



Refival.org

**Refugee Integration via Internet Based
Revitalization of Rural Europe**

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Introduction

With about one million refugees expected to arrive in Germany alone this year and an average recognition rate of almost 50% it means that Germany will receive up to 500.000 people who will be allowed to stay.

These asylum seekers for 2015 as such only represent 0.4% of the European population and 1.2% of the German population. However, giving shelter to them is in reality a substantial challenge; this will be followed by far greater challenges of finding longer term housing and employment for those granted asylum.

From a refugee integration perspective, the question is if it is wise to temporarily or permanently cluster all refugees in the richest and most developed areas of Europe. A further question is if resettlement on the basis of country population and economic strength based quotas makes sense from a European perspective.

Refival researches and proposes an opposite, radical approach. It proposes to create a win-win situation for refugees and European development by revitalizing Europe's countryside. It proposes to invest money for the settlement of refugees in the economically most deprived instead of the most developed areas in order to better balance and spread economic growth this way.

The approach primarily focuses on migrating jobs rather than on migrating people. If feasible, the generated secondary and tertiary sector job opportunities in rural areas could establish great synergy between refugee settlement and the revival or revitalization of Europe's deprived areas. It would further mean reversing a long time migration trend from rural to urban. Such development could finally be a catalyst for the return of non-refugees and native inhabitants.

Today, Refival has become a technically feasible scenario based on the general availability of advanced Internet telecommunication. This infrastructure can assist a fresh "brain-injection" of educated people in rural areas to compensate for the previously experienced "brain-drain". Such an intellectual revitalization can be followed by expanding less specialized skills requiring types of activities.

Of course all this should not be an in any way forced development; it should be a voluntary choice for both refugees and the receiving rural communities.

Refival is currently actively seeking for partners and stakeholders to participate in its cultural tolerance based initiative; a program that simultaneously most economically allocates resources whilst offering fast assimilation of newcomers.

In case of interest in participation in or sponsorship of a pilot-project, and in case of any questions or comments please contact me.

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Refugees versus migrants

Democracy and freedom of movement mean that every human is entitled to seek for his or her best economic prospective or opportunities. The reality is quite different; many borders and regulations exist that strongly limit such freedom in practice. However, it is also not sure that a fully open society would on average bring more prosperity. There are two different development principles here.

The first, migration, principle means that poorer people move to richer areas thus "*sharing poverty*". In such a scenario there can be a mutual benefit as long as the poorer people are able to contribute to the richer area's economy by employment. By taking part in the prosperity potential of the richer area, their derived reward/income can be higher than before migration. However, if they are unable to fully participate and still stay, their dependency will fundamentally reduce the average prosperity of the richer area.

The second, "*sharing prosperity*" scenario is to keep the prosperity exclusive for the rich area by fencing. This optimizes the wealth of the lucky few, but potentially a generated relative surplus can be transferred as development aid to poorer areas, thus reducing inequality between rich and poor.

The end-result of the first "*sharing poverty*" scenario is from a macro perspective not always positive for the poorer people. When the poorer migrate from an area with possibility for (albeit less prosperous) existence to become welfare dependent in their migration target country, then they would be better off receiving their "social benefits cost" in their home country as development aid.

Related to this, if we define European migrants as to be able to return home and recognized war-refugees as not, these principles have a number of implications.

First of all, from an economic perspective, the extension of the European Union created "*sharing poverty*" scenarios due to greater free movement of people and goods. Nevertheless, European "*sharing poverty*" migrants from deprived areas will often return home as soon as they do not find employment abroad and do not receive any social benefits, in this respect they regulate themselves from an economic perspective. In contrast refugees do not have such option and as a result they fully depend on social benefits in case they become/remain unemployed.

The effect is that from a cost perspective, receiving countries prefer employing refugees to migrants. However, from a greater European Union perspective this means reversing an increase of income for the migration originating areas (migrants missing destination country incomes) and a potential export of capital by refugees. It is very questionable that this fits to EU development strategies.

However, a third alternative can solve the economic conflict between migrants and refugees. The creation of an existence for refugees in the European migration originating countries could in practice economically/financially prioritize migrants over refugees (i.e., migrants and refugees change place).

