionally, the Project Leader argues that being employed also contributes to your sense of self-worth and self-sufficiency, corresponding with what Bakker *et al.* and Ager and Strang argue.¹⁵⁵

Thus, my analysis indicates that the policy differences have had more adverse effects on Syrian refugees than on Ukrainian refugees in terms of their socio-economic integration into the Netherlands. Due to the WaV amendment, Ukrainians do not have an employment delay, reducing economic dependency, increasing social connections and becoming more self-reliant. The adverse effect of the Wi2013 on the socio-economic integration of Syrians is clear, as their employability, human capital and mental health can diminish as a result of the waiting barrier.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, the barrier hinders them from making social connections, improving language proficiency and increasing self-reliance. Syrian Refugee C highlights the effects of these consequences:

“When you're put in handcuffs . . . , that's how it feels, you want to do those things, but you can't.”¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁰ Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het Regeringsbeleid. “Samenleven in verscheidenheid. Beleid voor de migratiesamenleving.” *WRR-Rapport* 103, 2020. p. 75-203. ; Robila. “Refugees and Social Integration in Europe.” p. 10-12.

¹⁵¹ Ukrainian Refugee A. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Sliedrecht, June 26, 2023.

¹⁵² Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, “The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees.” p. 432-434.

¹⁵³ Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, “The Importance of Resources and Security in the Socio-Economic Integration of Refugees.” p. 432-434. ; Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 170-187.

¹⁵⁴ Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023.

¹⁵⁵ Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 170-187. Expert: Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023. Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 170

¹⁵⁶ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. “The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands.” p. 380-385. ;

¹⁵⁷ Syrian Refugee C. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 7, 2023.

4.2 Lacking a Long-Term Perspective

Reading the research results above, one could assume that it is easier for Ukrainian refugees to participate in Dutch society than for Syrian refugees. This has to do with, among other things, direct access to the labour market, being seen as culturally more like the Dutch and being housed with the Dutch or in reception centres solely for Ukrainians. According to the ACM, the idea behind giving Ukrainians these essential, but temporary, integration-related services, was that they could carry on with their lives as best as possible, and return to Ukraine once safe.¹⁵⁸ However, according to Clingendael, the war is taking longer than anticipated and it is unclear when it will be safe for the displaced Ukrainians to return and so Clingendael argues that the Netherlands has to prepare for a long-term scenario of sheltering Ukrainians.¹⁵⁹ This long-term perspective for Ukrainians is at the time of writing still non-existent, which is in contrast with Syrians, who do have a permanent basis of residing in the Netherlands.

The lack of a long-term perspective causes insecurity and makes it more difficult for Ukrainians to participate in society. The TPD policy emphasizes the temporality of the situation.¹⁶⁰ The data from my interview with Ukrainian Refugee D shines light on the precariousness of living in the Netherlands on a temporary basis:

“All people need [to] have perspective and need [to] have motivation. It's very difficult to live between my old life and my new life, as everything is temporary.”¹⁶¹

Ukrainian Refugee D shows the duality of her situation in the Netherlands. On the one hand, she could participate in the Netherlands by rapidly integrating into the labour market, gaining fast access to a PIN, and being housed with a Dutch family. But on the other hand, her stay in the Netherlands is temporary, which according to the Government means that she does not have to integrate. This causes uncertainty and indecisiveness about investing in a new life.¹⁶² The lack of clarity pertaining to the length of stay of Ukrainians is according to the OECD, one of the major challenges for the integration of Ukrainians.¹⁶³ This uncertainty relating to their length of stay limits their employability, because companies are more careful of investing in their training, not knowing if they will be staying for a long period of time.¹⁶⁴

My analysis of the interviews I conducted with Ukrainians and experts confirms the OECD's argument, as all four of the Ukrainian respondents and all four experts informed me of the policy's consequences of not having a long-term perspective on their participation in Dutch society. Ukrainian Refugee D demonstrates how the policy implementation shapes her integration by explaining that her boss treats her differently than her Iranian colleague, who has a permanent residence status. She argues that her temporary status is not good for her, but also not for her boss, because he does not know if she will be working with him in the next six

¹⁵⁸ Adviesraad Migratie. “Tijdelijke bescherming voor Oekraïense ontheemen op de lange termijn.” 1-17. ; International Organization for Migration. “The Path Ahead for People Fleeing Ukraine: IOM Toolkit on Facilitating Pathways to Inclusive and Cohesive Societies.” p. 5-10

¹⁵⁹ Sie Dhian Ho, Monika, et. al., *Opgang van Oekraïners in Nederland: een kwestie van lange adem.*

¹⁶⁰ Adviesraad Migratie. “Tijdelijke bescherming voor Oekraïense ontheemen op de lange termijn.” 1-20.

¹⁶¹ Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

¹⁶² Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

¹⁶³ OECD. “What are the integration challenges of Ukrainian refugee women.” *OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine, May 30, 2023.* <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/what-are-the-integration-challenges-of-ukrainian-refugee-women-bb17dc64/#section-d1e721>

¹⁶⁴ OECD and UNHCR. “Hiring refugees - What are the opportunities and challenges for employers?” *Migration Policy Debates*, no. 10 (September, 2016). <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/migration-policy-debates-10.pdf>

months, or whether he will have to start again with a new employee. She says that the motivation to participate gets lost because of the missing perspective and said,

“This crushed me inside, it introduced me with real depression.”¹⁶⁵

Not only does the missing perspective limit employers investing in Ukrainians; it also discourages Ukrainians from investing into their human capital, particularly the acquisition of the host language.¹⁶⁶ Huijnk *et al.* elaborates on the OECD’s point and argues that the expectation of a short stay in a host-country tempers the refugee’s inclination to invest in social networks and to learn the language, which has an extensive influence on the integration of refugees.¹⁶⁷ The lack of a long-term perspective not only impacts the employment domain, but also the language domain and the safety and stability domain, which are according to Ager and Strang domains that help facilitate integration. By missing out on these facilitators, the integration progress can be impaired.¹⁶⁸

