

**If work is out of sight.**

**Experiences with introductory programmes for newly arrived  
refugees**

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In 2004 Norway introduced a compulsory introductory programme for newly arrived refugees and their families. The *Introduction Act* was the first law ever to be passed to regulate the integration of newcomers to Norway. It entitled newcomers to an individually tailored training programme as well as a modest fixed income, but by conditioning financial support on participation it also meant that extensive language and work training became compulsory for most newly arrived refugees and their families. The Norwegian Introductory programme (NIP) thus represents a formalisation of newcomers' rights to receive adequate support in adapting to a new country of residence. It also represents an – in a Norwegian context – unprecedented formalisation of their obligation to strive to become integrated in society. While our discussion takes place on the basis of Norwegian data and is directly related to a Norwegian policy, we aim to address more general issues by pointing at some of the dilemmas that arise when newcomers or other marginalised groups are enrolled in comprehensive activation programs. When the target groups are highly heterogeneous, with many facing significant challenges in the labour market, work-orientated goals can both be hard to achieve and insufficient. Such cases may invoke the need to address the labour market participation of newcomers in the context of wider issues of social inclusion and participation. Our analysis focuses at the level of local implementation, asking what types of aims and work methods that are devised in situations where work is out of sight or, at least, very far ahead.

## ***1. Activation, integration, citizenship***

The Introduction Act epitomises important trends both in European social policy and integration policy. Firstly it represents a massive activation effort targeted at a group which has experienced considerable difficulties in accessing the labour market. It ties income support to active participation in an extensive training programme aimed at improving participants' future employability. A distinction is sometimes made between activation of the work-first type and of the human capital type. The former gives priority to labour market integration on the premise that any job is better than none, while the latter emphasises the development of skills which will enable people to find suitable work (Dean 2003). The introduction programme belongs to the latter category in that it constitutes an extensive qualification programme, but contrary to many other such programmes it is made compulsory for an entire social category comprising highly diverse individuals. Secondly, as a piece of integration policy it constitutes an articulation of a more general shift towards the logic of assimilation in European integration policy regimes (Brubaker 2001; Joppke 2007). This does not imply assimilation in the sense of becoming culturally similar to the host country's dominant culture (whatever that is), but it means that the political emphasis has moved away from the importance of cultural recognition and towards a stronger emphasis on socio-economic integration in the labour market, as well as a more profound concern with the need for shared civic values in ethnically diverse societies.

This double character invites a discussion of the relationship between activation, integration and citizenship. Activation in its broad sense designates social policies aimed at increasing employment. In a narrower sense it refers to programmes of (work place) training and education with a strong emphasis on bringing people into work. Economic incentives or sanctions may be involved, as may

methods such as individual action plans and various schemes for training, counselling and job searching. Work is also a central element in accounts of both integration and citizenship, but both reach wider than that. Jørgen Goul Andersen (2005) suggests that integration or social inclusion and citizenship perspectives, despite many commonalities, have different frames of reference. The former stresses the conditions of social belonging, while the latter originates from a problem of democracy thus emphasising empowerment, the equal status and worth of citizens, and political participation. Despite such different frames of reference, we find it useful for our purposes to stress the overlaps and shared concerns of integration and citizenship. Both inclusion and citizenship perspectives place great emphasis on work, but also other dimensions of inclusion and participation are accounted for. Work is both a right and an obligation of citizenship in T.H. Marshall's perspective, but his concern is not employment *per se* but the equal status of citizens and their access to democratic participation through the elaboration of their civil, political and social rights. Likewise, an analysis of immigrants' integration into host societies will emphasise their position in the labour market, but also other areas such as participation in education, civil society, politics, local neighbourhoods and friendships may be accounted for. Also, just any job will not necessarily entail a strengthening of citizenship if it has no or little effect on poverty or inclusion in other areas (Barbier 2005).

In the analyses below, we argue that there is a considerable degree of ambiguity in policy makers' formulations of the aims of the introductory programme, oscillating between primarily being orientated towards work and also including wider objectives of social participation and personal autonomy (what we refer to as citizenship). As an activation effort the programme aims at qualifying participants for labour market participation and financial self-sufficiency. As an integration effort the aim is to enable participants to take part in society as active citizens, thus incorporating wider aims than labour market integration. Whether the aim of the programme is understood as work, citizenship or both have consequences for how policymakers, caseworkers and the general public think about work methods. Furthermore, it has consequences for how they will and can evaluate the programmes' outcomes. Most will agree that a programme which improves both employment and citizenship is a resounding success, and that one leading to none of the two is meaningless. But is the programme successful if it helps people to find work, possibly of a dead-end or precarious nature, but fails in improving participation in other arenas thus leading to the development of a working second-class citizenry? Or is it successful if it teaches people skills which enables them to take part in everyday situations at their children's schools or socialise in the local neighbourhood, but does little to alleviate welfare dependency? The figure below is obviously grossly simplifying possible outcomes, but works to outline the potential dilemmas.

Figure 1. Possible evaluations of NIP

|  | <b>Activation leading to work</b>  | <b>Activation not leading to work</b>   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Activation leading to citizenship</b>     | (A) Excellent result, NIP very successful  | (B) Still OK? Newcomer’s lives and ability to participate in social relations are improved, but they still depend on social benefits      |
| <b>Activation not leading to citizenship</b> | (C) Still OK? More newcomers work and burden on social budgets decreasing, but employment doesn’t seem to affect participation in other arenas or people’s perception of own position in society. Developing parallel societies? | (D) NIP is meaningless, a storage project for newcomers with considerable ethical problems considering the programme’s scope and duration |

Such dilemmas become particularly pertinent considering the very diverse group of individuals that are included in the programme. Newly arrived refugees and their families constitute a highly heterogeneous category encompassing all levels and types of educational backgrounds (including the complete lack of such), work experiences, family structures, war traumas and health issues. The great majority of adults, men and women, are enrolled into the programme. While the majority does move on to work or ordinary education after completing the programme, a large minority does not. Some will only need a little more time and training; for others employment remains an unrealistic or at least very long-term prospect.