Such prioritizing scenario would mean to strategically fill the empty spaces that migrant streams left in rural areas (by first moving/flowing to urban areas and from there further to more prosperous countries). If one manages to fill these via settlement of relatively young and educated refugees, the brain-drain and fertility-drain process that resulted from migration could be reversed. It means that refugees start down the stairs and climb their way up from there.

On a next level this could also imply that unemployed refugees in rich zones could possibly be employed in or transferred to the poorer zones in Europe. In this win-win situation the "welfare money" saved by the rich countries could be invested in the deprived areas where the refugees move to. More refugees would now be employed and the deprived communities would benefit from investments. Finally, at the time of their return home, migrants would also benefit from the improvements they accomplished by having a share in the derived revenues.

Although at first sight the project might appear to deport refugees to deprived areas; it is not. In reality the quality of simpler life in poorer rural areas can be substantially better than that of being unemployed in rich urban ghettos. Further, investments in housing provided to refugees can be far more efficiently done at such locations and potentially offer much better value for money. Finally, last but certainly not least, settling is voluntary and not a forced development; the quality of the opportunity has to convince both refugees and local communities.

Implementation success chances for the above Refival scenario greatly depend on the employability of refugees in the "rich" receiving countries, where they fled to. Further it depends on welfare savings to be accomplished and potentially "invested" in deprived areas instead of being "consumed" at high cost locations. This will from a European perspective be discussed in more detail now.

Refugee employment chances, demographics and absorption capacity

The further analysis will primarily focus on Europe's growth engine Germany. The point is that it is in many aspects an exceptional country. It represents 81 million people, being about 16% of the EU-28 population. Its labor force of 42 million people represents 17% of the EU-28 one, with the lowest unemployment rate of 4.5%, its 1.6% growth rate GDP represents 21% of the EU-28 GDP. At the same time it has a very low fertility rate of 1.39 children/mother born over lifetime.

All the other top 5 economically strong/large European countries in respect to population/GDP, being France (67 m. people), UK (65 m. people), Italy (61 m. people) and Spain (46 m. people), who together represent 71,4% of the EU-28 GDP, either do not face low fertility (*France 1.99, UK 1.83, Italy 1.39 and Spain 1.27*) and/or face economical growth issues and relatively high unemployment levels (*France 10,8%, UK 5,6%, Italy 11,9% and Spain 22,2%*), which makes it very unlikely that any of them is able to absorb or integrate many refugees.

Also the shorter and longer term German absorption capacity is questionable. Although a report predicts Germany to absorb between 276 and 491 thousand non-European immigrants per year up till 2050 (2015 Bertelsmann Stiftung), a number of factors have not been taken into account.

Most important is the assumption that until 2050 the labor force should remain constant; this whereas due to technological developments, economic growth can also be realized via technical innovation. It means that a smaller labor force can support more non-active/aged people, realizing an equal/higher GDP.

The report is further strongly based on averages. The real rapid decline in labor force will first take place in 2030-2035, when the baby-boom generation will retire, meaning that short-term there likely will be a lower absorption capacity.

Finally there are a number of alternative (to be combined) scenarios instead of absorbing immigrants or refugees. One can for example follow the French approach in which families receive strong incentives for having more children, one can raise the retirement age, one can convert "mini-jobs" (17% of the jobs in Germany; maximum payment 450 Euros/month) into more full-time jobs and one can try to raise the labor-force participation of immigrant women, which currently lags strongly behind that of native German women.

The conclusion here is that it is far from sure that there is currently a very high demand to employ refugees on top of the already existing migration streams. If one analyses what has actually happened over the last two years in combination with the so far positive economic development in Germany (which can change or slow down any moment), it is clear that on average yearly a 500.000 "net-influx" (previously expected to go down to 200.000 again by 2020), of which 350.000 people originated from EU countries (mostly from the new Eastern-European EU member states) has been absorbed into the German labor force. This is a self-regulating mechanism, EU migrants who do not find work return home.

