

TOWARDS INCLUSIVITY IN ENTREPRENEURSHIP: UTILIZING HIGHLY SKILLED REFUGEES

A Research on Supporting Syrian Refugee Entrepreneurs in Germany and the Netherlands through Collaboration between Business Incubators and Local Governments



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Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management

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A RESEARCH ON SUPPORTING SYRIAN REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURS IN GERMANY
AND THE NETHERLANDS THROUGH COLLABORATION BETWEEN BUSINESS
INCUBATORS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

A thesis submitted to Delft University of Technology
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in Management of Technology

Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management

by

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To be defended in public on the 7th of September 2023

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background. Per Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) findings, a considerable portion of refugees in Europe are highly educated, with many being overqualified for their roles. Despite these figures, existing literature often overlooks the unique challenges faced by this educated segment of the refugee community when integrating into the labor market. Specifically, many highly skilled refugees find it challenging to re-engage with professions or businesses that align with their prior education and experiences. This misalignment often leads to ‘deskilling’ and an underutilization of their capabilities, resulting in lost potential for host countries.

Research Objective. This research centers on the potential of entrepreneurship as a mechanism to integrate highly skilled Syrian refugees into the labor markets of Germany and the Netherlands. Recognizing the challenges and underutilization of refugee talent, the study’s principal aim is a detailed exploration of their entrepreneurial ventures. We seek to not only understand the barriers they face but also to offer a targeted framework of recommendations. These recommendations are aimed at local government bodies and business incubators, ensuring that these talented refugees can work in alignment with their skills and educational backgrounds, thereby contributing to their new communities.

Research Questions. In German and Dutch urban settings, what services can business incubators, in collaboration with local governmental actors, offer to assist highly skilled refugees in overcoming barriers to starting ventures that align with their educational backgrounds?

With the following sub-research questions:

- How does the current asylum process function for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands? Additionally, what is the current state of affairs regarding their integration and support?
- What are the legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related barriers faced by highly skilled refugees starting a ventures aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds?
- What is the ideal business incubator for providing services to address the barriers faced by highly skilled entrepreneurial refugees?
- How can business incubators collaborate with local governmental actors to develop and implement long-term solutions for highly skilled refugees and host countries?

Methodology. Adopting a qualitative research design, this study employs a combination of literature review, desk-based research, and semi-structured interviews.

- **Data Sources:** The *literature review* draws from works discussing refugee entrepreneurship and its intersection with business incubators. *Desk-based research* focuses on the legal frameworks of governmental agencies regarding asylum and integration. *Semi-structured interviews* involved four highly skilled refugees from the targeted countries who had engaged in at least one incubation program and

were either starting or had already started their ventures. Additionally, interviews included four professionals (mentors, managers, coaches) from business incubators targeting refugee entrepreneurs in the relevant countries.

- **Data Collection:** Semi-structured interviews comprised 8 open-ended questions, concentrating on barriers, business incubators, and policies.
- **Data Analysis:** Utilized the methodology by Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton (2013), employing a systematic three-tiered coding process to identify concepts, derive themes, and establish relational mechanisms.

Key Findings. Currently, both Germany and the Netherlands lack specialized support for highly skilled refugees during their asylum and integration processes. Furthermore, highly skilled refugees encounter multiple barriers in their entrepreneurship journey, such as legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related challenges. These obstacles align with the typology introduced by (Alrawadie, Karayilan, & Cetin, 2019) but are notably more complex for this group compared to the broader refugee population. Additionally, there's a notable absence of collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators in these regions. In response to these findings, the research provides specific recommendations to address these challenges.

Conclusions. The research deepens our grasp of entrepreneurship among highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. Theoretically, it unveils the interplay between migration policies and entrepreneurial activity. Practically, it advocates for better policy frameworks and tailored business incubators. These insights not only propel economic growth but also champion a more inclusive approach, emphasizing the untapped potential of refugees in host countries.

Recommendations. The research suggests formulating policies to enhance collaboration between business incubators and local governments, assisting highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs during their asylum and integration phases. Furthermore, the establishment of an optimized business incubator with essential services is recommended to address the unique challenges faced by these skilled refugees.

Limitations. The research is narrowly tailored to highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands, constraining its general applicability. The limited sample size might not fully represent the broader refugee populace. Difficulty in securing interviews from governmental figures might reduce the study's breadth.

Future research. This study prompts further exploration into tailored business incubator models for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. Expanding the scope to different countries and groups, assessing long-term outcomes, and aligning with global sustainability goals are crucial next steps to deepen our understanding and support for refugee entrepreneurs.

Contribution. *Scientifically*, the research ventures into the emerging domain of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship in the context of business incubators, setting it apart from the broader immigrant studies. *Societally*, the findings underline the potential economic and innovative prowess of these refugees, making a case for a more efficient harnessing of their capabilities. On a *practical* note, the study forwards nuanced recommendations for highly skilled refugees, business incubators, and governmental bodies, thereby championing refined integration strategies and supportive infrastructures.

DEDICATION

Allah, Baba, and Laila, I accredit all of my accomplishments to you.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I extend my deepest gratitude to my thesis advisor, Roland Ortt, for his unwavering support, guidance, encouragement, and flexibility throughout this journey. His insights and feedback have been invaluable, and his patience and dedication to this project have served as a constant source of inspiration.

I would like to thank the second supervisor, Victor Scholten, for his critical, constructive, and detailed feedback. His challenging questions have significantly contributed to the shaping of this research.

To my peers, especially Naram, thank you for the enlightening discussions, shared late nights, and camaraderie. You've made this journey more enriching, manageable, and enjoyable.

I owe an unending debt of gratitude to my family: Ayman, Ramleh, Rania, and Wyona for their love, understanding, and unwavering belief in my capabilities. Their steadfast support has been my stronghold.

Lastly, but by no means least, I want to acknowledge and offer my deepest respect and appreciation to all who lost their lives and sacrificed their well-being to uphold the Syrian revolution. My heartfelt remembrance especially goes out to my dear martyred friends, Laila and Anas. Without them, I likely wouldn't be alive to celebrate this day. I hope that today, in some small way, I have made you proud.

Mohammed Jabri
August 2023, Delft

PREFACE

Embarking on this research journey, which delved into the entrepreneurship barriers faced by highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands, held profound personal significance for me. As a Syrian refugee entrepreneur myself, the questions weren't merely academic inquiries; they were reflections of my own journey, struggles, and aspirations.