The UNHCR shared survey results on the future intentions of Ukrainians in host-countries, which states that Ukrainians are becoming more uncertain about their intention of moving back to Ukraine once the war is over.¹⁶⁹ Ukrainian Refugees A and B argued that not having a long-term perspective in the Netherlands is having a negative effect on the integration of Ukrainians who do want to stay. Refugee A said “It is demotivating for who want to stay and for the ones who are 50/50. ... It would be good for people to know that they can stay. Then they can start already [integrating].” She went on to say that this uncertainty is not only difficult for employed Ukrainians, but also for the people who employ them.¹⁷⁰ The Project Leader of a Dutch NGO argued that sustainability in labour relations is important for both sides, and explained that an employer will take more risks in investing in his employees when he knows that the investment will earn itself back. In the case of Ukrainians it is uncertain at this moment if they will go back within six months, and this uncertainty is discouraging Ukrainians and their employers from investing in their human capital.¹⁷¹

This interview data supports the theory of the OECD and UNHCR on how missing a long-term perspective limits the investment of human capital post-migration; as according to HCT, lack of investments in human capital results in the devaluation of skills, potentially creating obstacles to upward mobility and having a negative impact on the refugees’ socio-economic integration.¹⁷² My analysis concludes that the structural barrier of not having a long-term perspective has an adversary effect on the participation of Ukrainians, as they do not know if investing in new life will be for nothing. The long-term perspective does not only hinder the economic integration, but it also hinders making social connections and investing in their post-migration human capital.

¹⁶⁵ Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

¹⁶⁶ OECD and UNHCR. “Hiring refugees - What are the opportunities and challenges for employers?”

¹⁶⁷ Willem Huijnk, Jaco Dagevos, and Emily Miltenburg. “Een Staalkaart van Statushouders.” p. 380-384.

¹⁶⁸ Ager and Strang, “Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework.” p. 181-187.

¹⁶⁹ OECD. “What are the integration challenges of Ukrainian refugee women?” *OECD Policy Responses on the Impacts of the War in Ukraine*, May 30, 2023. <https://www.oecd.org/ukraine-hub/policy-responses/what-are-the-integration-challenges-of-ukrainian-refugee-women-bb17dc64/#section-d1e721>

¹⁷⁰ Ukrainian Refugee A. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Sliedrecht, June 26, 2023.

¹⁷¹ Expert: Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023.

¹⁷² Schultz, Theodore W. “Investment in Human Capital.” *The American Economic Review* 51, no. 1 (1961): 1–17. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1818907>. ; Char. “Explaining the Different Direct Socio-Economic Integration of Afghan and Syrian Refugees in the Netherlands.” p. 4-30. ; De Vroome and Van Tubergen. “The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands.” p.379-401.

Chapter 5: Language and Integration

In this chapter, I present the evidence from my 3-stage analysis of the effects of the differing language policies in on the shaping of the integration of Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands. The evidence was obtained by using Ager and Strang's framework to analyse the link between integration and the language domain and by investigating how the differences in language provision by the Government restricted Ukrainians' possibilities to integrate further in society, beyond their integration into the Dutch labour market. Furthermore, I show how, according to the refugees, there are structural faults in the language courses provided by the Government, which hinders the progression of their human capital and negatively shapes their socio-economic integration. I deduced my findings from my face-to-face interviews with refugees and experts and by reviewing literature pertaining to the link between language and integration,

Ager and Strang argue that besides the theme of markers and means, such as the discussed employment domain, there are also important domains pertaining to the theme of facilitators. These facilitators are to be understood as domains which remove barriers of integration, which is important as certain factors are to be understood as inhibiting the integration and participation of refugees into host societies. The framework focusses on two areas wherein such barriers exist: safety and security; and language and cultural knowledge.¹⁷³ Ager and Strang argue that being able to speak the main language of the host society is central to the socio-economic integration of refugees as it facilitates socio-economic connections and a better understanding of the host-society.¹⁷⁴

In the first stage of my analysis, I investigated the language policy aims for the integration of Syrian refugees. I discovered that the Government's objective on language is that all newcomers master the Dutch language, as this offers one of the best possibilities to successfully integrate in the Netherlands.¹⁷⁵ This goal is consistent with Ager and Strang's theory of integration, who argue that being able to speak the host-country's main language is crucial to refugee integration.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore I investigated the language objectives for Ukrainian refugees, which revealed that initially the Government did not aim in providing Ukrainians with language support, as they are temporary residents. However, as the war is still going on, the Government realised that Ukrainians increasingly want to learn Dutch so that they can work at the level of their pre-migration qualifications. And so the Government allocated on the 23rd of February 2023, €15 million for municipalities to organise optional Dutch lessons for Ukrainians.¹⁷⁷

In the second analysis stage, I researched the implementation of the language policy for Syrians and found out that the implementation of language courses in the integration programme corresponds to the policy's aim. This is also in line with Ager and Strang's integration theory, who argue that it is the role of the state to remove the language barrier to help progress integration.¹⁷⁸ The Government views the lack of Dutch language as a barrier to the socio-economic integration of refugees, and therefore provided all integrating refugees, with the exception of Ukrainians, with mandatory Dutch lessons as structural support.¹⁷⁹ This

¹⁷³ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," p. 180-184.

¹⁷⁴ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," p. 182.

¹⁷⁵ Rutte and Samsom. *Bruggen slaan. Regeerakkoord VVD - PvdA. 29 oktober 2012*, p. 230-32.

¹⁷⁶ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," p. 182-183.