In this paper we are interested in how local street-level bureaucrats handle situations when work appears to be out of sight (outcomes 3 and 4). Obviously, there will be differences in opinion both between municipalities and between individual case-workers with regard to who, among the newcomers, falls into this category. As a consequence, participants with similar background and skills may be perceived very differently with regard to their possibilities in the labour market. Despite considerable awareness of individual variation and the importance of personality and “drive” in caseworkers’ evaluation of their clients’ prospects, certain factors tend to be generally recognised as challenging – health issues in particular, but also women’s care responsibilities are prime among these. What do the central policy documents say about participants facing particular challenges vis-à-vis the labour market? How do caseworkers negotiate the aims and work methods of the introduction programme in a situation where central guidelines are ambiguous or out of sync with their everyday experiences? What adaptations are made to these participants’ specific challenges, whether these are poor educational background, poor health, heavy caring responsibilities or a combination? Is there a place for this type of participants in the Introduction Programme and, if so, how can activation be meaningful when work is out of sight?

## ***2. The introduction programme – background***

The employment rates of so-called non-western immigrants in general and refugees in particular are, in Norway as in the rest of Scandinavia, well below those of the majority population (Djuve and Kavli 2007). Among refugees in total men had an employment rate of 55.4 percent and women 44.2 percent, compared to 73.3 and 66.6 per cent in the total population (Olsen 2007). The gap is, for obvious reasons, particularly wide in the first years after arrival, but also after several years in Norway refugees lag behind. One result is that a high proportion of refugee families depend on social assistance also after several years of residency (Østby 2004). This, in the authorities' view, is problematic not only because of the financial costs of welfare dependency but also because one suspects a mental process of "clientification" through long-term presence in the social assistance system. As explained in a government white paper: "One consequence of the social assistance dependency can be that recipients to a larger degree will focus on developing coping strategies vis-à-vis the social assistance system, rather than, for example, vis-à-vis the labour market. Such a learned dependency of social assistance is called the "clientification problem" (St. Meld. No 17 1996-1997: 61).

While the gravity of the employment situation and concerns about clientification constituted one major impetus towards an Introduction Act, a second concern regarded the quality of the apparatus set up to facilitate the integration of newcomers into Norwegian society. The Norwegian approach to practical integration policy has primarily been to use the ordinary welfare system, where legally settled immigrants have enjoyed more or less the same formal rights as natives. For the services that are specific to the needs of newcomers, such as language instruction, responsibilities and funds have been transferred to the municipalities with only broad guidelines offered by central authorities. The result has been massive geographical differences with respect to the extent and quality of the services offered to newcomers (Berg & Thorseth 1995; Djuve, Kavli, Lund & Østberg 2001). The Introduction Act significantly limits the autonomy of local government in that it obliges municipalities to offer newcomers certain services in certain ways.

The Introduction Programme that was made law in 2004 is applicable to all newly arrived refugees (includes resettlement refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted asylum or residency on humanitarian grounds) and their families, with the further qualifications that they must be defined as in need of basic qualification and be between 18 and 55 years old. For the sake of simplicity, we shall below call the target group newly arrived refugees. Each participant is entitled to a fixed introduction benefit, which is not means-tested, meaning that work on the side is both encouraged and possible without affecting payments. The benefits are however conditioned on participation in a full time (30-37,5 hours a week) qualification programme lasting for up to two years (three years in special cases). Illegitimate absences from the set activities are deducted from the benefits, hour by hour. The programme shall be individually adapted to each participant's background, needs and aims, through the use of individual action plans. In practice of course, the specific content of each participant's programme will depend on the courses and placements that each municipality is able to or willing to offer, and these will suit some better than others. The most typical programme

components will be Norwegian language and social issues classes and various types of work training, most often in the shape of work placements (with more or less supervision) but also as sector specific courses. Such work-orientated activities are crucial as preparation for labour market participation it is an explicit aim of the programme, and much emphasis has been put on a pedagogy that takes language learning out of the classroom and into practical situations in the work places. In addition to these “staple” components, municipalities have come up with a wide array of other courses and activities to secure individual adaptation as well as preparing for participation in a wider civic sense. These range from computer classes to sewing courses, from helping children with homework to psychiatric treatment.

Many of the ideas inherent in the reform were far from new. Ideas about combining language instruction and work training, about providing refugees with other forms of income support than social assistance, about making language instruction compulsory, had all been circulating since the mid-1980s. Considering that the Act was praised by all parties as a positive and important reform when it was finally passed, it appears curious that it took so long to materialise. However, the consensus on the compulsory element of the reform (both for municipalities and newcomers) is more recent, and must be understood in the context of a growing sense of urgency and crisis in the integration field. These are European-wide concerns, debated under headlines such as citizenship and social cohesion, where the underlying fears are expressed in a vocabulary of parallel societies, ethnic underclasses, ghettoisation and extremism. In countries such as Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands, the position of immigrant women has been a further impetus to change, most dramatically exemplified through cases of forced marriages and honour killings, but also through analyses of immigrant women’s low levels of labour market participation and poor language skills (Akkerman & Hagelund 2007; Kavli 2003). A triple concern may thus be said to have led to the introduction reform (Djuve & Kavli 2007: 207): The concern that newcomers could (and actually did choose to) avoid acquiring basic skills necessary to function in Norwegian society; that they were being incorporated into a welfare system that reinforced their status as clients; and that the services offered were inadequate. In sum, this provided a powerful rationale for limiting both newcomers’ and municipalities’ autonomy. And for those who were sceptical to the compulsory element of the reform, the pill was considerably sweetened by the fact that the Act provided one of the most marginalised groups in the labour market with the right to comprehensive assistance and support.

In comparison with other European policies concerning newcomers and work, Norway was neither first nor last to introduce mandatory introductory programmes. The triple concern mentioned above, can be found in integration debates all over Europe and has facilitated what Carrera describes as a distinct trend towards a mandatory nature of integration programmes for newcomers. In a growing number of states, participation and completion of these programs is not only a condition for the right to welfare benefits, but also for the right to permanent residency and eventually full citizenship (Carrera 2006; Entzinger & Biezeveld 2003). In the European landscape of introductory programmes and their implications with regard to the rights and duties for newcomers, Norway can be found somewhere in the middle. Participation *is* mandatory and not fulfilling this obligation will have both short term consequences for the right to income-support and long term consequences for residency rights. Even so, the legal consequences are of a fairly lenient kind. Participants who fail to complete the program will not risk deportation like in Denmark or the Netherlands, only a bureaucratic burden of yearly renewals of residence permits (Kavli forthcoming).