The sobering statistics from the OECD — that one in five refugees in Europe has completed a tertiary education, and a staggering 60 per cent of those employed are overqualified for their jobs — resonated with me on a profound level. They didn't just represent numbers on a page. They mirrored the lived experiences of many of my peers and myself, talented individuals who sought not only refuge but also a chance to contribute meaningfully to their new communities. The stark reality that so many of us, despite our qualifications, found ourselves in roles that didn't align with our skills and potential underscored the urgency and importance of this research.

Throughout the research process, I often grappled with the duality of my role - as both a researcher and someone who had experienced firsthand the challenges under investigation. While my personal experiences provided invaluable insights and deepened my empathy, maintaining the objectivity required for academic research was a balancing act. It was essential to ensure that the research was both rigorous and authentic to the lived experiences of highly skilled refugees.

Exploring the potential role of business incubators in assisting refugees like myself was especially enlightening. Imagining incubators tailored to address our unique needs and challenges not only represented a promising solution but also echoed the broader need for systems and institutions that recognize and value our contributions.

Engaging with experts and peers, many of whom were aware of my background, enriched the research process. Their perspectives, coupled with my personal insights, added layers of depth to the narrative. Synthesizing policy complexities at various levels, I couldn't help but reflect on how these policies directly impacted lives, including my own.

On a deeply personal level, this research portrayed the resilience, potential, and often untapped talents of highly skilled refugees. My experiences, both as a Syrian refugee and as a researcher, solidified my conviction that more inclusive policies and frameworks are not just beneficial but imperative. By truly leveraging the skills and capabilities of refugees, we can foster more cohesive, innovative, and integrated communities.

In conclusion, this research journey was more than an academic endeavor; it was a personal pilgrimage. It allowed me to weave my story with those of countless others, seeking solutions, understanding, and most importantly, a chance to redefine our narrative as more than just refugees, but as valuable contributors to our new homes.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

EU	the European Union
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IDP	Internally Displaced People
UN	United Nations
COO	Country of Origin
COR	Country of Residence
UBI	University Business Incubator
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
MoT	Management of Technology
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee

At the close of 2022, history witnessed its highest levels of migration, with a staggering 108.4 million individuals worldwide forcibly displaced due to reasons ranging from persecution and conflict to human rights violations and events seriously disturbing public order (UNHCR, 2023a). This population is broken down as follows: refugees at 35.3 million, asylum seekers at 5.4 million, and Internally Displaced People (IDP)¹ constituting 62.5 million. Figure 3.1 showcases the upward trend of refugee numbers spanning the last two decades.

Per the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) report, Germany emerged as Europe's foremost recipient of refugees and the world's fourth-largest, processing 261,019 new asylum claims in 2022 alone. By contrast, the Netherlands, while receiving fewer applications, still noted a substantial 31,594 new asylum claims within the same timeframe (UNHCR, 2023a).

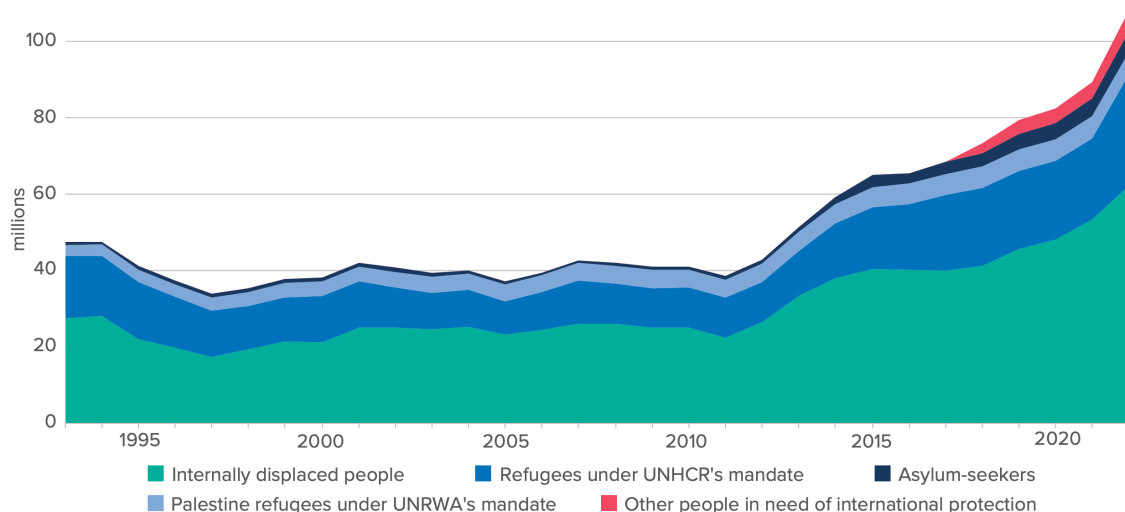


Figure 1.1: People forced to flee worldwide (1993 - 2022), by type (in millions) (UNHCR, 2023a)

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

According to OECD estimates, one in five refugees in Europe has completed a tertiary education and more than 60 per cent of the refugees with tertiary education who are in employment are overqualified for their jobs (OECD & European Commission, 2021). With few exceptions, literature on refugees' labor market integration in general, and refugee entrepreneurial activity in particular, tends to ignore the reality that a sizable proportion of the refugee community is highly educated. As a result, it rarely analyzes the specific barriers that highly skilled refugees encounter when attempting to re-enter their professions, or when they attempt to venture into businesses relevant to their studies or previous job experiences.

¹ Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.

The integration of highly skilled refugees into the labor market of host countries, especially in Europe, has been a persistent challenge (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021). Not only does the misalignment of their skills with employment opportunities lead to deskilling, but it also represents a significant underutilization of potential human capital for host nations. While the labor market poses challenges that often confine these refugees to low-skilled employment, a potential avenue for their integration and skill alignment lies in entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurial landscape for refugee entrepreneurs, however, is filled with legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related challenges (Alrawadieh et al., 2019).

Although existing literature sheds light on the deskilling of refugees and their inclination to overcrowded market sectors (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008), there is limited understanding of the specific barriers highly skilled refugees face when aiming to start ventures that match their educational backgrounds.

Business incubators, known for fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, could play a pivotal role in addressing these barriers (Meister & Mauer, 2019; Pellegrini et al., 2020; Rashid, 2018; Salamoun & Azad, 2017). However, the nature and design of these incubators in effectively serving the unique needs of highly skilled refugees remain underexplored (Harima, Freudenberg, & Halberstadt, 2019). Furthermore, the dynamics between business incubators and local governmental actors in developing sustainable solutions for these refugees' integration is an area requiring further examination.