¹⁷⁷ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Meer ondersteuning voor Oekraïense vluchtelingen." Nieuwsbericht | Rijksoverheid.nl, February 23, 2023.

<https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/02/23/meer-ondersteuning-voor-oekraïense-vluchtelingen>.

¹⁷⁸ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework," p. 180-184.

¹⁷⁹ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Integratie Agenda 2013." Huijnk, Dagevos, and Miltenburg, "Een Staalkaart van Statushouders." *Mensch En Maatschappij*, December 1, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.5117/mem2017.4.huij>, p.365-366.

is in line with Michael Neureiter's theory, who argues that mandatory language courses can positively influence refugee integration.¹⁸⁰ According to HCT, language lessons represent an investment in human capital and positively affects refugee integration.¹⁸¹

In contrast to the Syrians, the Ukrainians are not obligated to learn Dutch because the Government exempted them from fulfilling the mandatory integration program.¹⁸² At the time of writing, there have not been sufficient results published on the implementation of these optional courses and their outcomes. However, a Project Leader Ukraine of a Dutch NGO, who I interviewed, argues that the €15 million allocated to these language courses is far from sufficient to support willing Ukrainians to learn Dutch. She explains that this is because per refugee it takes about 800 hours of Dutch classes, which costs approximately €10.000 per person, to be able to hold a decent conversation.¹⁸³

My analysis sheds light on the contradiction in policies, Syrian refugees are obligated to follow and pass the Dutch language courses, as they are seen as permanent residents. However, Ukrainians refugees, who are here supposedly only temporarily, have now received the option to follow Dutch lessons provided by municipalities. This is a contradiction, as discussed in Chapter 3, because refugees who are still awaiting the approval of their asylum request, are not allowed to start learning Dutch, because the Government believes that this could give the hope and legal standing to receive a permanent residence permit.¹⁸⁴ In the following section I will draw on Ager and Strang's framework, the reviewed literature and first-hand accounts from refugees and experts to present my findings on how Ukrainians and Syrians have experienced the policies in shaping their socio-economic integration. Two key themes emerged, which were deduced from the coding process of the qualitative interview data, and apply to both refugee groups. These are: the nexus between language and employment and by how supposed faults in the provided language courses shape the socio-economic integration of Ukrainians and Syrians.

The nexus theme was analysed by examining how language and employment are interchangeably linked, in the way that progress in one domain helps progress in the other; and by looking at how inadequate language proficiency affects the attainment of high-skilled employment, and contributes to overqualification in the low-skilled sector. The second emergent theme focused on the faults, according to the interviewed refugees and experts, of the language courses provided and how this influences the socio-economic integration of both groups.

Ager and Strang's framework assists in understanding how Dutch language policies have played an important structural role in shaping the socio-economic integration of refugees. By using this framework I also aim to inform the HCT by arguing that the theory needs to take structural factors in to account in relation to the ability of refugees investing in their capital. This will be done by examining how the policies implicate refugees to have full agency in their integration. Furthermore, I want to inform the HCT by adding that investing in language skills does not always result in a higher human capital, because of faults in the provided education.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Neureiter. "Evaluating the effects of immigrant integration policies in Western Europe using a difference-indifferences approach." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, 15 (2019): 2779-2800. Here p. 2779-2796.

¹⁸¹ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands." p. 379-399.

¹⁸² Expert: Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023.

¹⁸³ Expert: Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023.

¹⁸⁴ Government of the Netherlands, "Kamerstuk 19637, nr. 2073 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen," October 29, 2015. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-19637-2073.html>.

5.1 Language and Employment

The Dutch Government sees language and employment as important pillars to enforce the socio-economic integration of refugees into the Netherlands.¹⁸⁵ This is reflected in their integration policies, where all refugees, except for Ukrainian refugees, are obligated to learn Dutch to fulfil the integration programme and thus be equipped fully participate in Dutch society.¹⁸⁶

Odé and Dagevos substantiate the Government's view and argue that successfully completing the integration program leads to refugees having a better grasp of Dutch. They argue that having an adequate proficiency in Dutch positively influences the labour participation of refugees.¹⁸⁷ The Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving (KIS), a Dutch research centre which focusses on integration, agrees with Odé and Dagevos; and further argues that it is a two-way street: having adequate Dutch proficiency is necessary to participate in the Dutch labour market and being employed improves Dutch language proficiency.¹⁸⁸

Also Neureiter, who evaluated the effects of European immigrant policies, argues that competence in the host society's language is vital for successful economic integration of refugees and that integration can be positively influenced through mandatory language requirements of host countries. He agrees with KIS that the positive relationship between language proficiency and economic integration operates through an interplay of the two. Neureiter elaborates on this argument by saying that language competency is needed to communicate within the workplace, and so employers will often only consider applicants with enough language proficiency.¹⁸⁹ According to a Dutch refugee integration researcher who I interviewed, the employment of Ukrainians has shown that language competency is not requisite to integrate in the low-skilled workplace, as relevant language can be learned on the way. However, she does argue that this only applies to low-skilled jobs and that higher-skilled jobs do require a better understanding of the language.¹⁹⁰ This is in turn an economic barrier for highly-educated Ukrainians as they do not receive extensive language courses from the Government.

Neureiter states that language competency also evokes social connections with the host society, which in turn can help refugees find jobs, for example, by notifying them of vacancies.¹⁹¹ However, he argues that there could be an alternative explanation for this positive relationship, such as there being immigrants who do not want to integrate, and thus avoid countries with restrictive refugee integration policies.¹⁹² For this research, this alternative explanation is not plausible, as according to Barry Chiswick and Paul Miller,

¹⁸⁵ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Integratie Agenda 2013."

¹⁸⁶ Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid. "Wet inburgering 2013."