In the longer term this European migration will (because less migrants will be available in Eastern Europe) likely reduce itself, but also for the coming years there remains a strong incentive for Eastern-Europeans to attempt to enter the German job market, which offers wages that are three or more times higher than in their originating Eastern European home countries.

There are three major implications of the above conclusions:

The first implication is that the resettlement of refugees to other EU countries (from Germany and/or from the arriving countries) will most likely only result in offering shelter followed by unemployment; it therefore dominantly represents an improved cost sharing scenario between countries and does hardly offer any additional benefits to refugees.

A second implication is that as soon as the sum of migrants and refugees exceeds the labor demand in Germany, there will be competition between the two groups and a conflict of interest will raise between local economic interest (refugees are from a national perspective more efficient/cheaper to employ because of the social benefits they are anyway entitled to) and the more macro EU policies/targets of free movement and increased mobility.

Third, depending on the outcome of the above competition, likely a substantial amount of refugees will be unable to find employment and will cost the German government between 1000 and 1300 Euro per month each, and will also require rapid construction of "social benefits budget based" housing for them.

Based on previous years' German statistics: from 1 million refugees, 500.000 (50%) will be recognized, out of the 70% men (350.000), 50% (assumption) will bring their family (175.000 women on top of the original 75.000, 15% of the refugees currently arriving are women). With a women labor participation of 60% this means an approximate labor supply of 500.000 people out of a total of at least 675.000 recognized refugees (reunited children are not counted for here).

As previously explained, besides of the "non-labor-force-participating-refugees", many of the potentially employable refugees will likely also remain unemployed and thus become dependent on social benefits instead (up to 350.000 for the coming year only, determined by the balance between employment of migrants versus refugees).

Still, the German economy may financially cope with such figures, since it only represents a maximal increase in the unemployment rate from 4.5% to 5.3%. From a buffer point of view it may even be considered an advantage to create some labor reserves. However, from a human "usefulness" perspective it is a complete catastrophe and does also cost/waste enormous amounts of money.

In principle it would have been better to invest the above amount of money as development aid in the local regions where the refugees come from. Due to years of ignoring the refugee issue, this is meanwhile no longer an option for treating those who meanwhile found their way to Europe. However, it is an alternative for refugees who did not arrive yet and is now considered by the EU.

The question is if the 1000-1300 Euro total cost per month per every welfare dependent refugee can not be better allocated in other ways inside of Europe. By encouraging refugees to settle in lower cost areas, money that would have been previously "consumed" can instead be properly "invested" in them. Such investments can in principle create win-win situations in the low cost, deprived, rural areas of Europe, something that currently is difficult to organize independently due to a lack of substantial fund allocation for such development.

This development can create a competitive edge for the poorer, more deprived areas, in which lower living and labor cost can be used as an advantage to migrate jobs there. Since minimum wages are between 300 and 400 Euros in Eastern Europe versus 1500 Euros in Western Europe the difference gives substantial room for "investment". It can further contribute to employment growth in Europe and improving the competitive edge here, rather than outsourcing employment and funds to countries outside of the EU.

Of course there is a trade-off at the German side; "consumption by refugees" indirectly creates jobs which would be lost. However, the long-term investment undertaken can refill the brain-drain and fertility gap left by the migration stream from deprived rural areas via the cities in poorer EU regions to Germany, thereby creating a future migration potential and thus improving Europe's labor force sustainability.

European Union dilemmas

From a macro EU point of view, the current migration from Eastern to Western Europe means a migration of the demographic ageing issue. Fertility rates in Eastern Europe were already low before the migration started, and in the coming decennia this will cause serious problems in the originating countries. Combined with the brain-drain effect that is caused by the current migration streams, the long term outlook is actually quite negative. The only short term compensation is the fact that migrants send money and may return home with money in the end.

The above raises an EU dilemma; at one side do the employed European migrants contribute to Europe's economic growth by using their migration potential to escape unemployment; at the other side is the existing gap between deprived and prosperous areas solidified. Although fully logical from an individual European migrant perspective to move there where he or she can earn three times more than at home, strategically this does cause longer term issues.