Thus, this research seeks to delve into the role of business incubators in supporting highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands, to overcome barriers in establishing ventures that align with their academic credentials. Through an in-depth exploration of the current asylum processes, the specific challenges faced by these refugees, and the collaborative potential between incubators and local governments, this study aims to bridge the identified knowledge gap, offering practical solutions for optimal refugee integration and utilization of their skillset.

1.2 KNOWLEDGE GAP: HIGHLY SKILLED REFUGEES

The gap that this research aspires to fill is investigating the *highly skilled* refugee entrepreneurs, which is evidently lacking from current studies on refugee entrepreneurship (see Chapter 3). The labor market poses significant challenges for highly skilled refugees, often leading them to precarious forms of low-skilled employment. Numerous studies on forced migration have highlighted the phenomenon of deskilling among highly educated refugees, resulting from difficulties in transferring their skills and knowledge to a new environment. Bygnes (2021) explored this issue in her paper titled "Not All Syrian Doctors Become Taxi Drivers: Stagnation and Continuity Among Highly Educated Syrians in Norway," presenting several cases from Norway that exemplify the complexities of the subject. Similarly, research conducted in Belgium indicates that many highly skilled refugees end up working in "inferior" or "over-populated" sectors that require less financial investment and are easier to enter, but offer potentially low profits and intense competition among peers (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2007). This phenomenon has also been observed among highly educated Ghanaians in the Netherlands (R. C. Kloosterman, Rusinovic, & Yeboah, 2016). Furthermore, qualitative studies on refugee entrepreneurship and business incubators have shown that even entrepreneurs who gain access to incubation programs often choose to enter over-

populated sectors (Harima et al., 2019; Jürgens, Ramalingam, Zarembski, Harima, & Yeshi, 2022; Meister & Mauer, 2019).

Empirical evidence suggests that refugees face greater challenges than native populations in establishing businesses in growing market sectors or engaging in innovative business activities (Bemak & Chung, 2014; Meister & Mauer, 2019; Vinogradov & Isaksen, 2008). The underutilization of refugees' skills represents a wasted resource that host countries should not overlook, while also presenting an opportunity for business incubators to tap into the potential of highly skilled refugees inclined towards entrepreneurship (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Backman, Lopez, & Rowe, 2021; Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019; Shneikat & Ryan, 2018; Wehrle, Klehe, Kira, & Zikic, 2018).

The literature review conducted for this research supports the notion that business incubators have a positive impact on assisting refugees in establishing successful businesses (Meister & Mauer, 2019; Pellegrini et al., 2020; Rashid, 2018; Salamoun & Azad, 2017). Furthermore, there is a general lack of blueprints or roadmaps for establishing business incubators fully addressing the needs of refugee entrepreneurs (Harima et al., 2019). Furthermore, it is important to recognize that each incubatee has unique needs influenced by various contextual factors, such as goals, prior experience, personal and organizational factors, and the local business environment. These variables affect different incubation models and outcomes (Hackett & Dilts, 2004; Hannon, 2005). Therefore, understanding the barriers faced by highly skilled forced migrants is crucial for local government actors and business incubators to develop policies and incubation programs that unlock their full potential. Consequently, it is necessary to identify these barriers, implement relevant policies and support structures, and design incubation programs that promote innovative thinking and startup behavior among highly skilled newcomers seeking to establish businesses in sectors with long-term growth prospects, thereby reducing barriers to entry in domains that are relative to their skills and educational backgrounds.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

Entrepreneurship has the potential to facilitate the integration of refugees into the labor market and create new opportunities in host countries (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Betts, Omata, & Bloom, 2017; Bizri, 2017; Shneikat & Ryan, 2018; Tumen, 2016). The primary objective of this research is to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the entrepreneurship endeavors of highly skilled Syrian refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. Additionally, this study aims to provide a framework of recommendations for local governmental actors and business incubators to address the barriers faced by highly skilled refugees, enabling them to fully utilize their skills and knowledge in sectors that align with their skills and educational backgrounds.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The main research question that this study aims to answer is:

In German and Dutch urban settings, what services can business incubators, in collaboration with local governmental actors, offer to assist highly skilled refugees in overcoming barriers to starting ventures that align with their educational backgrounds?

With the following sub-research questions:

1. How does the current asylum process function for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands? Additionally, what is the current state of affairs regarding their integration and support?

Rationale of SRQ1: To effectively address the barriers faced by highly skilled refugees in starting ventures, it is imperative to understand the initial hurdles they encounter upon arrival in Germany and the Netherlands. By examining the existing asylum process and integration mechanisms, we can pinpoint the structural bottlenecks and potentials for synergy with business incubators. Understanding the foundation of their journey into the host countries will shape the interventions of the business incubators.

2. What are the legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related barriers faced by highly skilled refugees starting a ventures aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds?

Rationale of SRQ2: Investigating the barriers in a categorized manner based on the typology of barriers faced by refugee entrepreneurs as identified by Alrawadieh et al. (administrative, legislative, financial, socio-cultural, and market related barriers) ensures a holistic understanding. Once these challenges are mapped out *through the lens of highly skilled refugees*, targeted solutions and interventions by business incubators can be investigated.

3. What is the ideal business incubator for providing services to address the barriers faced by highly skilled entrepreneurial refugees?

Rationale of SRQ3: With an understanding of the initial processes the refugees face and the specific challenges in starting ventures, it is necessary to conceptualize the 'ideal' business incubator. This question aims at proposing an incubator that is responsive to the unique needs of highly skilled refugees, a point that was identified in the literature as crucial topic to be investigated (Harima et al., 2019). Given that the end goal of the main research question is to understand how incubators can support highly skilled refugees, this sub-question breaks down the characteristics of such an incubator.

4. How can business incubators collaborate with local governmental actors to develop and implement long-term solutions for highly skilled refugees and host countries?

Rationale of SRQ4: Local governmental actors play a significant role in shaping the entrepreneurial ecosystem and providing support structures for refugees. This question emphasizes collaboration, understanding that while business incubators can play a pivotal role, sustainable solutions emerge from collaborative efforts between various stakeholders. By examining how this collaboration can occur, the research ensures that the solutions proposed are feasible, sustainable, and have a higher chance of being adopted and implemented.

In summary, these sub-research questions sequentially dissect the larger issue into its foundational components, addressing both challenges and potential solutions. Each is intrinsically linked to the main research question, ensuring a comprehensive explo-

ration of how business incubators can best support highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

1.5 RESEARCH SCOPE

Exploring the entrepreneurial dynamics of highly skilled refugees necessitates a focused approach for clarity and depth. This study operates within specified parameters, emphasizing distinct stakeholders and countries of interest integral to the research objectives. The subsequent sections detail these critical areas of concentration.