¹⁸⁷ Odé and Dagevos, "Statushouders aan het werk. De moeizame positieverwerving op de arbeidsmarkt en de betekenis van beleidsfactoren" p. 451-452.

¹⁸⁸ Kirsten Tinnemans, Elisa van Gent, Bora Avrić, Nada de Groot. "Wat Werkt Bij Arbeidsparticipatie Statushouders?" *Report Kennisplatform Integratie en Samenleving*, March, 2020.

https://www.kis.nl/sites/default/files/2022-06/wat_werkt-arbeidsparticipatie-statushouders-2020-kis_0_0.pdf p. 1-6.

¹⁸⁹ Neureiter. "Evaluating the effects of immigrant integration policies in Western Europe using a difference-indifferences approach." p. 2779-2796.

¹⁹⁰ Expert: Dutch Researcher on Refugee Integration. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023.

¹⁹¹ Neureiter. "Evaluating the effects of immigrant integration policies in Western Europe using a difference-indifferences approach." p. 2780-2794.

¹⁹² Neureiter. "Evaluating the effects of immigrant integration policies in Western Europe using a difference-indifferences approach." Here: p. 2794

immigrants are able to plan and prepare their migration, and thus research the policies of host countries; however refugees cannot as they frequently have to leave their homes on a short notice.¹⁹³

These academics substantiate Ager and Strang's argument of the interplay between employment and language; employment has an influence on the development of language skills, and being able to speak the host language improves employability.¹⁹⁴ Even though the Government provides language courses so that refugees are in time able to participate fully in Dutch society, language is still one of the biggest challenges for the successful integration into the labour market. According to the OECD the language barrier not only relates to the acquisition of the national language, but also relates to the knowledge of the terminology used in the workplace.¹⁹⁵ An interview I conducted with Syrian Refugee B sheds light on these language barriers in hampering the labour market participation of refugees. He said, "A friend was accountant in Syria ... [to become an accountant in the Netherlands] he had to graduate again here. He started studying and after 3 months, he stopped. Why? Because of the language [barrier]."¹⁹⁶ This citation confirms the OECD's argument by showing how insufficient knowledge of the Dutch language and of the proper workplace terminology resulted into the Syrian refugee's inability to participate in the Dutch labour market of accountancy.

According to Scott Feinstein *et. al.*, sufficient language proficiency in the host language is the key factor to successful engagement with a new society, because it helps secure employment and foster social connections.¹⁹⁷ Syrian Refugee B also acknowledged the importance of language proficiency, "The language is the key to the country". He explained that knowing the language helps you navigate all levels of society.¹⁹⁸ Feinstein and Syrian Refugee B substantiate Ager and Strang, who also argue that the ability to speak the language of the host society is central to the integration process of refugees as it enables social connections and fosters employability.¹⁹⁹ I argue that, by looking at the reviewed literature and the interview data, it is clear that the language policy aims for Syrians are congruent with its implementation, as they help cultivate socio-economic participation in society. However, as will become clear in 5.2, there are some points of improvement in the policy to better the socio-economic integration of Syrians.

The Government states that "[refugees] must ... develop the language skills necessary to participate in society".²⁰⁰ This obligation applies to all refugees in the Netherlands, except for the Ukrainian refugees. According to Domagoj Hajduković the exclusion of a group from certain integration programmes results in loss of human capital development and thus the group finding low-skilled jobs or work in the informal economy.²⁰¹ Hajduković's research

¹⁹³ Chiswick and Miller. "A Model of Destination-Language Acquisition: Application to Male Immigrants in Canada." p. 394

¹⁹⁴ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." p. 171.

¹⁹⁵ OECD and UNHCR. "Hiring refugees - What are the opportunities and challenges for employers?"

¹⁹⁶ Syrian Refugee B. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 11, 2023.

¹⁹⁷ Feinstein et al., "States and Refugee Integration: A Comparative Analysis of France, Germany, and Switzerland." p. 2170-2173

¹⁹⁸ Syrian Refugee B. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 11, 2023.

¹⁹⁹ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." p. 182.

²⁰⁰ Government of the Netherlands. "Kamerstuk 33086, nr. 3 | Overheid.nl > Officiële bekendmakingen," November 16, 2011. <https://zoek.officielebekendmakingen.nl/kst-33086-3.html#gerelateerd>.

²⁰¹ Domagoj Hajduković. "Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved." *Report for Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons*, March 15, 2023. <https://rm.coe.int/integration-of-migrants-and-refugees-benefits-for-all-parties-involved/1680aa9038> p.9-10. ; UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, "Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine." *UNHCR REGIONAL INTENTIONS REPORT #3*, February 2023. <https://reporting.unhcr.org/europe-lives-hold-intentions-and-perspectives-refugees-ukraine>

corresponds with the case of Ukrainian refugees in the Netherlands, as they are excluded from the extensive mandatory language courses, making them less attractive for high-skilled jobs. Nalog, a team of migration experts, shared that of the 48% of the Ukrainian refugees who were employed in the Netherlands as of November 22, 2022, most of them were working in hospitality, agriculture, and horticulture.²⁰²

This challenge is reflected in the words of Ukrainian Refugee C, who is a rheumatologist in Ukraine, and said, “I speak English, but if I want to work here, I have to know Dutch. ... I understood that during this one year [of being in the Netherlands] already I could have finished at least B1 level. ... And I could speak Dutch, but this year is wasted.”²⁰³ She continued, “The municipality sometimes invites us to a meeting where you can find a job on a farm or in a hotel. ... Of course it’s better than nothing, but on the other hand ... I will lose the [professional] level I have.” This is verified by the Project Leader Ukraine of a Dutch NGO, that I interviewed, who said, “Even though you can get quite far with [only speaking] English, it is only accepted in certain [low-skill] professions.”²⁰⁴

As previously discussed, it was not the aim of the Government to integrate Ukrainians so they were not required to learn Dutch. However, the ACM states that the Government’s aim was that by giving Ukrainians access to the labour market, their lives could go on as well as possible, and return to Ukraine when safe.²⁰⁵ I argue that the policy implementation is to a certain degree inconsistent with its aim, because not providing language courses hinders the economic participation of some high-skilled Ukrainians, like Refugee C, and leads to the reducing of human capital. As highlighted by Refugee C, the policy resulted in her not being able to go on with her life as usual. Refugee C also confirms Odé and Dagevos’ argument that language proficiency enables participation in the Dutch labour market, by revealing how her access is compromised as a consequence of not having adequate language proficiency to work as a doctor in the Netherlands.