Freedom of movement, being one of the main accomplishments of European unification, very likely will be strongly politically defended. The employment conflict of interest between European migrants and refugees will therefore likely cause some form of prioritization or discrimination between them. If this is the case, the current outflux from deprived areas will remain a permanent one.

Refugees are in another position than migrants. Whereas migrants move to a better opportunity area as a next step in their career, refugees are in a far worse position; they seek the possibility to rebuild their life. Of course do almost all refugees try to move to the "richest" areas which appear to give them the best chance for a prosperous future; however this assumption may turn out to be wrong if they are unable to find employment and become entirely dependent on social benefits.

If the refugee's welfare costs are high this does not imply any high quality of life; being unemployed in an urban high-cost area only guarantees a bare minimum. Although not sounding attractive at first sight, having much less money but having employment in a lower cost area can offer a much better growth potential and life quality. Even without employment, life quality strongly depends on an income versus cost balance, which is not necessarily better in prosperous areas. Other factors like housing, personal space, closeness to nature etc. are important; although such factors are highly personal and preferential.

Even in areas where the cost advantage is much less and unemployment levels are higher, as this is the case in France, Italy and Spain (minimum wages: 1500 Euros (F); none, by negotiation (I); and 750 Euros (ES)), it makes sense to strategically revitalize the rural areas. Rebuilding the villages and renovating the abandoned/ruined houses will employ people and build a certain economic development momentum. By carefully selecting the refugees on the basis of their skills and by for example bringing in entrepreneurially talented refugees, this renovation can be the start of a longer term redevelopment. Even in the unlikely, worst, case that all resettled refugees would remain unemployed, there is not really a negative result. It would mean that the rural housing would be reused and that social benefits income would contribute to the local rural economy; it would still lead to a demographic rural revitalization.

Rural Europe is economically and culturally important and offers a lot of room for expansion, only not in the primary, agricultural, sector. 112 million people, 22% of the European population are currently living in predominantly rural EU-28 areas, which cover 51% of the land in Europe (intermediate regions cover 39% and house 35%; urban areas cover 10% and house 43%). However, fifty years ago this number used to be much higher when 157 million people were living in rural areas (about 37% of the EU population, which is a rough estimate, based on EU-15 data, of at that time 425 million EU-28 inhabitants). It means that there is potential to re-house up to 45 million people in the rural areas of Europe.

This assumes of course a structural redevelopment in which secondary and/or tertiary sector jobs must be migrated to rural areas. Primary sector, agricultural, jobs nowadays only represent 5% of the total EU-28 jobs, whereas secondary sector, industrial, jobs represent 25% and tertiary sector, service, jobs 70%. Of course far from all currently existing 150 million service jobs can be migrated to rural areas but there is ample potential to at least migrate some. The same is true for a substantial number of SME type industrial production jobs. Labor cost advantage combined with meanwhile improved, IT based, logistical solutions can outweigh geographical disadvantage. With European highway network access available close to many rural places and with broadband Internet being available in most areas, their relative disadvantage has meanwhile strongly declined.

Refival as a development strategy strongly relies on modern communication and Internet services, other than Sweden's "Whole-Sweden" strategy back in 1985 (placing refugees in rural areas targeting to facilitate faster integration by non-clustering), which focused on supplying housing but failed to employ refugees and therefore was abandoned in the mid 1990's, Refival strongly focuses on rural redevelopment via the migration of jobs to lower cost areas. Times have changed in this respect, back in 1985 Europe looked very different than today anno 2015.

Of course is the proposed Refival solution, to have migrants and refugees exchanging place, somehow weird. Probably it would (like with the refugees) have been easier from a European perspective to invest more in the deprived areas from the beginning, which would have migrated employment more actively there. Reality is that substantial budgets are made available for refugees, whereas this is much less the case for fighting the origins of European migration.