A more important distinguishing trait of the policy in Norway (and in the other Scandinavian countries) is that the programmes are long-lasting compared to most other European countries, comprehensive (full time over a period of 2-3 years) and free of charge for the participants. In this respect, the NIP is representative for the general type of state response to issues of inequality and poor living conditions in the Scandinavian decommodifying welfare regimes.

### **3. Data.**

In this article, we present data that stem from several studies and sources. Existing knowledge on the effects of NIP on labour markets participation is based on an analysis of individual data from 4053 former participants in the NIP from various administrative registers. These data can only give a very general picture, so we supplement this with two additional sets of data to shed some more light on how, and to what degree, the local programme managers and caseworkers have implemented the program, and how they reflect upon the challenges they face and the solutions they have found.

- *Individual information on 4053 former participants in NIP* was gathered through public registers. We do not apply these data in any kind of depth in this paper, but they form the basis of the effect evaluation that is briefly referred in section 5.
- *Surveys among case-workers and programme managers in a representative sample of Norwegian municipalities.* Invitations to participate were sent to all Norwegian municipalities that had accepted refugees for settlement the past three years (256 out of 430 municipalities). Web-assisted surveys were conducted at two different levels of the local refugee-services. In the first wave, the management level was invited to answer questions concerning the overall profile of the local programme. In the second wave, up to four case-workers in each municipality were invited to answer questions concerning their everyday implementation of the programme. The response rates were high: 86 percent at management level and 84 percent at case-worker level.
- *In-depth interviews and focus groups.* We visited eight municipalities to gather more detailed information on the considerations and reflections among street-level bureaucrats regarding the everyday implementation of the NIP. We conducted two types of interviews. First, one-on-one (in two cases group-) interviews with mid-level managers in the local refugee-service to get a more detailed impression on how the local program was organised. Second, focus group interviews with NIP case-workers, teachers and other parties involved in the local implementation of the program. In total we interviewed 11 managers at various levels of seniority, 21 refugee caseworkers, 14 teachers, 1 nurse and 1 job-centre representative. The focus group interviews were organised around three constructed cases, where the interviewees were invited to discuss how they would organise the programme for the imagined case-persons.

There is, as always, some shortcomings worth noting in the data we have at our disposal. Firstly, in order to address some of the questions concerning the programmes' quality, we obviously should have more data on how the participants perceive the programmes they have taken part in. To try and remedy this, we present the most relevant findings from earlier studies among 286 participants in 26 trial projects launched in the years between 1999 and 2002 (Djuve et al 2001; Lund 2003; Kavli

2004a). Even though these interviews were carried out before introductory programmes became mandatory for municipalities, the participants were presented with a programme that for all practical purposes was obligatory and comprehensive. Their assessments are in our opinion therefore still relevant. Secondly, it is necessary to point out that our data were collected shortly after the first two years of NIP as an obligatory programme had come to an end. Needless to say, this will only give a very preliminary indication of the programme's results with regard to employment and financial self-sufficiency among the former participants. On the other hand, the local implementation of the programme was studied carefully, and this is very useful for our purposes.

#### ***4. The Introduction Act – analysing the policy discourse***

The double aim of employment and broader social participation – pointing in direction of what we described as a tension between activation and citizenship aims – is clearly pronounced in the policy documents that preceded the adoption of the Introduction Act by the Norwegian parliament in 2003.

The committee appointed to prepare a first draft of an Introduction Act started out from the premise that few newcomers entered the labour market and that the local efforts to provide them with basic insights in Norwegian language and social issues were often lacking in continuity, direction and coordination. This situation was made worse by the fact that social assistance became their main source of income. While emphasising that integration had to be each newcomer's individual responsibility, the committee acceded to the view that society had a responsibility to facilitate such participation. The aims it formulated for the introduction programme were accordingly to strengthen immigrants' participation in the labour market, their economic independence and their participation in social life (NOU 2001: 48).

The bill presented to Parliament by a centre-conservative government in 2002 elaborated the aims further. One aim was to ensure that participants actively contributed "something, primarily to the benefit of themselves, but also to society, in order to entitle themselves to the economic benefit" (Ot.prp.no.28 2002-03: 38). A further aim of the fixed benefit was to strengthen economic independence and responsibility for managing own economy. Finally, the programme should meet participants' need for language training, insights into Norwegian social conditions and preparation for work and/or further education. The bill explicitly stresses that participation in social life in a broader sense than work and/or education is an aim (ibid. 39).

Despite the heading Introduction programme for newly arrived *immigrants* (authors' emphasis), the programme was never intended to include all newcomers. Entitlements are restricted according to entry category, age and need. In the bill, the Ministry presents the rationale for each criterion:

- The Act applies to refugees and their families, refugee in this context meaning resettlement refugees and asylum seekers who have been granted asylum or residency on humanitarian grounds. The opposition protested that also family migrants should be included, primarily because many female family migrants demonstrably have not acquired the language skills necessary to participate neither in civil society nor in the work force. The Government

resisted arguing that family migrants had no need for income support (their maintenance was a condition for family reunification in the first place), and that the State had no “special responsibility” (ibid. 48) for this category of migrants, as it had for refugees.

- The right and duty to introduction programme applies to persons between 18 and 55. The upper age limit was justified by reference to the main target of programme participation being work and/or education, thus implicitly hinting at a lack of realistic work prospects for this group. This is also implicit in the added remark that it would be “inexpedient and unreasonable” (ibid. 49) to impose programme participation on this group.
- Finally, only those with a need for basic qualification (*grunnleggende kvalifisering*) are included. Whether a person has such a need must be decided on the basis of an individual assessment, which is thus left to the discretionary powers of the local introduction bureaucracies. However, two pointers are given. As the prime target of the programme is rapid transfer to work or education, persons who already are employed or in ordinary education do not need the programme. Furthermore, those who cannot “make use” of the programme for social or health related reasons should be exempted. The target group is thus delimited at the top and the bottom. Still, one is left with a very broad potential set of participants as “most newly arrived immigrants in the bill’s target group will lack essential prerequisites for social participation” (ibid. 51).