1.5.1 Primary Stakeholders in Focus

Policies and programs play a significant role in supporting entrepreneurial activities by and for refugees and in addressing the challenges they face in economic participation. This research examines its posed questions from two distinct viewpoints:

1. Perspective of highly skilled refugees: This research narrows its focus on Syrian highly skilled refugees who have both started ventures and participated in at least one business incubator. Excluded from this scope are other groups of highly skilled Syrian refugees, such as those furthering their education in host countries, or lacking entrepreneurial aspirations. The key questions for this group are:
 - What challenges do highly skilled refugees face when attempting to launch businesses in line with their educational and professional backgrounds?
 - What would be the ideal type of business incubator or services that cater to the needs of a highly skilled refugee entrepreneur?
 - How do asylum and integration policies impact their entrepreneurial ambitions, and how can local governmental entities collaborate with business incubators to foster a more conducive environment?
2. Perspective of business incubators: This research delves into business incubators that specifically target refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. The principal questions for this group are:
 - What primary challenges do highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs face when launching businesses that align with their skills and education?
 - What essential services should the ideal business incubator provide to optimally support these refugee entrepreneurs in their specialized sectors?
 - How can business incubators collaborate with local governmental actors to assist highly skilled asylum seekers or refugees in overcoming challenges posed by the asylum and integration processes?

While numerous stakeholders are associated with any societal issue, each with their distinct viewpoints and intricate relationships, this study limits its scope to the two primary stakeholders identified: highly skilled refugees and business incubators. It's undeniable that other groups, such as the media, the general public, and native entrepreneurs, have an impact on the livelihoods of highly skilled refugees and their interactions with governmental institutions. Recognizing the influence of these external entities is crucial, especially when this research investigates the status of highly skilled refugees in contexts where the media and the general populace have a say in

government funding decisions and refugee-centric policies. Nevertheless, due to time and resource limitations, this research will not delve deeply into these areas when discussing findings or formulating recommendations.

1.5.2 Countries of Interest

The focus on Germany and the Netherlands in this study is grounded in their significant roles within the EU as hosts for Syrian refugees. Germany stands as the primary host in the EU, while the Netherlands occupies the third position UNHCR (2023b). Direct access to local resources, business incubators, and government actors in the Netherlands will provide a depth of understanding for the research. Existing connections within the Syrian community in Germany can facilitate nuanced insights and aid in efficient data collection. Given the substantial refugee populations in both countries, an exploration into how business incubators can support highly skilled refugees, in tandem with local governmental actors, is both timely and crucial. Furthermore, considering the many similarities in economic and policy structures across EU nations, the findings from this study have the potential to be applicable across the entire European Union. This research not only aims to contribute to academic discourse but also to offer actionable recommendations for practical implementations in EU countries.

1.6 RESEARCH KEY TERMINOLOGIES

The following three sections explain the key terminologies examined in this research: refugee, highly skilled worker, and business incubator.

1.6.1 Refugee

The term "refugee" is defined in the 1951 Refugee Convention, a significant legal document published by the UNHCR. According to the convention, a refugee is an individual who has fled their home country due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on factors such as race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion. They are outside their country of nationality and are unable or unwilling to avail themselves of the protection of that country (UNHCR, 1951).

1.6.2 Highly Skilled Worker

There is no universally agreed-upon definition of a highly skilled worker, and the classifications used by different countries may not always be comparable. While some countries provide occupational data on foreign workers, these statistics often focus on the industrial sector rather than specific occupations, making differentiation challenging. Different countries use various occupational classifications, some of which are more detailed than others. This leads to ambiguity, as broad terms such as "scientists" or "administrators" are used without clear inclusion criteria. However, for the purpose of this research, the definition provided by Riemsdijk and Axelsson in their study on the integration of highly skilled refugees into the labor markets of Sweden, Germany, and the Netherlands will be employed. According to the authors, highly skilled refugees are "individuals who have completed higher education or possess equivalent experience." (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021).

1.6.3 Business Incubator

A business incubator is an organization that offers support and incubation services to a portfolio of entrepreneurs or start-up companies. The primary aim of a business in-

cubator is to increase the survival rate of incubatees and accelerate their development. These services may include providing physical infrastructure, mentorship, access to networks, training programs, and other resources to foster the growth of start-up ventures (George, 2010; Pauwels, Clarysse, Wright, & Hove, 2016; Scillitoe & Chakrabarti, 2010).

1.7 RESEARCH RELEVANCE

The relevance of investigating this topic can be categorized into scientific, societal, practical, and Management of Technology (MoT) relevance.

1.7.1 Scientific Relevance

This research aims to contribute to the emerging field of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship studies in relation to business incubator studies. While entrepreneurship among immigrants and other ethnic groups has received considerable scientific attention, research on refugee entrepreneurship remains limited and fragmented. Existing findings are context-specific, and refugees as a distinct group have often been overlooked, being treated merely as part of the immigrant population (Hammarstedt, 2001; Li, 2000; Lunn & Steen, 2005; Tienda & Raijman, 2004). This research seeks to address these gaps and provide a more focused examination of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship, which is crucial for a comprehensive understanding of their integration and economic contributions. Therefore, from a scientific perspective, further investigation in this area is warranted (Sekaran & Bougie, 2017).

1.7.2 Societal Relevance

The scientific relevance outlined above also has societal implications. By offering insights to policymakers in host countries, this research aims to prevent the wastage of societal resources and to harness the underutilized skills of highly skilled refugees. It's essential to promote the economic integration of these refugees and foster innovation in sectors that align with their skills and educational backgrounds. Doing so not only supports socio-economic development but also contributes to a more inclusive society that recognizes and leverages the potential of these individuals.

1.7.3 Practical Relevance

This research aims to provide practical value by offering specific recommendations to local governmental actors to enhance processes related to highly skilled refugees. The practical relevance is explored through the perspectives of the three main stakeholders: highly skilled refugees, business incubators, and local government actors.

1. Highly skilled refugees: Current research on labor market integration often overlooks the fact that a significant proportion of the refugee population possesses higher education qualifications. Consequently, the challenges faced by highly skilled refugees are rarely addressed. This research seeks to bridge this gap by interviewing highly skilled refugees and incorporating their perspectives when providing recommendations to business incubators and local government actors.
2. Business incubators: Many business incubators in host countries already engage with entrepreneurial refugees through various incubation programs. However, there has been limited research on the types of business incubators that can effectively address the needs and challenges of highly skilled refugees. Understanding

this dynamic would enable business incubators to better tap into the potential of highly skilled refugees, leading to a more diverse range of successful ventures.