A second, related, topic is that those who once decided to migrate and found well-paid employment in "rich" countries or in local urban areas will, unless they are forced to, unlikely return to their originating rural areas. From this point of view it is more logical to offer refugees, who anyway have to start from scratch rebuilding their life, the opportunity to do so in rural areas. This does not mean that similar/equal opportunities should not be offered to local migrants who want to return "home". Refival as a rural revitalization process is meant for everyone and not exclusively for refugees. Still, as said before, it is more likely it will attract refugees in the beginning. In a next stage their example can then be followed by others. In this respect the refugees are a catalyst for further development. Refival clearly targets to balance native and refugee populations; from an integration perspective creating a "refugee only" rural Europe is the last thing one wants to accomplish. However, in the end it all depends on practical implementation and attractiveness of the proposition that can be offered to any type of settler. This will be discussed into more practical detail now.

The Refival scenario, a pure win-win scenario that nobody wants?

In discussing the revival scenario with a number of people from very different backgrounds, there is a lot of criticism on the approach. The two main points are that no single refugee will opt for a "money and status" wise less prosperous scenario and that, second, rural communities are far too conservative to accept/integrate any foreigners at all. Finally there is criticism on the political feasibility of the approach, especially in relation to the relatively nationalistic, EU refugee resettlement quota opposing, Eastern-European countries.

Of course would the whole approach fail if one of the first two arguments turns out to be true; the third, political feasibility, issue is in principle solvable on an EU level and mainly a matter of advocacy, proper communications and patience.

Would refugees opt for settlement in deprived locations instead of in prosperous areas? Those who are at a EU "Blue Card" level very likely not, but these "sought for" people seem to be in such a demand that countries like Canada actively recruit them from the refugee camps in the originating regions, thus many of them do not have to undertake a dangerous trip to Europe. From those arriving, there is of course an educated group that has a good match with the German job market and also these employable people will likely not opt to leave Germany.

However, for a majority of the refugees the situation is different. They traveled to their "dream" Germany with unrealistic expectations. Of course, people hope for miracles but if their dream does not come true, they will be at first be frustrated, but in the end they face reality. In many cases reality means unemployment, to receive minimum welfare and collective housing without much perspective for improvement. They can only wait for the opportunity to travel back home. For this group a well organized new employed life in rural Europe can be a very good alternative to the "wait" to rebuild their life from scratch at home in a few years from now.

The second argument of rural non-acceptance can indeed be a major stopper. Yes, it is very true that people in villages are very conservative and afraid of or reluctant to change. Yes, it is true that they often have a very negative attitude towards "strangers", even toward those from the neighboring village. The big question is if it is possible to change this? The answer is probably yes. The point is that the remaining rural population is older, meaning that some villages are literally "dying out"; the elderly often could use simple help from their neighbors, but such help is not that easily available. The second element is that many refugees originate from cultures where the respect for elderly people is stronger than in modern individualized Europe and that the willingness to help them is natural.

In Western Europe, many nurses are migrants and work with the elderly without any issues. There is some adjustment needed, but as soon as people feel the benefits of revitalization in their village; their aversion can easily change to appreciation. Of course it requires proper communication from both sides and it requires a real connection instead of a "looking away from each other" attitude. This process must be clearly guided, but if implemented well it will very likely result in a much faster integration of the refugees than in urban areas where they tend to cluster.

Revival, an Internet based rural society

The economical infrastructure is currently mostly geographically and historically determined and rural areas are at a great disadvantage. However Internet is bringing a revolutionary change by the world-wide (-web based) "virtual broadband road network" which, once available, does not discriminate between "prosperous" and "deprived" geographical areas. A rural Internet does not exist.

This does of course not lead to equality overnight, but for "non-physical-goods" related activities there are less limitations. Many services can be economically positioned almost anywhere. A good example is iTalki.com, where language teachers can make a living by teaching individual students via Skype. Neither the students nor the teachers are, besides of on the time zones in relation to their preferred working hours, dependent on a geographical location any longer.

Meanwhile there are a lot of economical activities that can be outsourced via Internet, ranging from computer programming and ICT related activities to bookkeeping, accountancy, direct sales and many types of consulting activities. Another category is the crowdsourcing of services such as graphical design, text writing, translating etc. In both categories there is a globalization of activities.