The UNHCR states that the majority of employed Ukrainian refugees in Europe are working at a lower level than they were in Ukraine, because of several barriers that deny accessing higher level jobs namely, skills mismatches and limited knowledge of the host country’s language.²⁰⁶ The OECD has come to the same conclusion and states that low-skilled occupations are more accessible to Ukrainian refugees, who on average have high education levels, because being proficient in the host language and transferring their skills from Ukraine is less relevant for lower-skilled positions.²⁰⁷ And so, Ukrainians are often highly educated, but cannot work in high-skilled markets because they miss language proficiency and because their pre-migration skills cannot be properly transferred to their post-migration situation. This is a direct result of the Government implementing the TPD in the Netherlands for Ukrainian refugees and can lead to a significant loss of Ukrainian human capital, as they are performing in arenas which do not match their qualifications. As previously discussed, Clingendael argues that the Government should start making long-term plans to incorporate Ukrainians into Dutch society, as the war is taking longer than expected.²⁰⁸ The UNHCR published a

²⁰² Nalog, “More than 40% of Ukrainian Refugees Got a Job in the Netherlands.” September 5, 2022. <https://www.nalog.nl/en/news/2022/09/05/v-nederlandax-ustroilos-na-rabotu-bolee-40-ukrainskix-bezhencev/#!> (Accessed June 4, 2023)

²⁰³ Ukrainian Refugee C. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 9, 2023.

²⁰⁴ Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 8, 2023.

²⁰⁵ Adviesraad Migratie. “Tijdelijke bescherming voor Oekraïense ontheemen op de lange termijn.” p. 5.

²⁰⁶ UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, “Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine.” p. 7-10.

²⁰⁷ OECD. “What we know about the skills and early labour market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine.” p. 8-12

²⁰⁸ Sia Dhian Ho, Opvang van Oekraïners in Nederland: een kwestie van lange adem. p. 1-3

report discussing that interventions should be made to support Ukrainian refugees in their social inclusion; in contributing to their host countries, in achieving self-reliance and expanding their skills. The UNHCR proposes that the interventions should, among other things, include language courses, diploma and skills recognition, and investments in education and job-matching.²⁰⁹

5.2 The faults in the Provided Language Facilities.

While reviewing the literature and speaking to the twelve respondents, an important theme came up pertaining to language acquisition, namely the faults in the refugee policies for Syrians and Ukrainians pertaining to learning the Dutch language.

Anna Ziersch *et al.* researched refugee resources in Australia. According to them, practical support with developing a host country's language is considered as a key factor for integration for most participants in their study.²¹⁰ They argue that refugees wish to improve their language skills and learn how to navigate themselves in the community by being in contact with members of the host society.²¹¹ This is also a topic that has come up in the Dutch context. Pozzo and Nerghes argue that there is a contradiction in the Dutch integration policy and its discourse on the positive effects of language acquisition on refugee's socio-economic integration. They find that the integration policies can cause societal exclusion instead of inclusion, as the mandatory language programs do not allow participants to learn the Dutch language with Dutch people. In reality, refugees learn the language with other foreigners, which forms a barrier in making connections with Dutch people and also in improving their Dutch fluency, resulting into the hampering of their social integration.²¹² I argue that this problem of not being able to learn Dutch with the Dutch is a direct result of the implementation of the Wi2013, and that it partially contradicts the aim of the language refugee policy, which is the enablement of refugees socio-economic participation in society via learning Dutch. The policy implementation, of which the mandatory language courses are part of, does help in gaining language acquisition, according to the research of Odé and Dagevos in 5.1; conversely, the policy implementation also hinders refugees' of participating as there is no authentic communication with locals.

Fumiko Nishimura and Keiko Umeda agree with Pozzo and Nerghes's theory on how contact with locals can benefit language acquisition. They elaborate by saying that people who are learning a new language need to have 'authentic communication' with locals in order to improve their language proficiency. Nishimura and Umeda explain that authentic communication means using the actual spoken language of a country in conversation with a local.²¹³ They explain that communication with locals helps improve the conversational competence of the learner. This is important as it can have a positive effect on the ability to hold spontaneous conversations, which is one of the most common ways of communication

²⁰⁹ UNHCR Regional Bureau for Europe, "Lives on Hold: Intentions and Perspectives of Refugees from Ukraine." p. 1-10.

²¹⁰ Anna Ziersch, Moira Walsh, and Clemence Due, "Having a Good Friend, a Good Neighbour, Can Help You Find Yourself: Social Capital and Integration for People from Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds in Australia." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, March 22, 2023, 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2023.2177628>. p. 10-11.

²¹¹ Ziersch *et al.*, "Having a Good Friend, a Good Neighbour, Can Help You Find Yourself: Social Capital and Integration for People from Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds in Australia." p. 11.

²¹² Pozzo and Nerghes, "Having a Good Friend, a Good Neighbour, Can Help You Find Yourself: Social Capital and Integration for People from Refugee and Asylum-Seeking Backgrounds in Australia." p.842-855.