3. Local government actors: In the past decade, several policies have been implemented to facilitate the integration of refugees into the labor market. However, these policies often adopt a one-size-fits-all approach and fail to consider the unique challenges faced by highly skilled refugees, especially in the context of low-skilled refugees shaping labor market integration (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021). This research aims to provide targeted recommendations to alleviate the specific challenges encountered by highly skilled refugees, thereby assisting local government actors in developing more effective and tailored policies.

1.7.4 Management of Technology (MoT) Relevance

A typical MoT thesis focuses on how different actors in society can utilize technology and entrepreneurial activities to contribute to their envisioned objectives, such as venturing into startups or deploying new technologies. This thesis is positioned between an entrepreneurial perspective, utilizing highly skilled workers for socio-economic development, and a societal perspective, encompassing the dynamics of a multi-actor environment. The author has drawn upon the knowledge and skills acquired through the MoT curriculum, including courses such as Technology Dynamics (MOT1412), Research Methods (2312), Master Thesis Preparation (MOT2004), and Technology Entrepreneurship and Innovation (TPM401A). The unique perspective offered by MoT has enabled a holistic analysis of the problems at hand and has been instrumental in formulating recommendations for sustainable change and socio-economic growth for highly skilled refugees and their host countries.

1.8 RESEARCH STRUCTURE

This chapter introduces the problem area and outlines the research objectives. Chapter 2 details the research methodology, including the selected participant group, data collection methods, and analysis techniques. Chapter 3 presents a comprehensive literature review on refugee entrepreneurship and business incubators, highlighting the existing research gap. Chapter 4 examines the current landscape of asylum and integration procedures for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. Chapter 5 analyzes findings from the semi-structured interviews with highly skilled refugees and mentors from business incubators. Chapter 6 discusses the research findings and offers recommendations for business incubators and government actors on addressing barriers faced by highly skilled refugees. This chapter also touches on the implications of the research. Finally, Chapter 7 highlights the limitations of this research and identifies potential avenues for further research. The bibliography and appendices complement and enrich the main body of the research.

2 | METHODOLOGY

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology employed to address the research questions. It begins with an outline of the research design and then delves into a detailed explanation of the methods used to answer these questions. The theoretical rationale for selecting the research group and analyzing the interviews is elucidated. Subsequent sections detail the methods used for data selection, collection, and analysis. The chapter concludes with a discussion on research supervision.

2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

To formulate and address the research questions, a combination of literature review, desk-based research, and semi-structured interviews with two key stakeholders — highly skilled refugees and business incubators — was employed, as detailed in Section 2.2 below. A literature review was conducted to understand the under-explored domain of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship and to facilitate the formulation of research questions.

The first sub-research question was tackled through qualitative desk-based research. This involved an extensive review and analysis of relevant literature, as well as an examination of the legislative elements and the actors that influence the asylum procedure and integration process of highly skilled refugees.

To address the second and third sub-research questions regarding barriers faced by highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs, as well as the ideal business incubator and essential services, primary data were gathered through qualitative semi-structured interviews with highly skilled Syrian refugee entrepreneurs. This also included interviews with coaches and managers from business incubators. Secondary data, such as the websites of business incubators and ventures launched by the interviewed refugees, were used to supplement the interview findings. This provided a comprehensive view of the status of refugee entrepreneurship in the Netherlands and Germany.

The fourth sub-research question, focusing on the collaboration between business incubators and local governmental actors, was also tackled using semi-structured interviews. While the same group of highly skilled refugees was interviewed, only two incubator representatives (BI-1-NL and BI-1-DE) were chosen. Their selection was based on two primary reasons: their unique backgrounds, as both were refugees who had undergone the entire asylum-seeking process, and their managerial positions within the business incubators.

Figure 2.1 illustrates a detailed representation of the research design and scope. To provide a concise overview, here are the research questions and corresponding sub-research questions stated in Section 1.4:

In German and Dutch urban settings, what services can business incubators, in collaboration with local governmental actors, offer to assist highly skilled refugees in overcoming barriers to starting ventures that align with their educational backgrounds?

With the following sub-research questions:

1. How does the current asylum process function for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands? Additionally, what is the current state of affairs regarding their integration and support? (*qualitative desk-based research*)
2. What are the legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related barriers faced by highly skilled refugees starting a ventures aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds? (*semi-structured interviews with highly skilled refugees and business incubators*)
3. What is the ideal business incubator for providing services to address the barriers faced by highly skilled entrepreneurial refugees? (*semi-structured interviews with highly skilled refugees and business incubators*)
4. How can business incubators collaborate with local governmental actors to develop and implement long-term solutions for highly skilled refugees and host countries? (*semi-structured interviews with highly skilled refugees and business incubators*)

2.2 RESEARCH METHODS

The integrity of the research design in this study hinges on the seamless interlinking of the three employed methods: the literature review, qualitative desk-based research, and semi-structured interviews. Each method, while distinct in its approach, contributes to a cohesive, comprehensive, and multi-dimensional exploration of the research question. The subsequent section elucidates their interconnection:

The *literature review* serves not only as the bedrock upon which this study is built but also as a compass guiding its direction. By thoroughly examining the existing body of knowledge, the research gains insight into the intricate contexts surrounding highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship. This immersion into the literature highlights prevailing themes, uncovers gaps in current understanding, and brings to light evolving discourses. More critically, it is from this intensive literature review that the study's research questions are formulated, ensuring that they are both relevant and timely, and poised to contribute meaningfully to the scholarly conversation.

The *qualitative desk-based research*, while still grounded in secondary sources, takes a more current and pragmatic approach. By analyzing recent reports, policies, and digital presence of relevant entities, it provides a real-time snapshot of the situation. This method bridges the theoretical insights from the literature review with the actual, practical landscape, ensuring the research remains grounded in current realities.

To deepen the broad understanding derived from literature and desk-based research, *semi-structured interviews* introduce a human element, capturing experiential insights from individuals directly involved in the asylum procedure, integration process, and ecosystem of refugee entrepreneurship. These interviews provide nuanced, context-rich data, often uncovering subtleties and complexities that might not be evident in published literature or official documents.