While preparing for participation in social life is an important element in the formulations of the programme’s aim, it is being silently downplayed in the delimitations of the programme’s target group where each exclusion also carries an implicit message about the purpose of the programme. Family migrants are excluded because they do not need income support; thus their economic (or rather their spouses’) independence trumps their need for skills necessary for participation both in social life and work. Older migrants are excluded because it is considered unrealistic that the aim of economic independence can ever be met; thus the futility of offering work training trumps their need for training for participation in social life. The final category, those who cannot make use of the programme, is rather diffuse. Does it comprise those who cannot make use of the programme in the sense of being highly unlikely to find work? Or merely those who are physically or psychologically unable to follow any kind of full time activity schedule? Municipalities have wide discretionary powers here. The sentence on lacking “essential prerequisites for social participation” points towards an inclusive interpretation, while other formulations emphasise rapid transfer to work and/or education as the primary aim.

This brief analysis of central policy formulations hints at an inherent ambiguity with respect to the ordering of the programme’s aims. On the one hand it is targeted at those in need of basic qualifications for life in Norway. On the other, it is simultaneously an income support policy targeted at those dependent on social assistance who potentially can and should work. One consequence is that social participation in some contexts is hailed as an independent aim, while in others being downplayed as a secondary addition to what then appears as a primarily work orientated policy. Before we move on to look at how this ambiguity is interpreted and played out in practice, it is useful to survey the existing data and literature on NIP and other relevant policies targeted at immigrants. To what extent does this kind of programmes succeed and how are their successes

measured? Who among the participants are perceived as most challenging among the street-level bureaucrats, and how widespread is the phenomenon of programme participants for whom work out of sight?

## ***5. Work in or out of sight - what do we know?***

As we have seen, the NIP was conceived in the wake of a debate that put great emphasis on the need for better labour market inclusion of immigrants. Consequently, much of the research has concentrated on various programmes' effects on the participants' chances of finding paid work. A common finding is that the documented employment effects of labour market programmes for refugees and immigrants in Scandinavia are fairly moderate (Djuve forthcoming). The most robust finding is that the closer the training is to the actual labour market, the more likely it is that the participants will find work. This conclusion holds both for immigrants and for the overall population. However, in the general labour market programmes, refugees and immigrants tend to be underrepresented in the most effective activation programmes (Ibid). The reason for this can of course both be that (some) immigrants have qualifications that are less compatible with the local labour market than natives, but also that they lose in the competition for the most attractive work-placement programmes.

The NIP draws heavily on existing knowledge on effective activation programs, is reserved for newcomers, and the latest evaluation indicates that employment rates among former participants are fairly high (Kavli, Hagelund & Bråthen 2007). The study was conducted on the basis of all (former) participants who had completed or broken off from the introductory program during the first two years<sup>1</sup> after the law was enacted (4053 persons). Their status in the labour market and in the educational system was collected from public registers in November 2006. Among the former participants 69 percent of the men and 45 percent of the women had at this point found employment, started an ordinary education or both. Transfer from the NIP to ordinary education is most common among the young, and applies to an equal share of men and women (13 percent in both groups). An additional 10 percent among the male participants and 7 percent among the female participants combined work and education at the time of the evaluation. Consequently, the main difference between the male and female former participants concerns the transition from programme to employment. Among women, only 32 percent had found employment at the time of our evaluation, in contrast to 56 percent among men. Among women, 41 percent were not registered with any activity at all, compared to only 14 percent among men<sup>2</sup>.

Attempts to estimate the effect of participating in the program indicate that the NIP does in fact increase the participants' chances of finding employment<sup>3</sup>. However, this only holds true for men. So

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<sup>1</sup> 01.09.2005 to 01.09.2006.

<sup>2</sup> Activities in this respect are employment, ordinary education, disability pension, sick-leave, or labour market training through NAV (The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration).

<sup>3</sup> This result is based on binary regression analysis and a matching procedure in three stages. First, the former participants' individual characteristics were included in a multivariate analysis to identify the factors that had

far, the introductory programme has no documented effect on women's employment probabilities (Kavli, Hagelund & Bråthen 2007)<sup>4</sup>. This points towards one of the central challenges for the NIP and its facilitators: to adapt the programme to women with care-responsibilities. Women enrol in language classes and introductory programmes to the same degree as men, but complete their courses and classes to a lesser degree (Steen-Olsen 2001; Drøpping and Kavli 2002; Kavli, Hagelund & Bråthen 2007; Mathisen 2007). Among the 4053 participants who were registered as having completed the programme in our data, 57 percent both among men and women completed the full programme (normally two years, up to three years in special cases). However, an additional 21 percent of the male participants left the programme because they found so-called "suitable employment", thus bringing the male completion rate up to 78 percent. Among female former participants, only 8 percent found work during the programme period, resulting in a completion rate of 65 percent.

The study indicates that care responsibilities have different implications for men and women's employment probabilities. For women, the probability of being employed decreases when they have children under the age of seven or live in a household with more than one child. This does not apply to men, who, on the other hand, have an increased likelihood of being employed if they are married compared to being single. A reasonable explanation is that while marriage and children draw women away from employment, it pushes men towards it. We also find that the female former participants seem to be less susceptible to the regional employment situation. Whereas men's likelihood of finding employment decreases with rising unemployment in their region of settlement, the situation on the labour market have no measurable impact on the female participants' likelihood of finding a job. Studies' dating back before the NIP was introduced indicate that female participants receive a less work oriented and less intensive program than men (Kavli 2004b; Integrationsverket 2007). Whether this stemmed from the sum of all individual adaptations based on specific needs among women, from a gender bias in the way the program is implemented, or from a combination of both,

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an impact on their probability to be employed. Secondly, we used this information to construct a basis for comparison by establishing a group of non-participants. This group was individually matched with the participant-group based on age, gender, years in Norway at the time of reference, country of origin and immigration category. Because the NIP applies to all newcomers in the target group, the comparison group had to be constructed from immigrants who arrived in Norway before the law was enacted. Hence, the time of reference for the comparison group was November 2002, and for the participant group November 2006. Thirdly, the two matched groups were compared with regard to participation in education and in the labour market, both controlled for the regional employment-numbers at the two given times of reference. Thirdly, the two matched groups were compared with regard to participation in education and in the labour market, both controlled for the regional employment-levels at the two given times of reference.