²¹³ F. Nishimura, and K. Umeda. "Benefits and issues: Visitor sessions with pre-intermediate learners of Japanese." In *Creating New Synergies: Approaches of Tertiary Japanese Programmes in New Zealand*, by M. Ogino, P. Shino, & D. Nesbitt (Eds.), (pp. 142–186): Massey University Press, 2016.

between people.²¹⁴ This theory is reflected in the words of Syrian Refugee A, who felt that he could only improve his language proficiency further by interacting with Dutch society and told me, “I had to learn Dutch to go to the shop or to the doctor ... I don’t talk often to Arab people, to practice my Dutch more I always surround myself with Dutch people.”²¹⁵ Refugee A was extremely motivated to improve his Dutch through connecting with the host society and expressed little interest in developing networks with co-ethnic people. He said, “I do talk with Arabic people a little bit, but I love being with Dutch people to practice the language.”²¹⁶

However, Nishimura and Umeda argue that, even though conversing with locals can improve language proficiency, a certain level of knowledge of the language is necessary prior to these interactions, as these conversations often require a high language level.²¹⁷

This knowledge can be gained via the mandatory language courses, however these courses also have faults, according to three of the four interviewed Syrians, which can limit language acquisition. The most important fault in these courses, according to Syrian Refugees D and B, is that the teacher often does not speak the mother tongue of the learners, which can form a barrier to actually learning Dutch.²¹⁸ Syrian Refugee D, said in our interview that the rule of learning Dutch in Dutch is difficult. She said, “I would recommend to get teachers ... with a refugee background.... And support them to reach the criteria that a Dutch teacher would have. And then let them teach their own community with their own mother tongue. It will help people really understand what the heck Dutch language is.”²¹⁹ Florence Kemsley substantiates Syrian Refugee D’s need for being taught Dutch with help of her mother tongue. She argues that it is necessary to use one’s own language while learning a new language, as it can form as a mediator by making associations between new words and the corresponding mother tongue words.²²⁰

Ukrainian Refugee D, who followed free Dutch lessons organised by her municipality, also experienced learning Dutch in Dutch as a problem. She said, “Our teacher ... only knows Dutch and English. It’s a difficult situation, I go for four months but it’s too much because all the materials are in Dutch.... I don’t understand Dutch and need to focus on English, because it’s international”²²¹

Another problem that came up in the interviews I conducted, was the relationship between having a long-term perspective and language acquisition. Yuliya Kosyakova *et al.*, researched the dynamics of refugees’ language acquisition in Germany and argues that having a temporary or a permanent residency status influences refugee’s language. She argues that refugees who are allowed to stay permanently, receive a higher score on language proficiency measurements, than refugees who had temporary statuses. Kosyakova *et al.* argue that insecurities pertaining to receiving a permanent residency can hamper refugees’ motivation to

²¹⁴ Nishimura and Umeda. “Benefits and issues: Visitor sessions with pre-intermediate learners of Japanese.” p. 142-166.

²¹⁵ Syrian Refugee A. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 13, 2023.

²¹⁶ Syrian Refugee A. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 13, 2023.

²¹⁷ Nishimura and Umeda. “Benefits and issues: Visitor sessions with pre-intermediate learners of Japanese.” p. 142-166.

²¹⁸ Syrian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 9, 2023. ; Syrian Refugee B. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Utrecht, June 11, 2023.

²¹⁹ Syrian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 9, 2023.

²²⁰ Florence Kemsley, “Should teachers use students' own language in the classroom?” *Cambridge English*, February 24, 2015. <https://www.cambridge-org.nl/elt/blog/2015/02/24/teachers-use-students-language-learning-classroom/> (Accessed on July 3, 2023)

²²¹ Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

invest in their human capital post-migration.²²² As previously discussed, Ukrainian refugees experience this barrier to their integration, however Syrian refugees do not. Ukrainian Refugee D verified Kosyakova's argument by saying, "I don't have motivation [to learn Dutch] because I don't know if I'm allowed to stay."²²³

The quotes above show that although there are different language policies for Syrians and Ukrainians, they share similar experiences of discontent with how the lessons are being given; and they both feel that their integration is being hampered as a result of the policy implementations. Both groups experience the Dutch lessons in Dutch as having a negative effect on their language proficiency, due to the barrier that when only Dutch is spoken there is no translation help to clarify what is being said. This barrier can hamper the socio-economic integration of both refugee groups, as they are inhibited of fully participating socially and economically with the Dutch. Furthermore, Ukrainian Refugee D explained that not having a long-term perspective demotivates her from learning Dutch and experiences the policy's aim of offering temporary refugee to Ukrainians as a barrier to her integration in the Netherlands. This corresponds with the Government's aim of not integrating Ukrainians into the Netherlands, as they are here temporarily.

The interview data and my analysis substantiate the work by Ager and Strang by suggesting that reducing barriers sometimes means providing translation in the refugee's mother tongue to prevent miscommunications, and that this is especially important in the early stages of integration.²²⁴ Gwen Le Goff and Natacha Carbonel researched the refugees' experiences with translation tools, and agree with Ager and Strang that these can help to reduce language barriers, however Le Goff and Carbonel argue that this may lead to dependency on these tools, reducing self-reliance.²²⁵ And so the policy implementations, which do not include translation mechanisms, can adversely affect the language acquisition and subsequent integration of refugees. However, self-reliance is also an aim of the Government, and so not including translation mechanisms could be a strategy to enforce independent language acquisition.

The collected data also highlighted the negative effect of not having a long-term perspective in the Netherlands on learning Dutch. Besides receiving Dutch lessons from someone who could not help out in Ukrainian, Ukrainian Refugee D expressed that she lost motivation to learn Dutch, because she does not know if she is allowed to stay in the Netherlands. This shows that the lack of a long-term perspective is also a negative influence on language acquisition of Ukrainians, because their investment in language might turn out to be a waste of time. This is a direct result of the policy for Ukrainian refugees and hampers their integration.