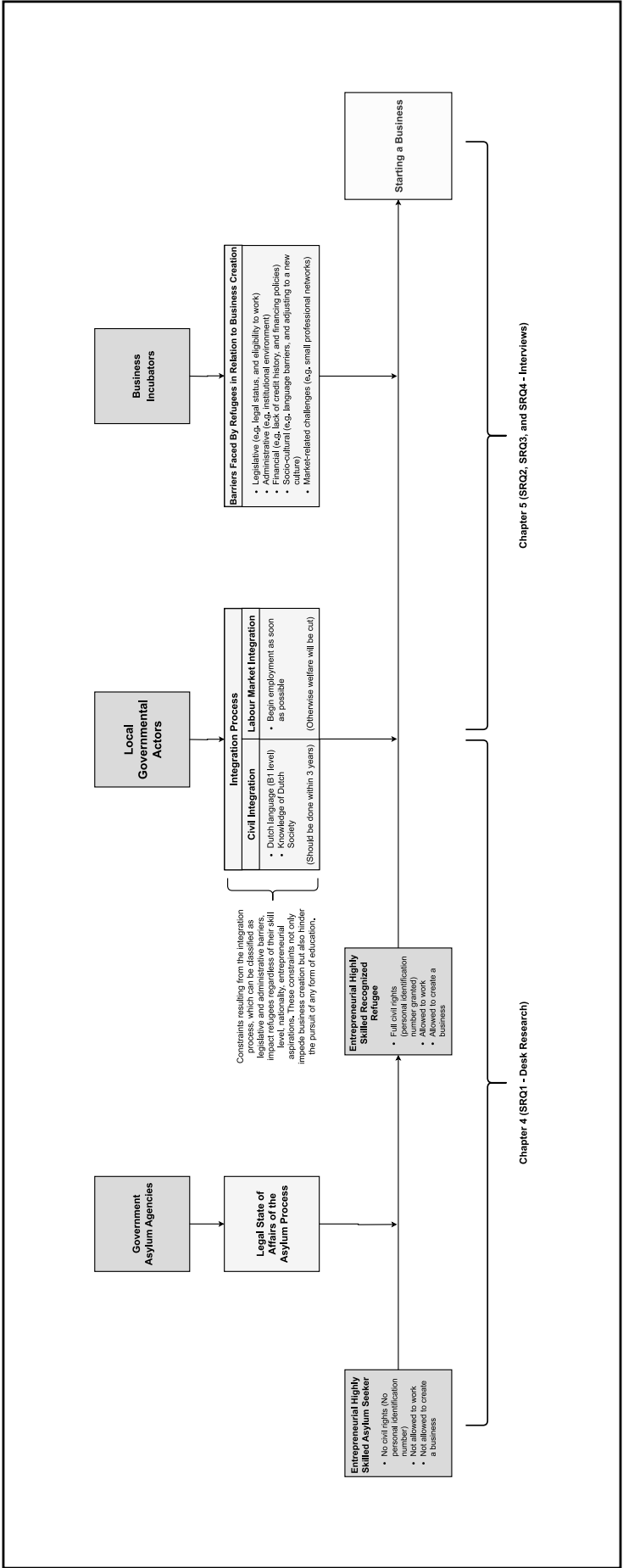


Figure 2.1: An Overview for the Research Design and Scope

Together, these methods offer a panoramic yet detailed view of the research topic. The literature review offers a theoretical grounding, desk-based research validates or challenges these theories in the light of current data, and the interviews provide depth and texture, bringing in real-world experiences and personal narratives. This interlinking ensures that the study is both comprehensive in its coverage and sensitive to the intricacies and dynamism of the real world.

2.2.1 Literature Review

The literature review represents an essential pillar of this research, setting the foundation for understanding the broader contexts and nuances associated with highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship, business incubators, and the role of local government actors. As this area is still relatively under-explored, it was imperative to immerse the study in existing knowledge and discourse to delineate the gaps and potential areas of innovation. Additionally, the insights gained from the literature were fundamental in formulating the research questions, ensuring they were not only grounded in the current academic conversation but also aimed at filling the identified gaps. For a detailed exploration, Chapter 3 delves into the comprehensive literature review.

- **Scope:** The review encompassed a wide array of sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, conference proceedings, and white papers. The aim was to grasp the multifaceted nature of refugee integration, the challenges of setting up ventures in host countries, and the initiatives by various stakeholders in supporting refugee aspirations.
- **Methodology:** Utilizing academic databases such as Google Scholar, and Scopus, the research employed keyword searches encompassing terms like "highly skilled refugees," "refugee entrepreneurship," and "business incubators". Once a preliminary set of papers was identified, a snowball method was employed: tracing back citations and references to ensure a comprehensive coverage of seminal works in the field. Section (3.2) provides a detailed explanation of the search description and selection criteria.
- **Themes and Analysis:** As the literature was reviewed, several themes emerged. These themes included the immigrant entrepreneurship in comparison to refugee entrepreneurship, structural barriers faced by refugees, the potential of entrepreneurship as a pathway to integration, and the role of business incubators. These themes were critically analyzed to understand their implications for the present study, informing both the research questions and the methodologies employed.
- **Integrative Approach:** The literature review was not just a passive assimilation of existing knowledge. Instead, it was an active interrogation of the intersections between different facets of refugee entrepreneurship. By weaving together insights from various disciplines and sectors, the research sought to construct an integrative framework that captures the complexities of the problem and suggests innovative solutions.
- **Gaps and Future Directions:** One of the critical roles of the literature review was to identify the gaps in the current understanding and discourse. By pinpointing these shortcomings, the research was better positioned to contribute meaningfully

to the field, offering fresh perspectives and underscoring the potential directions for future investigations.

2.2.2 Qualitative Desk-based Research

Qualitative desk-based research plays a pivotal role in this study as it involves the systematic collection and analysis of secondary data from reputable national authorities and European and international agencies¹. The primary objective of this approach is to investigate and explore the laws and procedures that govern asylum processes and civil integration programs. By scrutinizing relevant documents and publications, such as government reports, policy papers, and legal frameworks, the research aims to gain a comprehensive understanding of the regulatory landscape surrounding the integration of refugees.

In addition to the analysis of official sources, this research leverages secondary data derived from business incubators' websites and social media platforms. This valuable information is harnessed to enhance the researcher's comprehension of the backgrounds and program structures of these entities. By examining the online presence and communication channels of business incubators, including their mission statements, program descriptions, success stories, and partnerships, the study aims to acquire valuable insights into the specific approaches and initiatives they undertake to support highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

2.2.3 Semi-structured Interviews

To gain a profound understanding of the intricacies of the asylum procedure, integration process, and the landscape of refugee entrepreneurship, this research utilized semi-structured interviews. These interviews introduced an invaluable human perspective to the research process, capturing experiential insights from those directly involved. This methodology not only offered a means to garner nuanced, context-rich data, but also exposed subtle complexities that might otherwise remain hidden within formalized publications or official records.