<sup>4</sup> However, registration routines create some problems in our data. Female participants in the NIP are entitled to 10 months of maternity leave; participants on maternity leave have been "checked out" of the program together with participants who are too sick to participate any further. As a consequence, the data underestimates the number of female participants who will actually complete the program. Another consequence might be that we underestimate the programs effect on female participants' future employment, considering that some of the female participants who are checked out of the program and are thus part of our statistics, in reality has neither completed nor permanently broken off their program.

is hard to say. Either way, a less work-orientated program will in all likelihood lead to a lower degree of employment.

Measuring other outcomes from immigrant activation programmes than labour market inclusion is far less common. However, in the evaluations that were done of 16 pilot projects in 1998-2001 there are a few findings of relevance. There are indications that newcomers in municipalities which either supplied the participants with systematic information of local organizations, or facilitated local community guides, could document a rise in organizational memberships among the participants during their introductory period (Djuve et al 2001). Participants in these programmes also, on average, reported having a larger social network after the programme, than participants in programmes that did not include cooperation with NGOs.

Another result worth measuring would be how the participants perceive the full time, two-year programme they are obliged to complete. In a follow-up study of former participants in the pilot projects (3-5 years after ending the programme), the respondents were asked to assess the benefit of the programme. The findings suggested that although most participants found Norwegian language training to be important for their prospects in Norway, the more intensive the programme had been (measured as the number of hours per week they were obliged to participate), the more prone they were to consider parts of the programme as irrelevant or badly adjusted to their needs and qualifications (Kavli 2004a).

The last question we pose here, is what existing research can tell us about the street-level bureaucrats' reflections on who among the newcomers they perceive as "problem-categories" regarding the possibility to find work (at least within the NIP time-frame). Based both on qualitative and quantitative interviews among case workers in the local refugee services in Denmark, Norway and Sweden, three categories of particularly challenging participants can be singled out<sup>5</sup>:

- Participants with little or no education.
- Participants with extensive care-responsibilities
- Participants with severe health problems, either somatic or due to trauma/psychological illness.

The Introductory Act allows local authorities considerable leeway in adapting the program to individual participants' needs. Newcomers with extensive care-responsibilities or health problems are mentioned specifically in the section of the administrative regulations where possible adaptations to individual needs are addressed. Adapting the program to participants with little or no education is seen as less challenging, also among the local caseworkers. Eighty percent report that they have sufficient access to Norwegian language classes adapted for illiterates or participants with limited schooling. The challenge, both for this and the other two groups, is mainly to find relevant work training during the programme period, a task 61 percent of the caseworkers report to have difficulties carrying out (Kavli, Hagelund & Bråthen 2007). Participants with extensive care

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<sup>5</sup> Djuve et al 2001; Lund 2003; Kavli 2004; Drøpping and Kavli 2002; Kavli, Hagelund and Bråthen 2007; Husted & Heinesen 2004; Integrationsverket 2007.

responsibilities present caseworkers both with a practical problem and an ideological dilemma. On the practical side, 32 percent of the caseworkers report an insufficient supply of child-care opportunities for parents (Kavli, Hagelund & Bråthen 2007). Lack of child care obviously makes it difficult to participate in the programme full time and has consequences for mothers in particular. On the ethical side, extensive care responsibilities for children or adults will sometimes make it hard to participate full time even if child care or relief from other care-responsibilities are supplied. 19 percent of the municipalities have addressed this by allowing a part-time programme for participants with extensive care-responsibilities. An additional 27 percent of the municipalities allow participants to attend open kindergartens/playgroups with their children as part of the programme. Somatic and/or psychological health-problems among participants can both be hard to identify and will represent a considerable challenge for case-workers who aim for a full time programme. The knowledge of this challenge is well known, and 80 percent of the programme managers report that health treatment or therapy can be included as part of the program. Access to appropriate services is the bottleneck, as only 36 percent of the caseworkers say that they have sufficient access to treatment services for traumatized participants.

It is obviously difficult to estimate the share of participants who is perceived to be problematic in the sense that they have a long way to go before employment is a realistic option. Still, in light of the broad intake policy and the assessments from program managers, it is fair to conclude that “work out of sight” is no marginal phenomenon among NIP participants. Programme managers were asked how many of the participants in their municipality who had needs which made it hard to put together a programme. Only 8 per cent responded that none of their participants had such needs, whereas 35 percent reported that approximately 10 percent of the participants had special needs and an additional 30 percent of the municipalities said that this applied to 20-30 percent of the participants. It is a clear tendency that municipalities which have settled few refugees and consequently run small-scale programmes, are more prone to answer that the participants have needs they struggle to meet. It will also change over time, due to fluctuations in the characteristics of refugees who arrive in Norway.

We have no reliable numbers on the educational level among NIP participants, but it is fair to expect that the latest survey among the immigrant population will give some indications. Among the ten largest non-western immigrant groups in Norway, 17 percent report to have no completed education. An additional 23 percent have completed primary school or lower secondary level (9 years or less). 36 percent have completed upper secondary education, and 24 percent have higher education. On the hole, men have higher levels of education than women (Blom and Henriksen 2007). Only 6 percent of the programme managers believe that none of their participants are in need of treatment in addition to ordinary medical consultations. More than half of the programme managers estimate that more than one in ten participants need extra medical attention due to trauma or psychological illness (Kavli, Hagelund & Bråthen 2007). This is not surprising, given the broad intake policy and present knowledge about the risks of health problems, both somatic and psychological, among refugees (Varvin 2006).

