

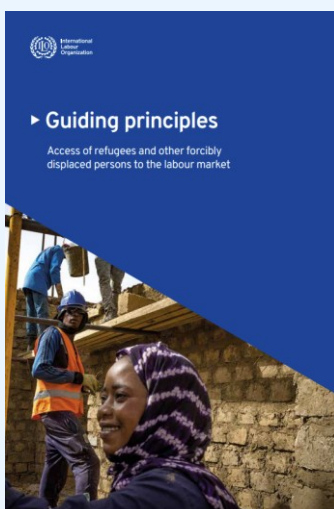
► Labour market inclusion for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

Germany: Economic and employment policies for inclusive labour markets

June 2026

The ILO Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and Other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market, adopted in 2016 by a tripartite technical meeting, provide a basis for the formulation of policy responses and national tripartite dialogue applicable to responses to forced displacement.

The Guiding Principles on the Access of Refugees and other Forcibly Displaced Persons to the Labour Market



The Guiding Principles (GPs) support efforts to improve labour market functioning and ensure the protection of nationals, as well as refugees and other forcibly displaced persons (FDPs), in accessing decent work. The GPs are a set of voluntary, non-binding principles rooted in relevant international labour standards and universal human rights instruments, and inspired by good practices implemented in the field.

The Guiding Principles are structured around six core pillars:

- A. Governance frameworks on access to labour markets;
- **B. Economic and employment policies for inclusive labour markets;**
- C. Labour rights and equality of opportunity and treatment;
- D. Partnership, coordination and coherence;
- E. Voluntary repatriation and reintegration of returnees; and
- F. Additional pathways for labour mobility.

This knowledge product focuses on section B of the GPs, with a specific emphasis on Principles 20 and 21. The case study of Germany illustrates how regular administrative data collection, longitudinal studies, and evidence-based assessments can shape and help to adapt labour market integration policies for refugees and other FDPs.

Unpacking the Guiding Principles

What does Section B on Economic and employment policies for inclusive labour markets mean in practice?

Guiding Principle 20 – ILO Member States are encouraged to undertake a national impact assessment on access to the labour market for refugees on their economies with the involvement of employers' and workers' organizations.

Guiding Principle 21 – ILO Member States should strengthen the capacity of national labour market governance systems, including in respect of information and data collection concerning the impact of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons on host communities, labour markets and economies more generally.

Case study: Data-driven adaptation of labour market integration policies in Germany

Key points

Key issues:

- Strengthening systematic data collection and regular assessment of refugees' and other FDPs' access to, and impact on, labour markets.

Key takeaways:

- Germany collects granular data through the Federal Employment Agency, including monthly statistics on employment, unemployment and benefit receipt by nationality, gender, age and status, and conducts

longitudinal surveys (since 2016, including Ukrainians since 2023), making information publicly available and enabling the tracking of labour market integration pathways.

- Regular assessments, at times including inputs from social partners and civil society, evaluate programme effectiveness (for example, Job Turbo 2023), macroeconomic impacts and barriers, and inform policy adaptation.

1. Profile of refugees and other forcibly displaced persons

At the end of 2025, Germany hosted around 3.2 million people registered as “protection seekers”, making it the country hosting the largest number of refugees in the European Union. By the end of 2025, around 2.7 million of these people held a humanitarian residence permit and thus an officially recognized protection status, while about 361,000 were still awaiting a final decision on their protection application.¹ Almost three in four people seeking protection in Germany originated from Ukraine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, Iraq and Türkiye (in order of largest number), with Ukrainians accounting for roughly one third of the total. Across this population, the average age is 32 years and women represent 45 per cent. Notably, 27 per cent are under 18 years of age, while more than 70 per cent are of working age.²

2. Major developments: Monitoring and adapting policy approaches

Germany's labour market integration model combines early registration with public employment services (the Federal Employment Agency), language and integration courses,³ vocational orientation and a gradual move from welfare

¹ German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis), “[At year-end 2025, around 3.2 million protection seekers were registered in Germany \(2.1% less than 2024\)](#)” (2026), Press release No. 162/26, Wiesbaden, 12 May.

² German Federal Statistical Office (Destatis), “[Table 12531-0003: Protection seekers – Germany, reference date, sex, age in years, country groupings/country of citizenship](#)” (2026), GENESIS-Online Database, as of 5 May 2026.