This problem of not having a long-term perspective is something that Syrian refugees do not have. Being seen as permanent residents, they are have to learn Dutch to fulfil their integration process and participate in Dutch society.

Ukrainian Refugee C, says that she is very happy that she can communicate with locals in English because "it results into an absolute other level and quality of living and that even if not fully, it feels like you are a member of society." She says, 'I would love to learn Dutch, but because I live in a small place it's almost impossible [as there are no courses available] I really feel that I missed one year for nothing, when I could have learned

²²² Kosyakova, Yuliya, Cornelia Kristen, and Christoph Spörlein. "The Dynamics of Recent Refugees' Language Acquisition: How Do Their Pathways Compare to Those of Other New Immigrants?" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48, no. 5 (October 12, 2021): 989–1012. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183x.2021.1988845>. p. 994-1004

²²³ Ukrainian Refugee D. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Personal interview. Amsterdam, June 13, 2023.

²²⁴ Ager and Strang, "Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework." p. 173-183.

²²⁵ Gwen Le Goff, and Natacha Carbonel. "Être accompagné par un interprète : entre besoin de reconnaissance et stratégies de résistance." *Rhizome* 75-76, no. 1-2, (2020): 151-163. Here: p.151-160.

[Dutch] already”.²²⁶ This excerpt shows how, in contrast to some Ukrainian refugees, others do want to learn Dutch and feel time has been wasted because of not getting the option to learn Dutch earlier.

In this section, I have shown how important it is to have a working policy for language acquisition. By analysing the data through Ager and Strang’s framework, evidence was revealed for the Dutch context; that speaking Dutch facilitates social and economic connections for both groups and opens more avenues for participating socio-economically in the Netherlands. However, the framework also showed that there are faults in the provision of these language courses, as there are not translation mechanisms put in place, which is something that can improve language acquisition. This finding was triangulated by Ukrainian and Syrian refugees, who expressed the need for having teachers that can speak their mother tongue for a better understanding of Dutch.

Furthermore, my research has shown that learning Dutch with the Dutch could improve language proficiency and foster connections, which in turn can positively influence refugee’s socio-economic integration. This indicates that even though the Government tries to facilitate refugee integration by providing mandatory lessons to Syrians and optional lessons to Ukrainians, both groups experience these structural faults as hampering their integration. Furthermore, even though the policies differ in aim and in implementation, both groups experience similar feelings of needing more support from the Government in language acquisition, and subsequently also in their socio-economic integration. The language policies can be seen as a structural barrier to their integration, as the refugees do not have sufficient networks nor enough economic funds to acquire Dutch proficiency on their own.

The HCT perspective shows that when a refugee invests in obtaining language skills of the host-county, it increases their capital and can improve their professional mobility.²²⁷ However, by reflecting on the analysed literature and interviews I want to add to the HCT debate by critiquing its individualistic stance. The HCT suggests that increasing one’s human capital is mainly in one’s own hands. It does not take the influence of structures on an individual’s position and their ability to improve their human capital into account. I critique this part of the theory, as it contradicts my findings on the influence of policies on the agency of refugees. Let me elaborate by giving two examples: As a result of the language and employment policies applying to Ukrainians, which is a structural condition, Ukrainians only received the opportunity to develop their human capital on language in February 2023 by the Government, even though they had immediate access to the labour market on arrival. This resulted in, according to Ukrainian Refugee C, a year going to waste. She explained that missing out on language courses hampered her socio-economic integration, even though she had the means to work following the policy, she was not facilitated by the Government in language proficiency, until one year into her refuge in the Netherlands and so she only had access to low-skilled labour, which would devalue her human capital as a rheumatologist.

The second example pertains to the Syrians, who are obliged to learn Dutch. Following the literature and interview material, it became clear that the structure of the language and employment policies have a hindering effect on their socio-economic integration. The legal structures on employment restrict the Syrians from the labour market for the first six months of their refuge, which causes devaluation of their human capital and impedes their socio-economic integration, as they are delayed in becoming economic independent and making social connections. Furthermore, even though language courses are provided, the way that they are structured hinders the language acquisition and social

²²⁶ Ukrainian Refugee C. Interview conducted by Isabel van Woerkom. Online interview. Microsoft Teams, June 9, 2023.

²²⁷ Kuschel, Hansen, Heyse, & Wittek. “Combining Language Training and Work Experience for Refugees with Low-Literacy Levels: A Mixed-Methods Case Study.” p. 1-6

connections of Syrians, as there are no translation mechanism in place and they do not learn Dutch with the Dutch.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion and Reflection

In this research I aimed to answer the following question:

“How do the differing Dutch refugee policies shape the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees, who arrived between 2015 and 2021, in comparison to the socio-economic integration of Ukrainian refugees between March 2022 and May 2023?”

In the previous chapters I investigated this question through researching and comparing the differing policies on employment and on language pertaining to Ukrainian and Syrian refugees in the Netherlands. Furthermore, I analysed the experiences of four Syrian refugees, four Ukrainian refugees and four experts on the subject of refugee integration to find out how the policies shaped the socio-economic integration of these refugees.

I did this by researching how and why the policies differ, the experiences of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees with the labour policies and its effect on their economic integration and by looking at how both refugee groups experience the language policies' effect in shaping their socio-economic integration.

My analysis was structured in three stages: 1) discovering the policy aims of the Government, 2) researching the implementation of the policies and, 3) interviewing twelve respondents to highlight the individual experiences of people, who fall under these policies.