To sum up, there are no solid data available on the proportion of participants who are considered to belong to the “problem categories”. Most street-level bureaucrats have encountered participants who, in their opinion, have a long way to go before employment is a realistic or even a remotely

possible option. Participants with little or no education, with poor health or with extensive caring responsibilities are at the top of caseworkers worry-list. The relative size of this group within the population of participants is hard to estimate, among other things because the same category of participant, with the same type of challenges, can be perceived differently in different local contexts based on the caseworkers' experience and competence, the municipalities' dedication to invest money in building a good introductory program, and the local labour markets' ability (and need) to absorb low-skilled workers. The overall picture will also change over time, in tune with the fluctuations in the refugee situation in the world and the national immigration policy. What seems certain is that a significant proportion of the participants can be and are being regarded as people who need considerable amounts of assistance and training before they will be able to enter the labour market. So how do local managers and case workers respond to the participants for whom work is not in immediate sight?

## ***6. Views from the street-level***

Our overall impression is that local authorities and street-level bureaucrats have taken the programme's primary emphasis on work to heart. Among caseworkers, 78 percent describes the NIP as more work-oriented than earlier programs for refugees in their municipality, and 98 percent perceives this as a positive development. The caseworkers' positive take on the work-approach is also illustrated by the fact that 80 percent agree to the following statement: "To be well integrated, refugees and immigrants should participate in working life". Still, there are nuances in how caseworkers and local managers formulate the primary aims of the programme and in how they rationalise their own practices. While the "work line" is never rejected, it can be defined in a narrow and a broad manner. In the narrow interpretation NIP is construed as a labour market programme where the challenge is to avoid adaptations which do not actually qualify for work or further education. The broader version construes work as one of many roads to participation, where also access to social participation in a wider sense is part of the aim. Two distinct types of discursive repertoires can be discerned, which we describe as respectively the *activation* perspective and the *citizenship* perspective. However, when we classify the viewpoints of street-level bureaucrats as belonging to the one or the other repertoire, this does not mean that individual caseworkers subscribe fully to one perspective. On the contrary, our point is that most of them will live with both perspectives simultaneously, negotiating practical solutions to the dilemmas as they go along.

The Introduction Act's "ability to make use of" formulation in theory opens up to a selective practice of screening potential participants with respect to whether they have realistic prospects of future employment. One may imagine that newcomers with health problems, with little educational background (illiterates), or with large caring responsibilities will lack the motivation and/or ability to follow a full time training programme and to move on to paid employment. However, available evidence indicates that such screening "at the bottom" is a marginal phenomenon. Among persons in the target group who were settled in a municipality in 2004 (close to 3000 persons), 85 percent of all women and 83 percent of all men were registered as participants in the programme either in 2005 and/or 2006 (Mathisen 2007). Considering that newcomers who were enrolled in the programme, but found employment within the end of 2004, appear as non-participants in public data, we can assume that these figures systematically underestimate participation rates.

Furthermore, the statistics also document considerable variations between municipalities and between groups. In some municipalities, 95-100 percent of the potential participants are enrolled in the programme. In others, registered participation rates are much lower. These numbers are very sensitive to the characteristic of the specific immigrants who were settled in these municipalities. For example, Iraqis has a much lower participation rate than other nationals. However, Iraqis have often spent a long time in asylum reception centres awaiting municipal settlement. During this time, they could obtain temporary work-permits and, as a consequence, many had already found work when they were finally offered municipal settlement. Resettlement refugees, on the other hand, who arrive from UNHCR-camps overseas and are settled directly in a municipality upon arrival, have participation rates approaching 100 percent. In sum, this evidence sustains the conclusion that most municipalities include more or less all newcomers within the target group without screening for labour market potential.

During our qualitative interviews two different perspectives on this practice stood out. The *activation* approach questioned the sense of the liberal intake practice. It addressed the borderline situations where such far-reaching adaptations to people's individual circumstances (health, family responsibilities etc) had to be made, that the programme stopped making sense as a labour market orientated measure. The *citizenship* approach endorsed the lack of or screening, emphasising that all newcomers needs basic skills for participation in society. This discrepancy seems to have little practical effects on actual intake practices, but it corresponded to how local bureaucrats think with respect to the development of the actual *content* of individual participants' programmes.

In principle each participant is entitled to a programme which is individually adapted to this individual's background, needs and aims. The principle of individually tailored programmes based on user involvement is embodied in the *individual action plan*, which should outline personal targets as well as the means to get there. In practice, certain standardised trajectories can be distinguished, but with an extremely diverse participant population a significant minority will not be able to follow such a standard programme.

The adaptations local practitioners make to fit the programme to individual needs are not only a matter of resources, but a question of which types of activities that can be construed as meaningful within the context of the programme. The problem, said one local programme manager, is to make a sensible full day schedule of activities when health or age issues indicate that work prospects are slim. The informant stresses that such cases are few, but when problems are complex and large the focus tends to be on emotional support rather than work and education targets. "This is very well. But that is also part of the challenge, if there have been two years where everything was nice and caring, did the person really need basic qualifications or did he need health services?", says one programme manager. In some municipalities doubts are expressed about their own currently very inclusive practices. "We have a huge discussion about a person who hasn't improved linguistically in a year or so, despite mother tongue instructor and other special measures. The teacher says he's at the learning ability level of a 6-8 year old. (...) Should we aim at a sheltered workshop or something? But is it then an introduction programme?", wonders another. The underlying question is if people are in an introduction programme because they have needs as newcomers in the labour market, or

because they need assistance to be part of society. The activation perspective will lean towards the former point of view, pointing at other institutions' responsibility for the latter type of concerns.<sup>6</sup>

The *citizenship* response to this dilemma is to expand the programme's target formulations. Everyone needs to learn the language; everybody needs to learn how to function in society. "The aim is not to qualify for work, but to cope in Norway", says one programme manager. "Learning Norwegian is a kind of qualifying measure on its own", says a caseworker, "even if work is not the aim you will be qualified to start school at a later point or at least to follow up the kids". "Work and education is not necessarily the aim for everyone, there can be other types of targets", argues another programme manager. The formulations of other types of targets typically revolve around immigrants' familial responsibilities. They are parents who need to understand society in order to take care of their children. In order to do this, language skills are essential. As language instruction is a key component of the introduction programme, participation in the programme appear meaningful even if employment prospects are slim.<sup>7</sup> For some participants aims can be even more mundane, one caseworker presented an example of a participant whose aim was to go the shops and buy milk. What is shared by all the alternative target formulations is the emphasis on establishing relations between households and the outside world: They are about getting out of the house and about relating to everyday Norwegian institutions, whether these are sports clubs, grocery shops or schools.