³ Although by mid-2026 language courses are being scaled down due to budgetary constraints.

receipt into regular employment.⁴ The extent of support provided largely depends on the legal status granted and on individuals' "prospects of remaining" in the country. Clear distinctions are made between (1) recognized refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, (2) asylum seekers awaiting a decision and "tolerated persons,"⁵ and (3) people granted temporary protection, each of whom enjoy different rights and levels of access to support (see Box 1 below).

Box 1: Labour market access for refugees and other FDPs in Germany

1. **Recognized refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection** enjoy full and equal access to the labour market. They are issued residence permits that include unrestricted work authorization ("Erwerbstätigkeit erlaubt"), removing the need for a separate work permit.⁶ These groups have full access to public employment services.
2. **Asylum seekers and "tolerated persons"** have more restrictive access to the labour market. Asylum seekers may apply for a work permit after three months, provided they are no longer required to remain in an initial reception centre; if they are still obliged to reside there, access is generally deferred until six months. Tolerated persons are subject to similar conditions, while certain groups – notably applicants from countries of origin designated as safe – may be excluded from employment altogether.⁷ During this first period (when without a work permit), employment services are often limited and, once entitled to work, support is often lighter or more fragmented than for recognized refugees, including in terms of social assistance, and depends on their "good prospects of remaining".⁸
3. **People under temporary protection – predominantly Ukrainians** – have benefited from a more favourable legal framework, as most were admitted under the European Union Temporary Protection Directive⁹ rather than through the regular asylum system.¹⁰ This status grants residence with unrestricted work authorization and faster access to employment services. However, a legislative change effective as of 1 April 2025 means that Ukrainians arriving on or after that date who require social assistance¹¹ fall under the same benefits regime as asylum seekers and tolerated persons, rather than that applicable to recognized refugees, persons entitled to asylum and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, resulting in lower levels of assistance.

Over time, Germany's approach to integrating refugees into the labour market has evolved, drawing on national evidence-based research and related policy recommendations based on administrative records from the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, as well as longitudinal research produced by the Institute for Employment Research, the research institute of the Federal Employment Agency.

- The Federal Employment Agency produces monthly administrative data on employment, unemployment, benefit receipt, job placement and programme participation, distinguishing between persons from the eight main

⁴ See: Social Code II and Social Code III, the Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz), the Integration Act (Integrationsgesetz), and the Asylum-Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz), which together define activation obligations, integration-course entitlements, and stepped pathways from social-benefit-related support to standard employment.

⁵ Tolerated persons come under a legal regime called "Duldung", which is a temporary administrative status (a suspension of removal), not a lawful residence title; it confirms that deportation is not carried out for factual or legal reasons (for example: lack of travel documents, serious health problems that prevent travel, ongoing legal or factual obstacles to return, risk of severe harm on return, or unresolved identity issues).

⁶ Federal Republic of Germany, [Act on the Residence, Economic Activity and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory \(Residence Act – AufenthG\)](#), last amended by Article 3 of the Act of 8 May 2024 (Federal Law Gazette 2024 I No. 152), section 25.

⁷ Federal Republic of Germany, [Asylum Act \(Asylgesetz\)](#), in the version promulgated on 2 September 2008 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 1798), last amended by Article 2 of the Act of 11 March 2016 (Federal Law Gazette I, p. 394), section 61.

⁸ Asylum Information Database, ["Access to the labour market – Germany"](#), and Honorati, F., C. Testaverde and A. Totino, ["Labor Market Integration of Refugees in Germany: New Lessons after the Ukrainian Crisis"](#) (2024), Social Protection & Jobs Discussion Paper No. 2404, World Bank.

⁹ Council of the European Union, ["Directive 2001/55/EC of 20 July 2001 on minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons and on measures promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof"](#) (2001).

¹⁰ The EU Directive is implemented in Germany via Section 24 of the Residence Act (AufenthG) defining the temporary protection status category and the residence and work-entitlement structure for Ukrainian and associated groups.