Next, one can see a migration of call-centers and back-offices to lower cost areas and the further rise of virtual call centers whereby people work from home. Currently there are still limitations in relation to the virtualization of internal communication and the training of employees, but these issues can be solved.

Things are changing in the production logistics of physical goods also. There are a lot of small and medium sized subcontractors who can deliver their parts "just-in-time" to the bigger manufacturers. With many rural locations being close to the European highway network, the rural disadvantages are decreasing.

The above means that unlike ten or even five years ago, a lot of economic activities and related jobs can be more easily migrated, one can realistically bring the job to the employee instead of having the employee moving to the job. However, starting point must be to "inject" advanced skills back in the deprived areas, from there one can top-down expand to activities which require less skills.

Of course there is always a shadow side to things; working from home assumes a high level of self-discipline and offers less social interaction with co-workers than a non-virtual work environment. Still one can take measures to reduce such negative effects by for example creating a shared common rural workplace or by organizing sufficient real social interaction via voluntary community work etc.

The other important role of Internet is to be a catalyst in reviving the lost infrastructure of rural areas. There are many options here, no school can mean distance learning, no public transport can mean sharing an UberX taxi, no shop can mean online ordering and delivery. Over time when there is enough reversed migration, schools and public facilities will very likely regenerate themselves, but up till then Internet has a lot to offer. Again there is a shadow side; revival does not automatically occur, it must be organized and possess a certain economics of scale. How to realize this will be discussed into more detail below.

Refival, the rebuilding stage, investment in real-estate, preparation

Where to start? The first step is that rural communities must be selected via a request for tender and that minimal but proper housing must be realized in order for refugees to be able to stay in the selected rural communities. The financial approach Refival uses here is that investors/governments will buy neglected, abandoned or ruined houses from their private owners and enable refugees to renovate them. Such houses are currently very cheaply available in many rural areas of Europe and will upon success of revitalization likely turn out to be a good investment; their value should greatly increase over time as villages are repopulated and sufficient employment/infrastructure is established again.

There can be a special role for investors or governments from the Middle-East in this process. Although these governments face difficulties to absorb "refugees" from their neighborhood countries, they do supply substantial amounts of financial humanitarian aid to refugees in their vicinity. For these countries it may therefore be a good strategy to also invest in Refival and its humanitarian goals.

The property investment "use arrangement" is that refugees can live in their houses for free (for a certain period) but that they have the obligation to renovate them over time (renovation materials to be financed by the investor). In return for their efforts they will get a right to buy their renovated houses for the total amount invested plus a reasonable interest (in case they want to settle). However, in case they decide to return home, they can apply for a real-estate valuation or sell their houses and share an eventual increase in value with the investor. This way they can upon successful revival take part of the gain they created, by renovating and revitalizing, to their originating countries.

The second, parallel, step is (based on the existing infrastructure) to prepare the basics like education, daycare, transport, delivery from shops, Internet access, common meeting/work/education places, distance learning programs etc. Special attention is needed to create sufficient medical care (currently still a clear minus for rural areas, but the refugee population is relatively young and healthy).

The third, parallel, step is to setup a program for arranging Internet based employment opportunities which can be potentially migrated to the village and/or to make an inventory of business opportunities available on a local level.

If these three conditions are met, a very strict selective refugee "job application" and skills assessment process can start and the selected refugee families can arrive in the villages. From there on, their social integration program can start. In the beginning refugees will have to endure relatively harsh and primitive non-renovated circumstances (a minimum condition will be arranged beforehand) but they will be immediately enabled to organize a first house renovation stage; possibly in cooperation with volunteers that are willing to help them.

In respect to furniture (as far not included in the acquired houses) and/or other goods needed by the refugees there can be a charity collection and distribution system organized from "richer" to "deprived" areas. Other than in the past this can be efficiently organized via Internet, better matching supply and demand.

After rebuilding the basic requirements a next, redevelopment, stage can start.

Refival, the redevelopment stage, creating jobs and companies

Already during and immediately after the rebuilding stage the primary focus must be on refugee education. Core is local language education and a cultural integration program in which refugees and locals learn to know to each other.

