MEETING MINUTES

ECONOMIC INCLUSION WORKING GROUP MEETING

DATE	31.10.2024	TIME	14:30-16:00	PLACE	Online meeting

CHAIRS	
1.	UNHCR (Eliza Przezdziecka, Assistant Livelihood and Economic Inclusion Officer, przezdzi@unhcr.org)
2.	CARITAS POLSKA (Michał Korzeniowski , Project Coordinator, mkorzeniowski@caritas.org.pl); Marek Lepianka PM, mlepianka@caritas.org.pl)
PRESENTERS	
1.	Alexandra David, PhD in Sociology, Senior Researcher at the Westphalian University Gelsenkirchen, Institute for Work and Technology IAT.
2.	Maddalena Honorati, Senior Economist at the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice of the World Bank.

PARTICIPANTS	
1.	UNHCR
2.	Caritas
3.	Dom Otwarty
4.	IOM
5.	Right to Protection
6.	International Rescue Committee (IRC)
7.	Fundacja Polskie Centrum Pomocy Międzynarodowej
8.	Fundacja Innowacja i Wiedza
9.	Skills Alliance in Poland

10.	Red Cross
11.	World Bank
12.	Institute for Work and Technology
13.	Ukrainski Dom
14.	AVSI POLSKA
15.	PRM
16.	UNICEF
17.	International Orthodox Christian Charities
18.	Grupa CDG

AGENDA

14:30-14:40 Introductions by UNHCR and Caritas Poland.

14:40-15:10 **Part 1**:Presentation on "Germany's Approach to Refugee Entrepreneurship – What Can Poland Do Better?" (Alexandra David, PhD in Sociology, Senior Researcher at the Westphalian University Gelsenkirchen, Institute for Work and Technology IAT + Q&A).

15:10-15:40 **Part 2**: Presentation on Labour market integration of refugees in Germany: new lessons after the Ukrainian crisis. (Maddalena Honorati, Senior Economist at the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice of the World Bank +Q&A).

15:40-16:30 AOB

INTRODUCTION

This meeting of the Economic Inclusion Working Group focused on several key presentations. In the first part, Alexandra David presented her research on Germany's experiences with refugee entrepreneurship.
In the next part, Maddalena Honorati, Senior Economist at the Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice of the World Bank spoke about Integration of refugees in the labor market in Germany. She presented conclusions after the Ukrainian crisis. She provided good practices and tips for Poland, which can learn from the experiences of its neighbors.

I. Germany's Approach to Refugee Entrepreneurship – What Can Poland Do Better?

1. Entrepreneurial Ecosystems and their Inclusiveness
Alexandra David discussed how various networks of actors collaborate to support entrepreneurship. While ecosystems can support businesses, they are not sufficiently inclusive, especially for minority groups such as refugee entrepreneurs. They often lack social, financial, and knowledge capital, as well as access to resources, which hinders their business development.

2. Challenges Faced by Refugee Entrepreneurs
In Germany, refugee entrepreneurs face many challenges, such as language barriers (e.g., German or English), difficulties accessing networks, and limited financial support. Despite these challenges, their businesses can have a positive impact on the local economy, contributing to GDP growth, job creation, and the diversification of entrepreneurial ecosystems.

3. The Role of Refugee Entrepreneurs in the Local Economy
Refugee entrepreneurs have the potential to create innovation and contribute to the development of the labor market, particularly through job creation and preparing younger workers for various professions. They are also aware of discrimination, which often leads them to create more inclusive work environments.

4. Resources Available in Germany and Barriers to Access
Although Germany has many resources (e.g., capital, knowledge, infrastructure), access to them is often limited for refugee entrepreneurs. There is also an issue with integrating these groups into the mainstream entrepreneurial ecosystem. Many business centers and accelerators are not tailored to the needs of refugee entrepreneurs, which hampers their development.

5. Psychological Barriers
Refugee entrepreneurs often face psychological barriers, such as a lack of readiness to be integrated into the local ecosystem. As a result, they do not feel fully integrated and often build their own independent structures, which can limit their opportunities within the main economic ecosystems.

In conclusion, a key challenge remains creating more inclusive and accessible ecosystems that allow refugee entrepreneurs to fully leverage their potential, both in terms of capital and integration into local business networks.

6. Power Relations in the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
Alexandra David emphasized the importance of power relations in entrepreneurial ecosystems, noting that they are present in every social structure and can be understood in various ways. Power in ecosystems extends to actors and social groups, and its dynamics can be complex. On one hand, there may be dominance, e.g., from institutions controlling access to resources; on the other hand, less formal forms of power exist, where different groups are somewhat "equal" in terms of resources but struggle to access opportunities.

7. Segregation and Exclusion of Refugee Entrepreneurs
In interviews with over 70 refugee and migrant entrepreneurs, strong signs of segregation were identified. Many of these individuals face prejudice and barriers that hinder their access to key resources. Businesses, are often unable to move their operations to better neighborhoods, remaining in poor and marginalized locations.