As noted above, there are three main impediments to the completion of the standard version of a work orientated introduction programme involving a full time schedule of language classes and work placements: Health (psychological and somatic), care responsibilities and little or no education. We will concentrate on the former two.

Both the activation and citizenship approach to participants with health problems are positive to include treatments in the programme. However, the activation approach will strive never to lose work out of sight as long as someone is in the programme. "It should make a difference whether people are in the programme or on social services", says one caseworker, "work or education is the focus also when a programme include treatments and so forth". If participants find a programme of Norwegian language classes too demanding, a desirable alternative can be to introduce work placements at a very early stage – even if the person's language skills are considered too limited to be able to function in an actual workplace. One group of caseworkers said they would organise work placements even when a future job was unrealistic, simply to give the participant a taste of what working life meant and realise for himself that it was not a real option. Another group said they

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<sup>6</sup> In practice, the problem is that such an alternative is often lacking thus forcing the introduction programme to take on tasks it is not designed for.

<sup>7</sup> While all introduction programmes will incorporate language training, programme participation is not a prerequisite for access to language classes. In theory, newcomers could be excluded from the programme but still attend language classes. However, they would then have lost their right to an introduction benefit, as well as the close monitoring and supervision that accompanies participation in the programme. Most caseworkers would regard this as a substantially poorer offering compared to what they can give programme participants.

would enrol also the unrealistic category into a job seeker course, so that at least they would know how to apply for work.

A citizenship approach to this group will consider how this type of participants can be integrated into social relationships. Some caseworkers argued for the importance of facilitating a space where it is legitimate to speak about traumas and mental health, issues that are often steeped with prejudice and stigma. In one municipality, staff were pleased that they had succeeded, they felt, in turning the adult education centre for immigrants into a social meeting place. Without appropriate treatment people would suffer from staying at home, they argued: “That she can come and go here, she might come at 11 and leave at 13, but that’s ok. She’s good at sewing, she can sit here and do some needlework”. Another municipality tried to encourage people, with or without mental health issues, to be active in after-school hours by giving financial support for sports and cultural activities.

Despite what we know about the limited effect of programme participation for women’s employment, caseworkers are far more likely to be optimistic with respect to the work prospects of women – also when they have young children and/or little educational background. They may need an extra year, it may take time, but practitioners like to emphasise positive examples of people in this category who have succeeded against the odds. In our focus group interviews with caseworkers and teachers we confronted them with the imagined case of Fatima and asked how they would adapt the programme to her:

*Fatima is 39 years old from Somalia. She has spent the past one and a half year in a reception centre [for asylum-seekers], but has now been settled in this municipality. She has three children under the age of 12, two will go to school but the youngest is only four<sup>8</sup>. The older kids are left with relatives in Kenya and she worries about them. Her husband has also been granted asylum in Norway, but they are now divorced and he lives elsewhere. She is illiterate, has never gone to school, but been involved in the care of children and older relatives. She speaks a little bit of English, but relatively poor Norwegian. She doesn’t have any particular work ambitions, but says that she loves cooking and complains that her kitchen is too small. When you ask what kind of job she wants, she responds that she prefers to stay at home and look after her children.*

The interviewees confirmed that Fatima was a type of participant they regularly encountered. They differed with respect to how realistic they judged her job prospects, but most agreed that she would have a chance and that they had seen people like her succeed in the sense of finding work in fields such as cleaning, child care and catering (the three C’s of female migrant employment). They would all offer her language instruction, for the most in a class targeted at illiterate students. In some municipalities this would be supplemented by a work placement or other scheme to learn the language in a practical setting, but this would require an above average level of supervision at the workplace. In general, the feedback from caseworkers was that it is challenging to find appropriate placements for persons with poor language skills and limited educational background.

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<sup>8</sup> Children start school at the age of 6 in Norway.

Irrespective of how Fatima's work prospects were assessed, great emphasis was placed on formulating aims related to her status as mother. Some interviewees even said that this should be her first priority. More specifically, this would involve aims such as learning enough Norwegian to be able to communicate with her children's school or, more diffusely, to be able to "follow up" the children in kindergarten, school and leisure time.

While local introduction bureaucracies will agree that participants' parental responsibilities can and should be addressed within the framework of the introduction programme, they differ with respect to whether care can actually be part of the programme activities. Again, the activation perspective will be that the programme primarily is about work, and that parents' employment is crucial for the children's adaptation. "The children will be social losers if she chooses a passive existence at home as a passive recipient of social assistance", was one caseworker's response to Fatima. The citizenship approach, on the contrary, stresses that enabling women to be good mothers in Norwegian society may be more than enough rationale to include women like Fatima in an introduction programme. "If she can manage to follow up the kids and the home, learn sufficiently Norwegian to speak with a teacher, receive messages from school and kindergarten. That's the most important job for her".

The most tangible example of this difference is whether participants are allowed to spend (parts of) their 37,5 hours of weekly activities being with their children. In the activation perspective programme participation is envisaged as a substitute for full-time employment. If you're at work you cannot go home to the children, it was argued in one municipality that did not accept this kind of adaptation. Another group of caseworkers argued: "We cannot adapt her entire programme to be about fetching and following children and spend all the time on such things. There has to be some basic elements". The kind of adaptations that can be done in this kind of approach is to find work placements that are appropriate: "in areas that feels secure to them, which is often health, care, looking after children, because these are areas they know" (programme manager). Against this, other caseworkers argue the unreasonableness of fulltime programmes for mothers: "with kids and worries of all kinds, it's not easy, and Norwegian women<sup>9</sup> don't have to".

Instead of giving participants the chance to go home to look after their children, many municipalities try to develop methods for learning to "follow up" children in an institutionalised setting. Some municipalities have special kindergartens for refugees and apply these in the parents' introduction programmes. The kindergarten can set up "mummy-groups" where mothers discuss child rearing in Norway, appropriate clothing for Norwegian weather and learn about the routines in the kindergarten, they can "sit in" with the kids to see how the daily routines works, or parents can be involved in activities with the children such as skiing or playing children's games. Some municipalities are involved in organised parental guidance programmes, others have more informal groups set up to discuss issues of parenthood in a migration context, while some merely express a desire to work more on mother-child relations.