In parallel there is a focus on developing (and educating people for) employment opportunities and new businesses. To start with, it is likely the best approach to create "any kind of subject" distance learning teaching jobs (which can target a worldwide student audience!) and/or ICT and back-office Internet based jobs.

This will be followed by centering on entrepreneurial development, which will instead of migrating existing jobs, create new types of employment and will therefore expand the local/European labor potential. The problem is that most new enterprises require risk capital investment, which may not be easy to obtain unless special programs/funds are developed for this.

Still there are smaller scale craft related occupations that in combination with the right business plan and a proper Internet sales presence may flourish in a rural environment; competitive edge of such environments being availability of ample space at low cost.

Whereas the rebuilding stage in principle will be mainly financed by investors, the redevelopment stage will have to be dominantly financed from social benefits, this until the refugees will become self-supporting again.

Over time when the population grows and when it reaches a certain critical mass, additional new employment will be automatically generated out of a demand for services like café's, shops and other types of facilities. The top-down skills build-up becomes balanced this way. At this stage it will also be attractive for people from outside the community, including returning migrants from local cities, to settle or come home. Meaning that by then the community is fully revitalized.

For some of the refugees this may be the time to move on or return home.

Refival, the resettlement stage, to harvest and move or go home.....

Living in an Internet based society and exercising an Internet based job, there are great migration advantages. It means that many refugees who want to move or return home can in principle take their employment with them and continue to work. This can be a good starting point for growth or for rebuilding one's life at home. However, if afterward jobs are changed, the original job will (having been organized by Refival) have to return to the village in order to bring continuity.

Second, if the Refival project is a success and the renovated houses have gained value, the refugees can (next to their eventual savings) also bring some start-up capital to their originating countries by selling their house to either a next refugee or to other people interested in living in the revitalized community.

To achieve such a complex resettlement end-target, it requires a very careful selection and skill assessment in the beginning, Refival is thus not for everyone.

Refugee's choice and requirements

As discussed there are many aspects to refugee participation in Refival and this raises the question what refugees can expect and what is expected from them?

Refival targets those refugees who, although having sufficient skills, will remain unemployed and therefore dependent on social benefits in the country they originally fled to. It means that they are either waiting to return home or possibly stay long-term living on welfare if returning home is no option after some years.

Although in a less prosperous rural area and with less income, refugees who opt for participation in Refival can expect to be given ample opportunities for personal development and can expect to realize a "normal" living with proper chances to integrate and economically move upward during their stay in Europe.

Further they will be enabled to renovate a private house. For such effort they in return can live in it for free for some period of time. Also they will obtain a right to buy the house in case they have sufficient income and decide to settle. Alternatively they can sell the house in case they decide to return home. In that case they will have a share in the eventual capital gain made.

The above opportunity is primarily meant for young and educated war-refugee families who prefer to fully integrate and rebuild their lives in quiet rural Europe. Primary expectation is a high motivation level, proper work ethics and social skills. Next to this there are expectations in respect to eagerness to learn, a minimum foreign language knowledge and computer literacy. Ideally, candidates possess professional experience in teaching, programming, customer service or similar professions. Alternatively they have proven entrepreneurial experience.

The procedure to find suitable refugee families will be comparable with a normal job candidate's selection; very likely a social skills assessment will be part of it.

Rural community's choice and requirements

For many rural communities Refival offers an excellent and unique opportunity to economically and socially revitalize their community. There will be substantial economical investments made in the villages and the ageing population will be supplemented with young families. At the same time a lot of attention will be given to building good relationship between natives and newcomers. Part of the Refival concept is to limit the amount of newcomers to a maximum of 25% of the available houses in the villages and also to longer-term actively stimulate the return of local migrants and/or abroad living natives to the community. The refugee families thus form a catalyst for more general countryside revitalization.

Main requirement for rural communities to participate in the Refival program is their population's openness to socially interact with the newcomer refugees. Next to this there are expectations in respect to the price, quality and quantity of the real-estate to be acquired. Ideally, there are local children and schools available.

Selection will be done by a project request for tender to which communities must reply what they have to offer and how they expect to bridge cultural gaps.