8. Examples of Discrimination

Alexandra cited specific examples, such as refugees unable to rent business premises because their origins (e.g., Syrians, Afghans) are seen as a "problem." Entrepreneurs must find someone with German citizenship to help them rent space or access other resources. These subtle barriers create serious difficulties for integrating refugees into local ecosystems.

9. Lack of Representation in Institutions

Refugee entrepreneurs also face a lack of representation in economic institutions such as chambers of commerce. This means they are not adequately represented or informed about opportunities that could support their business development. The lack of awareness in institutions about the needs of migrants makes it difficult for them to access necessary services, such as handling visa matters, which can delay their business growth.

10. German Culture vs. Refugee Needs

One of the main problems is the lack of understanding and awareness of the needs of refugee entrepreneurs. Institutions and decision-makers do not always grasp the urgency of their issues, such as the need to quickly resolve formalities. As a result, refugees often face long waiting times for meetings, leading to frustration and delays in their business development.

11. Conclusions and Recommendations

- The main difficulties faced by refugee entrepreneurs include discrimination, segregation, lack of access to resources, and weak representation in key institutions. This issue also stems from the lack of awareness among those managing entrepreneurial ecosystems about the specific needs of migrants. Alexandra emphasized that the success of entrepreneurship among refugees requires not only access to resources but also greater openness to diversity and readiness to integrate these groups into the local business ecosystem.

  - **Access to Resources**: It was observed that although resources are available in entrepreneurial ecosystems, refugee entrepreneurs often struggle to obtain them or lack the power to access them. This is another obstacle to the development of their businesses.
  - **Discrimination**: Another key issue that emerged in the research is **discrimination**. Entrepreneurial ecosystems in Germany, despite existing support programs, are not fully inclusive, especially for minority groups such as refugees. Refugee entrepreneurs experience it not only in their daily lives but also in their professional lives. For example, German companies may refuse to collaborate with them, further hindering their business growth and integration into the economic ecosystem.
  - **Power relations**: these relations in entrepreneurial ecosystems have a significant impact on who has access to resources and how they are distributed.

- Based on experiences in Germany, Alexandra emphasized the need for greater openness to minority groups within entrepreneurial ecosystems. Business networks and other resources should be more inclusive, and programs need to be moderated to enable fuller engagement of refugee entrepreneurs. She highlighted the "embeddedness theory," which emphasizes the importance of embedding an entrepreneur in a specific location and integrating them with other ecosystem actors, including accelerators.

II. Labour market integration of refugees in Germany: new lessons after the Ukrainian crisis.

Purpose and Scope of the Study:

Maddalena is a senior economist at the World Bank based in Washington, responsible for social protection and labor policy in Poland. The study focused on analyzing refugee integration documentation, particularly in the German context, and collaborating with Eliza Tutino, a consultant and project manager.

1. Background and Methodology:

- The World Bank supported German authorities in response to the influx of refugees following the invasion of Ukraine.
- The study incorporated experiences from other countries (Greece, Romania, Turkey, Colombia) and was based on a review of existing academic publications, data from the European Commission and OECD, as well as interviews with German institutions.

2. Data and Analysis:

- The study primarily utilized administrative data and survey results regarding refugees' participation in integration courses and their presence in the labor market.
- The study highlighted that the existing German integration system was initially designed to respond to the refugee crisis caused by the Syrian conflict.

Good Practices:

- The study aimed to understand effective practices and aspects of the German system that could be adapted or implemented in other contexts:
  - Continuous investment in language and integration courses, as well as technical skills specific to the country.
  - Strong, targeted informational campaigns via social media.
  - Simplification of application procedures for benefits and services, improving service utilization.
  - Introduction of fast-track procedures for recognizing "unregulated" qualifications, facilitating employment.
  - A large network of non-governmental organizations increased the German system's ability to respond to sudden and unexpected large refugee inflows.

Conclusions:

- The implementation of the EU directive represents an important precedent in EU history. The reception and integration system demonstrated Germany's ability to respond quickly to refugee needs. Thanks to significant investments in language programs, integration benefits emerge even before refugee status is granted, and the recognition of skills, Germany's integration system produces slower but more sustainable labor market integration compared to other countries.
- This approach, which immediately focuses on long-term integration skills rather than just crisis response, proves to be a sustainable strategy even in the face of large refugee inflows. The crisis in Ukraine highlighted the shortage of certain services crucial for long-term refugee integration and well-being, such as childcare and psychological support. Collaboration between government agencies, the private sector, and local organizations is essential.

WAY FORWARD
Initiatives and potential presenters for upcoming meetings are welcome, with encouragement to propose topics related to economic inclusion and livelihoods.
NEXT MEETING
Thursday, 5th December, 11:00-13:00h.