

Discussion Paper No. 17-016

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Initial Evidence from  
an Inclusive Soccer Project**

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**ZEW**

Zentrum für Europäische  
Wirtschaftsforschung GmbH

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# **Integrating Young Male Refugees: Initial Evidence from an Inclusive Soccer Project**

Martin Lange\*, Friedhelm Pfeiffer\*\* and Gerard J. van den Berg\*\*\*

\* Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW)

\*\* Centre for European Economic Research (ZEW) & University of Mannheim

\*\*\* University of Bristol and IFAU Uppsala

**Abstract:** The study analyses data collected among a group of young male refugees who participated in a randomized experiment. Refugees were randomly assigned to a soccer project, which aimed at facilitating labour market integration, or to a control group. We evaluate the randomization process, we discuss the survey design and implementation, and we summarize the main findings of the survey, focusing on labour market activity, pre-migration characteristics, and the monetary costs of the escape. In addition, we provide a preliminary outlook on the effectiveness of the course.

**Keywords:** refugees, randomized experiment, labour market integration

**JEL-Classification:** C93, F22, J15, J24.

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**Corresponding author:** Friedhelm Pfeiffer, Centre for European Economic Research, P.O. Box 10 34 43, D-68 034 Mannheim, pfeiffer@zew.de

## 1. Introduction

In 2015 Germany experienced, with 1.1 million people, the largest net inflow of migrants after the early 1950s (BAMF, 2016). It is expected that especially the group of approximately 890,000 new asylum seekers will stay for a considerable time in Germany. Recently, measures to facilitate integration into society and the labour market have been discussed by a variety of bodies.<sup>1</sup>

In this context it is of particular interest to examine initiatives of volunteers intended to provide support for refugees. In Germany numerous such initiatives have emerged.<sup>2</sup> Although such volunteer-based support is widespread, scientific studies on its impacts are, according to the best of our knowledge, up to now virtually non-existent.<sup>3</sup>

In this study we concentrate on a specific small scale project, namely an inclusive and multi-dimensional soccer project for male asylum seekers, intended to improve on social inclusion and labour market participation. The project is administered by a non-commercial association and run by non-professional trainers.<sup>4</sup> The treatment consists of a comprehensive package of playing soccer, receiving mentoring and language training,<sup>5</sup> recreational activities and job placements. Invitations to participate in the project were randomized over a pool of refugees living in the Rhine-Neckar area in Germany.

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<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Konle-Seidl and Bolits (2016); for general overviews of economic research on asylum seekers and immigrants see e.g. Fuest (2016), Card and Peri (2016) and Dustmann and Frattini (2014).

<sup>2</sup> According to Ahrens (2016) almost 12 percent of all Germans are active in giving a helping hand to refugees; see also Karakayali and Kleist (2015).

<sup>3</sup> A separate literature focuses on the volunteers rather than the volunteers' target groups. For example, Yamamoto and Sakamoto (2012) discuss potential determinants of the motivation to engage in volunteer-based work. Day and Devlin (1998) and Proteau and Wolf (2006) examine whether voluntary work generates a labor market premium. They find small to sizable wage premia.

<sup>4</sup> The association is called Anpfiff ins Leben e.V.. We would like to thank Roman Frackenpohl and Daniel Lingenfeld from this association for the chance for collaboration and the extremely valuable support throughout conducting the survey.

<sup>5</sup> Research hints at the relevance of language proficiency for labor market assimilation of migrants and partly seem to confirm the effectiveness of language programs for integration; see Chiswick (1991) and Dustmann and Fabbri (2003), among others.

Our study presents the results of a survey among refugees in the treatment control groups. Socioeconomic similarities and disparities among these groups of refugees are examined, together with information on the cost of their escape, their human capital and indicators of labour market integration. We investigate whether the randomization outcome is orthogonal to observable characteristics of control and treatment group. Finally, we provide some preliminary evidence on short run effects, exploiting the randomization design.

Our main findings can be summarized as follows. On average, the 81 male respondents were 23 years old, had spent nearly nine years in education and had already accumulated five years of work experience in their home countries or on their way to Germany. They report on average a good health status and are fairly optimistic about finding work in Germany. On average respondents had been living in Germany for nine months at the time of the interview. 36 percent were searching for a job, and 14 percent report that they were working at the time of the survey.