¹¹ Registration challenges make it difficult to determine who is entitled to social assistance.

countries of asylum (those from which most asylum applications were filed between 2012 and 2015) and Ukrainians.¹² In addition, dedicated statistical overviews on “persons in a refugee context” are published on a monthly basis, making it possible to track labour market integration over time by nationality.¹³

- The Institute for Employment Research assesses the integration of migrants and refugees into the labour market, the education system and society more broadly, drawing on survey datasets linked to administrative data from the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.¹⁴

On this basis, several assessments have evaluated both the impact of refugee integration on the labour market and the broader economy, as well as the effectiveness of specific employment programmes:

- The Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs has commissioned studies and funded research consortia to assess integration efforts and the effectiveness of specific labour market integration measures.¹⁵
- In parallel, the Institute for Employment Research conducts empirical, labour-market-oriented studies and policy assessments of refugees’ integration, focusing on employment, education, language skills and social participation. Its portfolio also includes qualitative and mixed-methods studies, cohort-specific reports (for example on Ukrainian or Syrian refugees) and international comparisons that examine how legal frameworks, institutions and programmes shape refugees’ access to work, training and inclusion.
- Furthermore, the Federal Employment Agency has published a range of practically oriented, programme-based research and guidance on the labour market integration of refugees, mainly assessing its own instruments, such as integration courses, labour market activation measures and counselling.¹⁶

3. Outcomes and key lessons

These assessments and evaluations have contributed to adapting Germany’s approach to refugee labour market integration. Germany increasingly emphasizes early labour market entry for refugees – through early counselling and on-the-job learning – because these measures have been found to improve employment and support inclusion, and they complement, rather than replace, traditional qualification-first approaches. Against this backdrop, the Job Turbo initiative, launched in October 2023, seeks to accelerate employment transitions by intensifying counselling immediately after integration courses and encouraging early job placements at lower language levels (see Box 2 below).

¹² Federal Employment Agency (BA), “[Personen nach Staatsangehörigkeit](#)”.

¹³ Federal Employment Agency (BA), “[Personen im Kontext von Fluchtmigration – Deutschland, Länder, Kreise, Agenturen für Arbeit und Jobcenter \(Monatszahlen\)](#)”.

¹⁴ Since 2013, the Institute for Employment Research (IAB), together with partners, has conducted the annual IAB-SOEP Migration Sample and, since 2016, the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, which has included refugees from Ukraine since 2023.

¹⁵ For example, a 2017 study analysed the macroeconomic effects of increased efforts to integrate refugees into the German labour market, making projections up to 2030 based on a simulation model: Bach, S., P. Haan, K. von Deuverden, B. Fischer, H. Brücker, A. Romiti and E. Weber, “[Abschätzung von Effekten der Integration von Flüchtlingen: Kurzexpertise für das Bundesministerium für Arbeit und Soziales](#)” (2017), Forschungsbericht Nr. 477, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS), DIW Berlin and Institute for Employment Research (IAB). Based on the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees, BMAS has also published a refugee monitoring report that includes an assessment of refugees’ integration into the labour market and provides evidence to shape integration policies and support decision-making: Brücker, H., et al., “[Flüchtlingsmonitoring – Endbericht](#)” (2023), Forschungsbericht Nr. 528, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS). In addition, since 2020 the Ministry has published assessments of labour market integration measures, offering policy recommendations to further support integration, including: Boockmann, B., et al., “[Begleitevaluation der arbeitsmarktpolitischen Integrationsmaßnahmen für Geflüchtete: Langfristige Effekte](#)” (2025), Forschungsbericht Nr. 659, Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS).

¹⁶ For example, Federal Employment Agency (BA), “[Fachliche Empfehlungen zur Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten mit Arbeitsmarktzugang](#)” (December 2023). The document sets out a three-phase integration process – “orientation and basic language learning”, “working and qualification in employment” and “stabilising and expanding employment” – and lists available programmes and planned changes.

Box 2: Evaluation of the Job Turbo programme

Since its launch, the Job Turbo programme has become the focus of several assessments of refugee labour market integration. These assessments point to a number of key challenges: while job placements have increased, especially among Ukrainians, structural barriers persist, including capacity pressures in Jobcentres and gaps in language and qualification support. In addition, few women are participating in the programme, which points to the need for more targeted measures, including childcare support and more flexible upskilling and recognition of qualifications.¹⁷ The Federal Court of Auditors considers the initiative meaningful in principle, yet calls for measurable targets and more consistent implementation across Jobcentres, as there is so far no clear evidence that the initiative improves employment outcomes or generates budgetary savings.¹⁸ This underscores the need for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of employment programmes, with particular attention to outcomes for more vulnerable groups and to the use of robust labour market information to inform regular impact assessments.