In order to structure my thesis and subsequently answer the research question, I used the analytical framework by Ager and Strang on successful integration to systematically compare the differing policies pertaining to the groups and to compare their experiences with the effects of the policies in shaping their socio-economic integration. Ager and Strang informed my choice of focussing on the domains of employment and language, by showing how these domains are the most important pillars to refugee integration, which corresponds with what the Dutch Government finds the most important factors for successful integration.

I built on Ager and Strang's recommendation that further research was needed on the interlinkages between domains. I did this by investigating how the domain of language and employment influence each other and highlighted via the conducted interviews that the links are of immense importance to understand refugee integration. Syrian Refugee B formulated the link well by saying, “The language is the key to the country”, by which he meant that language helps in understanding and navigating through all levels of society, including the labour market. By shedding light on this interlinkage I contributed to the refugee integration debate, as I showed that inadequate language support leads to inadequate employment, and also the other way round; being unemployed leads to missing out on improving language proficiency. Furthermore, by looking at this research through the lens of HCT, I have added to the HCT debate by critiquing its individualistic stance on investing in human capital. The concluding discussion below will show how policies form a structural barrier to the individual investments in human capital of refugees.

In my discussion of the policies it became apparent that the Government's' policy aims do not correlate with the implementation of the policies, which leads to differing effects on the shaping of the socio-economic integration of Syrian refugees in comparison to Ukrainian refugees. According to de Vroome and van Tubergen the implementation of the employment policy for Syrians is inconsistent with the aim of letting them participate as quickly as possible in Dutch society, as the policy is implemented in a manner that delays the

access of Syrians to the Dutch labour market, because of restrictions like the 24-weeks rule. The policy not only forms a barrier to the economic integration of Syrians, but also to their mental health and their social integration, as making connections with locals and improving their language proficiency is also hindered by the policy's implementation.

Furthermore the language policy for Syrians, who are obliged to learn Dutch to fulfil the integration program has its problems. Researchers like Odé and Dagevos, have shown that the mandatory language courses have a positive effect on the language acquisition of refugees and subsequently on their socio-economic integration. However, my interviews have highlighted that there are structural faults in the implementation of the language courses; they enable refugees to learn Dutch with the Dutch, which leads to them missing out on making social connections, on learning the 'spoken language' and on acquiring a better understanding of the Dutch culture. This leads me to arguing that the language policy implementation forms as a structural barrier to the socio-economic integration of Syrian, and also to their investment in human capital, as missing out on social connections can also result in missing job opportunities and improving language proficiency.

The employment policy aim for Ukrainians, was providing them a temporary space to live their lives as normal as possible. The implementation of the policy fulfilled the Government's aim in part, as direct access to the labour market was given to the Ukrainians. However, the temporality of their status in the Netherlands, damages the socio-economic integration of Ukrainians, and uncertainty regarding the duration of their stay leads to mental health problems and loss of motivation, which in turn can negatively influence their human capital acquisition, as *Bakker et al.* discuss.

This is also directly related to the language policy for Ukrainians as the one influences the other. In the Netherlands, the Ukrainians are not obliged to integrate, because of their temporary status. Thus they are not obligated to follow Dutch lessons, however the Government did allocate money to municipalities to offer optional language courses to Ukrainians. My research has resulted in evidencing that the missing of teacher who speak the learner's refugee language has a negative effect on the language acquisition. I argue that provision of language lessons in the refugee's native language, should be provided where possible, as this can accelerate the initial learning phase of language learners. Furthermore, I argue that the policy implementation is inconsistent as not receiving sufficient language acquisition support hinders their economic integration, resulting in highly-educated Ukrainians working low-skilled jobs, which then negatively influences the continuation of their 'normal' lives. These policy consequences prevents them from acquiring additional skills through investment in their own human capital, even leads to its loss. Additionally, it has become clear that the longer the TPD is in place, the more damage is done to the wellbeing and integration of Ukrainians, as it does not offer any other prospect, than that of temporariness.

And so by researching the relation between employment and language, I have come to the conclusion that the inconsistencies with the policy aims and implementations, subsequently have a negative effect on shaping the socio-economic integration of refugees, as the policies form as a structural barrier to the investment of refugees in their human capital. Even though the policy aims and implementations differ from each other, they both result in the same feeling of helplessness for both groups and in taking away the agency of an individual to invest in their lives.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Research

Following on from my research's key findings, I recommend that further research is to be done on the interlinks and positive and negative synergies between employment, language and social connection, and its subsequent effect on the integration of refugees into host-countries. The scope of my thesis limited me to only analysing two domains of Ager and Strang's framework, but I have now observed, through actively working with this model, the depth of its theoretical underpinning, the clarity that its presentation provides and the importance of seeing it as a linked unity. My study can be interpreted as a first step in elaborating the knowledge on the influences the domains have on each other. Furthermore, I think that the Dutch refugee integration field could be enlightened greatly if further research was to be done on the interlinkages between less researched domains, such as health, and the more 'popular' domains, such as language. By researching these connections, a greater understanding will be gained of how successful integration of refugees can be achieved in a specific context.

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Appendix

1. Ager and Strang's Conceptual Framework for Integration (2008)



Source: Alastair Ager, Alison Strang, Understanding Integration: A Conceptual Framework, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, Volume 21, Issue 2, June 2008, Pages 166–191, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fen016>

2. List of interviewees

Ukrainian Refugees	Syrian Refugees	Experts
Ukrainian Refugee A, 38 years old	Syrian Refugee A, 54 years old	Integration Coach at Asylum Seeker Centre
Ukrainian Refugee B, 37 years old	Syrian Refugee B, 34 years old	Project Leader Ukraine at Dutch NGO
Ukrainian Refugee C, 44 years old	Syrian Refugee C, 27 years old	Policy Researcher on integration at a Dutch research institute
Ukrainian Refugee D, 48 years old	Syrian Refugee D, 37 years old	Researcher on refugee integration and participation