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

Economic consequences of the recent refugee migration have been intensively discussed (see Fuest, 2016) although evidence from micro data obviously is still rare but improving (see Brücker et al., 2016). In the past, labour market integration of refugees has been more difficult compared to other migrants in Germany. Fuest (2016, p 13), summarizing the evidence, concludes: “I do not think that the refugee wave of 2015 into Germany will bring economic ad-

vantages, but admitting those migrants was more a question of offering humanitarian aid.” Our initial evidence on relatively low education and low search intensities seem to provide some preliminary support for this conclusion. However, our sample of asylum seekers also reports significant labour market experience from their home countries, which should be valuable in the medium term for integration in the German economy.

The study proceeds as follows. In the next section the treatment and institutional setting is introduced. Section three discusses the randomized experiment and explains how the survey was performed. Section four summarizes our initial evidence on human capital, on the cost of escape, and on labour market integration while section five concludes.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. The inclusive soccer project HEIMSTÄRKE**

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

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<sup>6</sup> The authors are part of the “Real-World Laboratory: Asylum Seekers“, a joint project with the Heidelberg University of Education. The project is supported by the State Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg and focuses on potential factors that influence the integration of asylum seekers in the Rhine-Neckar region and intends to contribute to improved measures for integration.

One important goal of the course is to increase the participants' employment opportunities. In addition, contact to local residents, the improvement of health, German language proficiency and life satisfaction are targeted. HEIMSTÄRKE is aiming at these goals by offering multiple treatments. The weekly two hour training sessions are based on the football3-concept<sup>7</sup> and consist of three parts: (i) language training, mentoring or support in job search, (ii) soccer training and (iii) feedback.<sup>8</sup>

In the first part, either a German language lesson is taught, mentoring or job search assistance is provided. The language lessons focus on everyday language and sports, in particular soccer. The participants should learn to communicate on the pitch in German and in common conversations. The mentoring aims to provide guidance in every day's problems. Here, difficulties regarding the housing conditions, administrative processes or communication issues are discussed and solutions are proposed. Moreover, job search assistance is provided. Being one main goal of the course, this subject is especially important. Participants acquire knowledge about the German labour market, receive assistance in setting up a CV and are informed about job search channels. Notably, job placements shall be performed within the network of the supporting parties of HEIMSTÄRKE. The project aims at matching participants to firms from their network in order to supply participants with internships and full employment opportunities.

The second part consists of soccer training and playing. In addition to standard rules of soccer games, cooperative behaviour and applying the newly learned vocabulary, e.g. for saying a German sentence after scoring a goal, is awarded by additional points to the score.

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<sup>7</sup> For more information on the concept see <http://www.streetfootballworld.org/football3/?q=de#home>.

<sup>8</sup> The multiple treatments offered by HEIMSTÄRKE are all designed to improve labor market activity for the refugees. Also the soccer training shall serve as a device for improving labour market chances. See for instance Cabane and Lechner (2015), who summarize the empirical evidence on physical activities and improvements in labour market outcomes.

The third part is designated to give feedback on today's session in order to provide room for improvement and give participants the opportunity to fit the sessions to their needs. In addition the group meets occasionally for other sport events or social activities such as setting up a barbeque or visiting soccer games.

### **3. Design of the research project**

#### *Randomized Experiment*

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

Experimental settings where one group is treated and another group is not treated may be helpful in overcoming this basic methodological problem. Thereby, attention has to be paid to the underlying mechanism how individuals are assigned to the treatment. If participants are allowed to self-select into the treatment or selection is partly influenced by unobserved characteristics, outcome comparisons between the groups may be substantially biased. A randomized experiment may overcome this difficulty. In order to claim that treatment effects have been estimated consistently one needs to control the assignment into the treatment (Imbens and Wooldridge, 2009; Rubin, 1974; etc.). This may either be accomplished by knowing all observables which describe the selection process, by instrumenting unobserved confounders or by random assignment of group membership.



Our identification strategy relies on random group assignment of individuals who were recommended to be part of the treatment. The two step randomization procedure was developed as follows: Since the organizers of HEIMSTÄRKE had no contact to refugees, they were dependent on persons who did. Hence, they asked volunteers who worked in the refugee camps for recommendations. Then, a list of individuals of asylum seekers, who express a somehow general interest in playing soccer, was assembled for each treatment location. Based on the list, refugees entered the pool of potential participants.