Whether to allow a certain laxity with respect to the employment target for mothers goes to the heart of Norwegian welfare state ideology. The so-called "work-line" implies that policies and

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<sup>9</sup> Norwegian women have high employment rates (71,5 percent), but a high proportion of these (42,7 percent) work part-time (Statistics Norway figures, 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2007, [www.ssb.no](http://www.ssb.no)).

incentive structures should be designed to maximise work incentives. In Lundberg and Åmarks words: One side is “work for everyone; the other is that everyone has to work” (2001:176). The high labour market participation rates of Scandinavian women are both a result and a major boast of this strategy. Some caseworkers speak of the inclusion of women in the programme as one of the policy’s major achievements: They are no longer allowed to withdraw to – or to be restricted to – the home sphere. Giving up on activity and employment targets for immigrant women with children would thus represent a considerable break with the work-orientated logic of the Nordic model. Instead, when adaptations of the standard fulltime programme are made these seem to go more in the direction of the adaptations Norwegian women themselves make – namely to work part-time (even though this is actually not allowed within the legal framework of the Introduction Act) either by actually having shorter days or by defining time spent with the children as part of the programme.

We have seen how the somewhat ambiguous, but primarily labour market orientated goals of NIP are being interpreted and implemented in cases where participants face particular challenges in the labour market. Two distinct frameworks of interpretation, with distinct consequences for practical implementation, have been identified. Firstly, the activation perspective, which maintains that everything which takes place within the framework of the programme, should have a positive effect on the labour market prospects of participants. Secondly, the citizenship perspective, which handles the considerable challenges some participants face in the labour market by broadening the goal formulations to include wider forms of social inclusion and participation than employment. None reject the importance of work for all, but the latter softens work requirements by extending the time frame in a way that goes far beyond the stipulated two or three years of introduction. Referring back to Fig. 1, in a citizenship perspective outcome B would be rated as a success, at least in a short time perspective, while the activation perspective would be far more hesitant in its evaluation of this type of outcome.

Both perspectives contain important insights. The former insists on the importance of formulating precise goals and to work purposefully towards these. The latter acknowledges that inclusion is more than work, that many participants most probably will spend time outside of the labour force and need a platform for participation also when non-employed. However, while the former focus may risk being too narrow, the latter risks defining goals so generally that anything can pass for a meaningful training activity. A second problem concerns differential treatment: The discrepancy in interpretations of NIP’s aims allow for differential treatment of similar participants between municipalities as well as between caseworkers. In order to secure both better and more uniform practices, there is thus a need to devise appropriate work methods that point towards social inclusion and citizenship, as well as tools for evaluating other types of outcomes than employment. This is what we turn to in the final part of the paper.

## ***7. Afterthoughts: policy implications and suggestions for future practice***

The participants in the NIP constitutes a highly diverse group, consisting of people from a range of countries, educational backgrounds and work experiences, some with considerable health problems and care responsibilities. The broad and liberal intake-practice is not problematic as such. On the

contrary, it eliminates the suspicions that attached to the previous regime, where local gate keepers selected participants to the various labour market and qualification schemes that were offered locally. People who would easily have been assessed as hopeless or “not ready” now get a chance (more often than not), and sometimes show surprising results. The challenge is to find appropriate activities also for participants who for some reason struggle to follow the standard fulltime programme of language classes and work placements. These should not be means to fill the time, but actually have a skill-enhancing effect, whether these are qualifications relevant to the labour market or to the wider area of social participation. The Introduction Act has given newcomers a legal right to services, but also an obligation to dedicate 30-37,5 hours a week to participating in a set of activities they can only marginally influence. The legitimacy of this considerable degree of state intervention into people’s lives rests on whether these activities actually generates a change – for the better – in people’s lives beyond occupying their time.

For many participants this change will be an improvement of their chance of finding employment. The quality of the work they find can (and should) be discussed at length, but this is not our matter of concern here. We are concerned with those whose employment aims are either non-existent or still very far into the future. Our analysis shows that their presence in the programme is rationalised by pointing to their need for skills that will enable them to take part in social life in a new and foreign country. But while attainment of work targets are continually being monitored and evaluated according to set criteria, no monitoring or quality assessment takes place with respect to these kinds of targets, despite the fact that participation in social life is definitely a part of the programme’s formal aims.

Considering the ambiguous treatment of this aim in the policy texts analysed above, this is not so surprising. Also, the comprehensive shift in integration policy towards labour market inclusion that the introductory act entailed probably made it less politically viable for central authorities to focus on other targets than employment, education and economic self-sufficiency. Nevertheless, for local practitioners it means that they have a less well defined repertoire of activities to draw on, thus making their work more challenging. Not surprisingly, while some caseworkers embrace this flexibility and manoeuvre quite easily between different alternatives and participants, others find the uncertainty and general lack of guidelines stressful. We know less about how the participants themselves experience this lacuna, but the obvious risks are that their “activation” instead of being movement towards meaningful goals consists of passive enrolment in time filling activities which prime effect is to ensure that they “get up in the morning”. It also violates the principle of equal rights, as the competence and skills of your individual case-worker will have impact heavily on the programme you are offered compared to a “main-stream” programme. We will argue that thoughtful design of appropriate work methods also is necessary with respect to the aim of social participation. This will include finding ways of measuring and evaluating other outcomes of activation than work and education.

As a final reflection, we are not blind to the limits of policy and potential futility of the very project of managing newcomers’ inclusion in society. Indeed, it is worth taking a step to the side and ponder this tendency to respond to any problematic issue in society by calling for the state, for more and better rights, policies and interventions. There are quite probably aspects of people’s inclusion in social life that do not respond to policy interventions, at least not in the ways that are intended. For

the “good” state – and this is how the extensive Nordic welfare states tend to identify themselves – it is hard to leave what is considered social problems outside its sphere of action. In Grete Brochmann’s words, good welfare states do not have the time to let history do the job of integration and assimilation – as it happened to previous generations of immigrants (2002). That being the case, the pressing concern must be to ensure that policy interventions actually have the ability to change people’s lives in ways that are to the better.

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