Cultural tolerance model

The integration of foreigners with a completely different cultural background is no sinecure. It requires a lot of mutual openness and willingness to achieve real understanding. Of course can one just ignore people and live next to each other without being involved, this is what very regularly happens in urban areas where refugees often cluster and create their own shielded cultural domains. For Revival such an attitude is no option since the revitalization of small rural communities requires full interaction and proper cooperation between all people involved.

It is important that the refugees rather than being at home are guests in Europe; meaning that they must accept the house rules of their hosts. This means that there is no place for some of their traditions because of conflicts with core values like for example that one is not allowed to take the law into one's own hand.

However, this does not imply that the refugees must become equal to natives and copy their behavior; there is ample space for own, private, cultural identities and traditions in Europe. A melting pot would be a step backward in this respect; cultural variety means more choice and more cultural richness.

The cultural communication model Revival uses is to achieve a cultural balance without neither "melting with" nor "ignoring" each other, it is based on a division in common and private cultural space.

Together with education at both the host's and the guest's side, this approach must lead to mutual understanding and tolerance. The host has some advantage here because he/she dominates the common cultural space, but at the same time the guest can maintain his own private cultural space without adaptation.

The division between common and private cultural space is not as simple as it looks at first sight. It does not mean that at home people can do whatever they like. Neither the host nor the guest is allowed to kill or suppress people at home because there are general common European cultural values that forbid this.

This means that everyone must obey the common cultural space rules at all times and places, meaning that the main European values prevail. This still leaves ample space for cultural differences because both the host and the guest do have a private cultural domain where they can fully differ from each other.

One must of course teach people each other's traditions and try to explain their origin, in most cases this will not lead to changing any points of view but it can lead to a better understanding and more tolerance for the other's perspective. Increasing tolerance is the basis here; at the same time there must be zero-tolerance for not obeying common cultural space rules. Yet, common rules are by itself far from static but changing them requires general cultural consensus.

For many refugees it will be tough to adapt to the common rules of individual freedom and responsibility in Europe. For example women in principle possess the freedom to wear a burka and a bikini. Neither of the two can be forbidden nor enforced. It implies that people are free to migrate from one private cultural space to another but are also free to stay where they are. In many cultures this type of freedom does not exist and is against the common cultural space rules.

Summary

Depending on the development of Eastern- to Western-European migration, from the 1 million refugees who arrived this year up to 350.000 employable refugees will even so receive social benefits and remain unemployed in Germany alone.

The total cost for the German government is between 1000 and 1300 Euro per refugee per month and will require rapid construction of substantial housing.

The expenses on social benefits can likely be better allocated in other ways inside of Europe. By encouraging refugees to settle in lower cost areas, money that would have been previously "consumed" can be properly "invested" in them.

This can create win-win situations in mostly rural, deprived, strongly depopulated areas of Europe (an estimated 45 million people left), which were vacated over the past 50 years. A competitive edge can be established for such areas, in which lower living and labor cost can be used as advantage to migrate jobs there.

About 70% of economic activities are services related in Western Europe. There are a substantial number of jobs available that can be outsourced via Internet. This means to structurally organize a migration of jobs instead of people.

The Refival opportunity is at its first startup stage primarily meant for young and educated war-refugee families who prefer to fully integrate and rebuild their lives in quiet rural Europe. Although settled in less prosperous areas and with less income, people who opt for participation in Refival can expect to be given ample opportunities for personal development and can expect a "normal" income level.

Further they will be enabled to renovate a private house. For such effort they in return can live in it for free and will obtain the right to buy it in case they have sufficient income and decide to permanently settle in the rural community.

Alternatively, some refugees can take their Internet employment with them if they move or return. This can be a starting point for personal economical growth elsewhere or for rebuilding one's life at home in the originating country.

Longer-term Revival stimulates a return of native migrants to their communities. Refugee families thus form a catalyst for general countryside revitalization.

All this should not be an in any way forced development; it should be a voluntary choice for both refugees and the receiving rural communities.

Refival is currently actively seeking sponsorship and stakeholders to participate.

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