It is important to note that refugees did not know that they were recommended or not recommended. Moreover, according to the best of our knowledge, no refugee knew that the treatment existed before the invitations to the treatment were announced. It could be the case that recommendations for refugees were based on other characteristics than previously stated. For instance, volunteers could have been recommended especially well-integrated refugees. Then, the external validity of the experiment will be rather weak. We tested whether refugees in the pool are structurally different from other refugees in the region (our non-recommended control group, see below) and found no qualitatively important differences in their observable characteristics.

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

Table 1 reports the number of recommended participants per volunteer, where each row marks a volunteer, e.g. the first volunteer in Walldorf recommended eight participants, the second 20 and so on. In order to avoid the case that volunteers who were very selective in giving recommendations are underrepresented in the invited sample, the randomization process was clustered at the volunteer level. That is, participants were randomly chosen from the pool of recommendations under the constraint that the number of invited participants from each volunteer has to be greater or equal than one.

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

Table 1: Recommendations per Volunteer

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

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey.

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

*The ZEW inclusive soccer project survey*

In order to assess selected outcomes of the project, ZEW conducted a survey among the refugees who belonged to the pool of recommendations. The pen and paper survey took place at six different locations, which are all located in the Rhine-Neckar region. Refugees were interviewed either at their camp or at the soccer court. The participants of the survey were either approached by the trainers, if they belonged to the treatment group or by mail and social workers, if they were part of the control group. All potential survey participants were informed that participation was entirely voluntary and that no information supplied by the individuals would be handed to any official administration. They were informed that the aim of the survey was purely academic.

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

Table 2: Survey Participation at Six Different Locations

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

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey.

At the time of the survey, the treatment has been roughly three months in place for all course groups. Hence, the survey may serve also as an opportunity for a very preliminary and initial short-time evaluation of the project. In addition the survey provided useful knowledge for this group of participating refugees. At the soccer courts in Walldorf and Sandhausen 21 out of 32 potential interviewees filled in the questionnaire. For Sinsheim, participants as well as non-participants were interviewed at two refugee camps. Reaching persons in the control group turned out to be more difficult. Where it was possible, we used the contact of the volunteers to the refugees in order to motivate them to engage in the survey.

The survey was performed with a paper based questionnaire consisting of 49 items in total, which stretch over different topics. These topics include recreational activities, professional activities, the social environment, health, personality and values, language and stay in Germany, general information about the interviewee and information about the escape to Germany. Compared to the IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey on refugees (see Brücker et al, 2016) which entails almost 450 questions, our questionnaire is fairly modest but comparable to the one performed by Buber-Ennser et al. (2016) among refugees in Austria. Participants belonging to the treatment group filled in an additional questionnaire which tries to capture their experience with and in HEIMSTÄRKE. In general the items were designed to provide a 'quick & easy' fill in. No open questions were included where participants would have been forced to write a sentence or more.

The German questionnaire was translated by a professional institute into English, French, Dari, Farsi, Arabic, Urdu and Tigrinya. Even though having translated the surveys into the native language of the refugees, there were some participants who had problems in reading and understanding the survey. According to our field experience we think that the survey information gathered is fairly fine for those who were able to understand the questionnaire. Surely more experience is needed to provide more knowledge on the quality of refugee's re-

sponding to questionnaires.<sup>9</sup> We regard the findings reported in the next section as preliminary in nature.

#### **4. Initial insights from the ZEW survey**

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

##### *Socio-economic characteristics, family background and escape costs*

Table 3 provides an overview on the distribution of home countries within the surveyed sample. Roughly one third of the survey participants were born in Afghanistan. Another third of the participants originate from the Islamic Republic of The Gambia (17 percent), Syria (10 percent) and Iran (9 percent). In total 60 percent of the individuals among the observed population were born in Asia, while 18 percent were born in Africa.

Our sample should not be regarded as representative for the population of refugees living in Germany. For the evaluation of the treatment representativeness is not needed. The IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey is representative regarding the population which already filed an asylum application (Brückner et al., 2016). In our study participants are drawn from the entire distribution of refugees living in the region, regardless of their asylum application status. The distribution of nationalities across treatment and the recommended control group seems to be quite similar. Differences, however, to both of these groups are visible with respect to the non-recommended control group. Here, almost half of the sample stems from Afghanistan.