This study conducted two distinct sets of semi-structured interviews to delve deeper into the entrepreneurial journey of highly skilled Syrian refugees and the business incubators supporting them.

The first set of interviews was focused on highly skilled Syrian refugees who had participated in at least one incubation program and were either in the midst of starting their ventures or had already done so. The primary objective of these interviews is to:

- Delve into the barriers faced during their entrepreneurial journey .
- Determine the ideal business incubator or services needed for highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs.
- Understand how policies affect their entrepreneurial ambitions and explore how local governmental entities might collaborate with business incubators to foster a more supportive environment for these entrepreneurs.

¹ Primarily, the websites and publications of IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) in the Netherlands, BAMF (Federal Office for Migration and Refugees) in Germany, and UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees).

On the other hand, the second set of interviews targeted business incubators located in Germany and the Netherlands, which specifically cater to refugee entrepreneurs. The objectives of these discussions were to:

- Understand the barriers that highly skilled refugees face when starting ventures in Germany or the Netherlands.
- Identify the business incubator or services that would best cater to the needs of highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial journey.
- Explore potential collaborations between incubators and local governmental entities to address asylum and integration challenges.

For details on participant selection, the criteria are elaborated upon in Section 2.4.1. Furthermore, for a comprehensive breakdown of the individuals interviewed and an overview of their primary characteristics, please refer to the table in Section 2.4.2.

The following section offers a comprehensive overview of the interview design process employed in this research. It initially outlines the nine steps involved in conducting the interviews, followed by a discussion on the development of the interview questions. Furthermore, the structure of the interviews is explained, and the role of the pilot interview in refining the interview design is highlighted. Finally, the process of finalizing the interview design in collaboration with the supervisor is addressed.

Interview Design Process

The interview design process comprises nine crucial steps, each playing a significant role in ensuring the study's ethicality, rigor, and relevance to the research questions. These steps are as follows: defining the population, selecting participants, inviting them to participate, conducting the interviews, reporting the findings, obtaining feedback and consent, collecting and analyzing the data, and drawing conclusions and answering the research questions. The following provides a detailed explanation of each step involved in the interview design process, along with an account of how these steps were executed during the course of this research:

STEP 1: DEFINE POPULATION

The first step was to clearly define the target population for the interviews. In this research, the population consisted of highly skilled Syrian refugees, as well as managers, coaches, and mentors from business incubators. The criteria for inclusion in the study were based on the participants' expertise, experience, and relevance to the research objectives. Section 2.4.1 provides a comprehensive explanation, incorporating scientific theories, on how the population for the study was defined.

STEP 2: SELECT PARTICIPANTS Once the population is defined, the next step involves selecting the participants who are invited to participate in the study. This step involves using purposive sampling to specifically select participants who possess substantial knowledge or experience in the area of interest. For a detailed breakdown of the selection criteria, please refer to Section 2.4.1. Additionally, for a comprehensive breakdown of the individuals who were interviewed and an overview of their main characteristics, please refer to the table presented in Section 2.4.2

STEP 3: INVITE PARTICIPANTS

Once the participants are selected, the next step involves inviting them to participate in the study. This involves sending an email or letter that explains the purpose of the study and invites them to take part. It is important to ensure clarity regarding the expectations of participation, including the time commitment and any potential risks or benefits involved.

STEP 4: REMIND PARTICIPANTS

After inviting participants to take part, it is necessary to send reminders to encourage their participation. This involves sending follow-up emails or making phone calls to remind participants of the study and to motivate them to complete any required paperwork or preparation.

STEP 5: CONDUCT THE INTERVIEW

Once the participants agree to take part in the study, the next step is to conduct the interviews. This involves using a semi-structured interview approach that allows for flexibility in the questions asked. It is important to ensure that the interview is conducted in a way that respects ethical considerations and ensures the participants' comfort throughout the process. Section 2.2.3 provides an overview of the four main elements that constitute the interview structure, and Section 2.2.3 provides the interview questions for both the highly skilled refugees and the business incubators.

STEP 6: REPORT FINDINGS AND OBTAIN FEEDBACK/CONSENT

After the interviews have been conducted, the next step is to report the findings to the participants. This involves providing them with a summary of the results or sharing the full report with them. It is important to obtain feedback from the participants to ensure that they are comfortable with the findings and to address any concerns they may have. Additionally, sharing the report with them may result in obtaining new insights and valuable information, further enhancing the research.

STEP 7: COLLECT DATA

Once the participants have provided their feedback and consent, the next step is to collect the data. This involves transcribing the interviews, coding the data, and entering it into a database for analysis. Section 2.4.3 provides a comprehensive description of the methodology employed for data collection.

STEP 8: ANALYZE DATA

Once the data has been collected, the next step is to analyze it. This involves using statistical techniques to identify patterns or themes in the data, or using a qualitative approach to identify key findings and themes. Section 2.5 provides a detailed account of the data analysis methodology employed, while Chapter 5 presents the analysis of the collected data.

STEP 9: DRAW CONCLUSIONS AND ANSWER RESEARCH QUESTIONS

After analyzing the data, the next step is to draw conclusions and answer the research questions. This involves developing hypotheses or recommendations based on the findings, or identifying implications for future research or practice. Chapter 6 presents the

findings and answers to the research questions based on the analysis of the collected interview data.

Interview Structure

The following provides an overview of the interview structure, including the objective explanation, justification, data handling, interviewee background information, main questions, and a roundup.

1. Introduction

- Objective Explanation: Clearly explain the purpose of the interview to the interviewee.
- Justification: Explain why the researcher wants to talk specifically to this interviewee.
- Data Handling: Describe how the collected data will be used and processed.

2. Interviewee Background Information

- Selective Information Collection: Collect relevant information needed to understand the interviewee's responses, especially when they differ among different interviewees.
- Timing of Background Information: Gather background information at the beginning of the interview, recognizing the cultural significance, such as the Syrian culture, in establishing rapport and connection between the interviewer and interviewee.

3. Main Questions

- Open-Ended Questions: Ask 8 questions that require detailed answers.
- Question Topics: Focus the questions on barriers, business incubators, and policies.
- In-depth Exploration: Ask follow-up questions to get a better understanding of the interviewee's experiences and perspectives. Use additional probes to gather more details and insights.
- Summarization and Validation: Summarize key points during the interview to confirm understanding and potentially discover new information.