Three key points can be distilled for collecting and using administrative data to monitor and assess labour market integration:

- **First**, building a data system for monitoring labour market integration is a long-term institutional and political process, which ideally builds on an existing system for collecting labour market information. It requires sustained investment, clear mandates and close coordination to establish stable reporting systems, implement legal frameworks for secure data use and carefully design questionnaires, sampling and consent procedures.
- **Second**, continuous administrative tracking by nationality, gender and age, conducted over time – such as that undertaken by the Federal Employment Agency and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees – provides the foundation for monitoring integration outcomes and assessing the impact of labour market instruments.
- **Third**, the systematic use of data to produce evidence-based assessments and regular reporting is essential to turn monitoring into learning and policy improvement. By analysing integration trajectories, programme participation and employment outcomes across nationalities and subgroups, policymakers can identify which activation and language-support strategies work best for whom and develop more targeted, effective measures, avoiding one-size-fits-all approaches.

4. Actionable steps: Roadmap based on experience from Germany

- **Establish a clear legal and institutional mandate** for monitoring refugee integration and ensure that adequate budgetary resources are available for effective implementation. In consultation with social partners, define the purpose, scope and responsibilities for tracking refugee labour market integration, specifying which actors for example, the public employment service, the national statistical office or research institutes are responsible for data collection, analysis and reporting, ideally supported by coordination mechanisms among them. Ensure that legal frameworks enable secure, privacy-compliant handling of personal data and that sufficient resources are available.
- **Set up continuous administrative tracking by nationality, status, gender and age:** Systematically register and update information on refugees' residence status, benefit entitlements, job search registration, job placements and participation in activation measures, generating regular, disaggregated and publicly available statistics that allow monitoring over time and by nationality, gender and age.
- **Develop complementary survey-based and qualitative monitoring:** Launch or strengthen large-scale, longitudinal surveys of refugees that capture employment, education, language acquisition and social participation so as to complement administrative data with information on individuals' experiences, barriers and pathways.

¹⁷ Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (DGB), Abteilung Arbeitsmarktpolitik, "[Arbeitsmarktintegration von Geflüchteten: Wie wirksam ist der Job-Turbo – und welche politischen Konsequenzen folgen daraus?](#)" (2025), Arbeitsmarkt aktuell Nr. 01/2025, and Sonderbeauftragte der Bundesregierung für die Integration von geflüchteten Menschen in den Arbeitsmarkt, "[Erfahrungsbericht des Sonderbeauftragten der Bundesregierung für die Integration von geflüchteten Menschen in den Arbeitsmarkt: Der Job-Turbo – Kurzfassung für Entscheidungsträger](#)" (2025), Federal Employment Agency (BA).

¹⁸ Holstein, Miriam, "[Bundesrechnungshof: Vernichtendes Urteil über Heils 'Job-Turbo'](#)" (2024), *Capital Online*, 30 October 2024.

- **Link monitoring to policymaking:** Create formal channels through which monitoring and assessment findings are fed back into policy cycles, such as periodic integration reports, evaluation studies and policy recommendations, while being attentive to possible weaknesses in the system and capacity-building needs.
- **Test and scale pilots:** Use the monitoring and assessment system to pilot new approaches and evaluate their impact on employment outcomes, and then scale successful models.
- **Promote knowledge-sharing and coordination at the regional level:** Generate insights for policy debate, compare approaches and assess which measures are most effective.

5. Way forward

Despite the existence of a robust data and evaluation framework, several limitations constrain the extent to which findings translate into politically sensitive policy reforms. In particular, some relevant populations – such as asylum seekers at early stages of the procedure, individuals not registered with the Federal Employment Agency and those engaged in informal work¹⁹ – are only partially captured by existing data and assessment mechanisms, which risks overlooking their specific integration barriers. Workers' and employers' organizations and civil society actors, including refugee-led organizations, are also rarely consulted or included in assessments.

In addition, time lags in data release and evaluation outputs mean that evidence is not always used promptly or systematically in policymaking. Choices on labour market integration measures for refugees are inherently political and often shaped by governing coalition dynamics and fiscal negotiations.

The way forward is to strengthen both the technical and institutional foundations of the monitoring system. First, coverage should be broad enough to address the needs of specific groups, such as women, single-headed households and persons with disabilities, recognizing that refugees are not a homogeneous population. Second, it is important to consult social partners when designing and conducting assessments. In a context such as Germany, which already has tripartite and multi-stakeholder coordination channels between government and employers' and workers' organizations on labour market integration, a tripartite body could be tasked with monitoring and evaluating refugee integration outcomes and regularly feeding into policy discussions and shaping political choices.

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¹⁹ Doerr, A., C. Hartmann and C. Sajons, "Unregistered Work among Refugees: Evidence from a List Experiment in Germany" (2022), WWZ Working Paper No. 2022/01, University of Basel.