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<sup>9</sup> The K6 mental health scale (Kessler et al., 2002), a locus of control and a self-control inventory (see Cobb-Clark, 2015 and Tangney et al., 2004) suffered from high missing-rates. Therefore we excluded these items from the analysis.

Table 3: Country of Birth across Groups

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Treatment</b>	<b>Rec. Control</b>	<b>Non-rec. Control</b>
Iraq	9%	14%	13%	0%
Syria	10%	14%	13%	3%
Afghanistan	32%	21%	25%	48%
Pakistan	1%	0%	0%	3%
The Gambia	17%	25%	17%	10%
Eritrea	2%	0%	8%	0%
Iran	4%	0%	0%	10%
Turkey	1%	0%	0%	3%
Togo	1%	4%	0%	0%
Missing	22%	21%	25%	21%

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

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

The recommended control group has stayed on average 1.5 months longer in Germany than the treatment group. Important dimensions for understanding labour market integration are related to the socio-economic background and the working experience in the home country. Table 4 indicates that almost 72 percent of the surveyed individuals had a paid job before they came to Germany. There are some differences between the groups (treatment: 75 percent, rec. control: 54 percent, non-rec. control: 83 percent), which sustains when looking at the length of working experiences, which varies between 4.3 and 6.0 years.

Table 4 also presents the average years of education, an indicator of human capital widely used in education and labour market research (see Morrison and Murin, 2009, Pfeiffer and Stichnoth, 2015 among others). The average amount of schooling of 8.8 years for refugees in our sample lies above the average in their home regions or countries.

Table 4: Characteristics of Respondents

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

<sup>a</sup>reported are the means of a self-assessment given on a scale 1 (bad) – 5 (very good). Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

According to Morrison and Murtin (2009) the average number of years in education is 6.0 in North Africa and Pakistan, 6.8 in Iraq, and 8.0 in Syria. The comparison seems to support the hypothesis that refugees, who migrated to Germany, might be positively selected with respect to years of education. Note however that the numbers assessed by Morrison and Murtin (2009) hold for the entire population and not for the group of young people. Since there is an upward trend in years of education in nearly all countries in the world the young generation will have, as a rule, higher numbers compared to the average population.

The average number of years in education of respondents is substantially below the average number of years of education in Germany. According to official statistics more than fifty percent of young people in their 20's are enrolled in universities (see Autorengruppe Bildungsberichterstattung, 2016). Their overall time in education will be around 18 years. The average

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

In addition to a reasonable education, a good health should be a prerequisite for a successful integration. Table 4 reports the assessment of the refugees' own health status, which seems to be relatively positive on average, although heterogeneities remain. The finding is not surprising given the average age of the survey participants. There seems to be no major group differences (treatment 3.9; rec. control 4.1; non-rec. control 4.1) on the scale ranging from 1 to 5 (bad – very good).

Migrating from troubled home countries may not only be cumbersome and exhaustive but also financially expensive. Monetary costs of the escape may matter for economic integration of refugees in Germany. If the migration process associated with these costs is seen as an investment, a certain return from it may be expected. Furthermore, if refugees accumulated debts, the incentive to be active on the labour market might be considerably increased. Table 5 presents the results from the self-reported costs of migrating to Germany. On their way to Germany, 77 percent of the surveyed individuals crossed the Mediterranean. The crossing is not only associated with high risks but also with costs of 2,212€ on average.

There are significant differences in the costs between the treatment and control groups. First, this might be explained by selectively high missing rates for every group – about 50 percent within each group. Second, recall that the groups differ substantially by their country of origin and thereby by the route taken. Treated individuals experienced lower costs compared to the control group.



A similar picture emerges when looking at the overall costs of the escape to Germany. On average respondents spent 4,900€ on their way to Germany. The IAB-BAMF-SOEP survey reports higher average costs for the flight. This may again be due to selective non-response or to differences in terms of the country of origin, since the monetary migration costs are a direct function of the route taken. The accumulated debt from the escape is on average 3,978€. This suggests that on average refugees financed 81.2 percent of their escape expenses by credit.

Table 5: Monetary Costs of the Escape

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

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations

Kennan and Walker (2011) estimate a structural model for individual migration decisions between states within the US. One of the structural parameters is the total instantaneous “switching” cost of the migration itself, which is supposed to capture monetary as well as monetized other costs. Compared to their estimates, the values reported above are rather modest. This, as well as the fact that refugees face large emotional costs of migration, suggests that the expenditures and debts reported by refugees in Germany only constitute a small fraction of the total utility loss incurred. It is, however, an open question to what extent the accumulation of interest payments on debts leads to substantial increases of the ultimate debt to be paid.

