The role of the guardian in refugee integration

Abstract:
Successful integration of refugees into the labor market and political community is critical for the social cohesion and long-term economic stability of EU Member States. Yet whose role is it to ensure integration is effective? EU primary law clearly bestows competency upon individual Member States. Yet spillovers from ineffective integration may impact the socio-economic well-being of neighboring States, and, on a macro level, the Union as a whole.

This paper engages the question of responsibility for integrating asylum seekers and refugees. It proposes a centralized EU-wide mentoring system to address determinants shown in the literature to impact integration of third-party nationals. Centralized coordination will help ensure consistent funding, measurable outcomes, oversight, as well as the ability to tie integration into a more equitable Union-wide refugee allocation. Centralization, however, does not preclude local ownership: interactions between State and refugees must be embedded within local institutions and meso-level stakeholders.

Methodologically, a mix-methods, interdisciplinary approach is taken. Through case studies and empirical analysis, a well-designed mentoring program reveals the potential to impact stratification factors and institutional inequalities shown in the labour market, educational, migration, and political economy literature to stifle effective integration. In turn, this two-way, multi-tiered interactive process may allay the uncertainty for hosting communities surrounding absorbing refugees, as well as weld a sense of permanence for refugees, thereby increasing incentives to invest in the human capital of their designated host country.