### *Integration in Germany: Initial evidence on short run differences*

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

Table 6 presents the share of surveyed refugees who work and search for a job in Germany, attend a German language course in the last four weeks as well as visited Germans in their homes within the last twelve months. Labour market activity was still limited at the time of the survey. 14 percent reported having a paid job in Germany currently (similar Brückner et al., 2016). The non-recommended control group seems to be more successful in finding any kind of employment. Similarly, this group is much more active in looking for a job: half of the persons who answered this question in this group are currently searching for employment.

The recommended control and treatment group report much lower values. This might be due to differential education aspirations. Since the treatment group is on average younger and more educated, more of them might aim for further education or training rather than for employment. Another reason for the low percentage of individuals pursuing paid work might be explained by a lack of institutional help in searching for a job. 80 percent report having experienced no institutional support in their search for paid work. The surveyed participants indicated that they are mainly using non-institutional channels in order to find a job. Employment offices and job centres cover only 31 percent of the used channels, whereas individual networks are used much more extensively (49 percent).

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

When looking at a self-assessment of German language skills the treatment group reports an average speaking skill level of 3.1 on a scale from 1-5 (not at all – very good) (rec. control 2.92, non-rec. control 3.27). This value indicates average German conversational skills among the groups. The same picture emerges when looking at self-assessed German writing and reading skills, which range from 2.9 to 3.4. Self-assessments can be performed with low costs, although they may have some bias (for instance Edele et al., 2015).

Table 6: Integration in Germany

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

<sup>a</sup> reported are the p-values of a t-Test testing  $H_0 =$  the groups are equal.

<sup>b</sup> reported are the means of given answers on a scale 1 (very unlikely) – 5 (very likely).

<sup>c</sup> reported are the means of self-assessment on a scale 1 (not at all) – 5 (very good).

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

The variable ‘visits of natives at home’ indicates a specific dimension of social inclusion into the German society. This concept is frequently used in order to measure immigrant’s contact

to the native population (among others by Kanas et al., 2012; Lancee, 2012; or Danzer and Yaman, 2013). In addition to this, the questionnaire also included a question on the number of German friends. Table 6 reports that individuals in the treatment group have closer ties to the German population than the other groups. The difference is statistically different from zero at a 94 percent confidence level. This might already be an initial short term outcome of the treatment.

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

#### *Self-Assessment of HEIMSTÄRKE*

This final subsection illustrates HEIMSTÄRKE participants' opinion about the course. Table 7 presents the degree to which participants in HEIMSTÄRKE agree or disagree with the statements in the first column. Over half of the participants report the experience that the project HEIMSTÄRKE is more than just football training to them. In contrast, 41 percent of the participants report no substantial learning effects beyond the football training. However, when participants are asked to evaluate their experiences with specific parts of the course, feedback is largely positive. For instance the language lessons are highly valued by participants: 82 percent report improvements of their language skills.

Furthermore, as shown in Table 7, 64 percent of the participants would like to participate more frequently in HEIMSTÄRKE. In addition, 64 percent view participation as an opportunity to find paid work. Only a small fraction of 12 percent does not expect increases in their chances to find a job via participating in the treatment. Overall, our initial findings hint at a positive short-term assessment of the course by its participants.

Table 7: Opinions about HEIMSTÄRKE

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

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

## 5. Conclusion

The study analyses data from a survey conducted in July 2016 in the German Rhine-Neckar region. We surveyed a group of male refugees who participate in a small inclusive soccer project and two groups of refugees who do not participate in the soccer project.

Our main findings with respect to integration and the effect of program participation can be summarized as follows. On average, the 81 male respondents were 23 years old, had spent nearly nine years in education and had already accumulated five years of work experience in their home countries or on their way to Germany. They report on average a good health status and are fairly optimistic about finding work in Germany. On average respondents had been living in Germany for nine months at the time of the interview. 36 percent were searching for a job, and 14 percent report that they were working at the time of the survey.

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

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

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## Appendix

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

Table 8: Balance Check Randomization

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

Source: ZEW inclusive soccer project survey; own calculations.

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