4. Roundup

- Summarize the interview process and remind the interviewee that their data will be kept anonymous to ensure their safety and confidentiality.

Interview Questions

To ensure an effective and engaging interview process, three distinct sets of questions were developed to address the specific perspectives of the two main stakeholders involved. Initially, a comprehensive pool of over 118 questions was generated. However, through collaborative discussions with the research supervisor, the question set was

refined to create a more focused and manageable approach. Ultimately, each group of interviewees was presented with 8 open-ended questions.

The primary objective of the interview design was to foster a sense of interest and create an atmosphere where the interviewees could freely express their thoughts and experiences. The intention was to conduct the interviews as a peer-to-peer conversation, promoting a more humane interaction. This approach allowed for a greater level of autonomy and freedom for the interviewees to share their insights, ensuring that their perspectives were given ample space to be explored.

Importantly, the questions were deeply rooted in prior literature. The questions on barriers are drawn from the typology of refugee entrepreneurship barriers by Alrawadie et al.. The inquiries concerning the ideal business incubator and its services emanate from the future research suggestions by Harima et al.. Further, questions about policies were formulated based on the findings from the desk-research in Chapter 4.

By providing a relaxed and open environment, the interview process aimed to encourage interviewees to engage in meaningful dialogue, allowing their narratives to unfold naturally. The emphasis was on granting the interviewees the necessary freedom and space to express their viewpoints, enabling a richer and more authentic exchange of ideas.

Naturally, follow-up questions were asked to gain a deeper understanding of the interviewees' experiences and perspectives. Additional probes were used after each initial question to gather more details and insights, allowing for a more comprehensive exploration of their responses.

A- HIGHLY SKILLED REFUGEES

ON BARRIERS

1. What challenges have you faced in starting a venture aligned with your skills and education as a highly skilled refugee?
 - What specific legislative barriers have you encountered in the process of starting a venture aligned with your educational background? - (e.g. legal status, and eligibility to work)
 - What specific administrative barriers have you encountered in the process of starting a venture aligned with your educational background? - (e.g. bureaucratic hurdles, or procedural obstacles)
 - Have you faced any financial barriers or difficulties in accessing funding or financial support for your venture? If so, could you elaborate on the challenges you faced? - (funding or access to capital)
 - How have socio-cultural barriers affected your ability to navigate the startup ecosystem and establish connections with potential partners or customers? - (e.g. language barriers, and adjusting to a new culture)
 - What specific market challenges have you encountered as a highly skilled refugee? - (e.g. small professional networks)

ON BUSINESS INCUBATORS

1. What was your experience like with business incubators?
 - What kind of support have you received?
 - What kind of support would you have liked to receive?
 - What kind of support from a business incubator would be most helpful in overcoming the barriers you mentioned earlier?
2. Can you describe the ideal type of business incubator or that would meet your needs as a highly skilled refugee entrepreneur?
 - In your opinion, what are the essential services or resources that business incubators should provide to support highly skilled refugees in starting ventures aligned with their educational backgrounds?
 - What specific challenges or needs do you believe business incubators should address to effectively support highly skilled refugees?

ON POLICIES

1. How have asylum and integration policies impacted your entrepreneurial ambitions?
 - Did they affect the sector that you chose to operate in?
2. Do you feel that government policies are supportive of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship? Why or why not?
 - What policy changes or improvements would you recommend to better support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs:
 - during the asylum seeking phase?
 - during the integration phase?
3. How can local governmental actors collaborate with business incubators to create a more conducive environment for highly skilled refugees to start ventures? What role should they play in supporting entrepreneurial refugees?

B- BUSINESS INCUBATORS**ON BARRIERS**

1. From your experience working with highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs, what are the main challenges or barriers they face when starting ventures aligned with their skills and education in Germany or the Netherlands?
 - What are the common legislative barriers they face when trying to start ventures aligned with their educational backgrounds?
 - How can business incubators support them in overcoming the aforementioned hurdles?

- What are the common administrative barriers they face when trying to start ventures aligned with their educational backgrounds?
 - How can business incubators support them in overcoming the aforementioned hurdles?
 - What are the common financial barriers they face when trying to start ventures aligned with their educational backgrounds?
 - How can business incubators support them in overcoming the aforementioned hurdles?
 - How do socio-cultural barriers impact the ability of highly skilled refugees to engage with the local startup ecosystem and access relevant resources or opportunities?
 - How can business incubators support them in overcoming the aforementioned hurdles?
 - Are there specific market-related challenges or needs that highly skilled refugees encounter that are unique to their situation? If so, could you provide examples?
 - How can business incubators support them in overcoming the aforementioned hurdles?
2. How do you perceive the role of barriers in hindering the progress of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs in the context of business incubation?

ON BUSINESS INCUBATORS

1. What are the key services and resources that business incubators should provide to address the specific needs of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs in ventures aligned with their skills and education in the sectors they specialize in? In other words, what is the ideal business incubator for highly skilled refugees?
 - What constitutes an ideal business incubator model designed to support and empower highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial pursuits?
2. Can you describe any successful strategies or initiatives that business incubators have implemented to foster the entrepreneurial development of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs?

ON POLICIES

1. In your opinion, how do government policies impact the ability of business incubators to effectively support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs in starting ventures aligned with their skills and education?
 - What policy changes or improvements do you believe would enhance the support provided by business incubators to overcome the challenges faced by highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs?
2. How can business incubators serve as facilitators for highly skilled asylum seekers or refugees in overcoming the barriers arising from:

- the asylum process?
- the integration process?

Interview Pilot

A pilot interview was conducted with a PhD student from Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) who has a background identical to that of the potential interviewees among the highly skilled refugees. The aim of this pilot interview in the research was to test and refine the interview design, methodology, and questions prior to actual data collection. It allowed the researcher to identify and address any potential issues or shortcomings in the interview process, ensuring that the final interview design is effective, reliable, and aligned with the research objectives.

2.3 RESEARCH THEORY

This research employs the theory “A Theoretical Understanding of Refugee Trauma,” conducted by George in 2010, to explore the phenomenon of entrepreneurship among highly skilled refugees.

2.3.1 Theory on Typology of Refugees

The model developed by George (2010) is utilized to identify the research group and to gain a deeper understanding of refugees’ trauma. George (2010) compiled a model to draw a typology of refugees. The model helps to analyze three layers of characterizations, which gives 12 different categorizations for refugees. As illustrated in figure 3.3, George’s (2010) model was inspired by the work of (Kunz, 1973, 1981; Paludan, 1974).

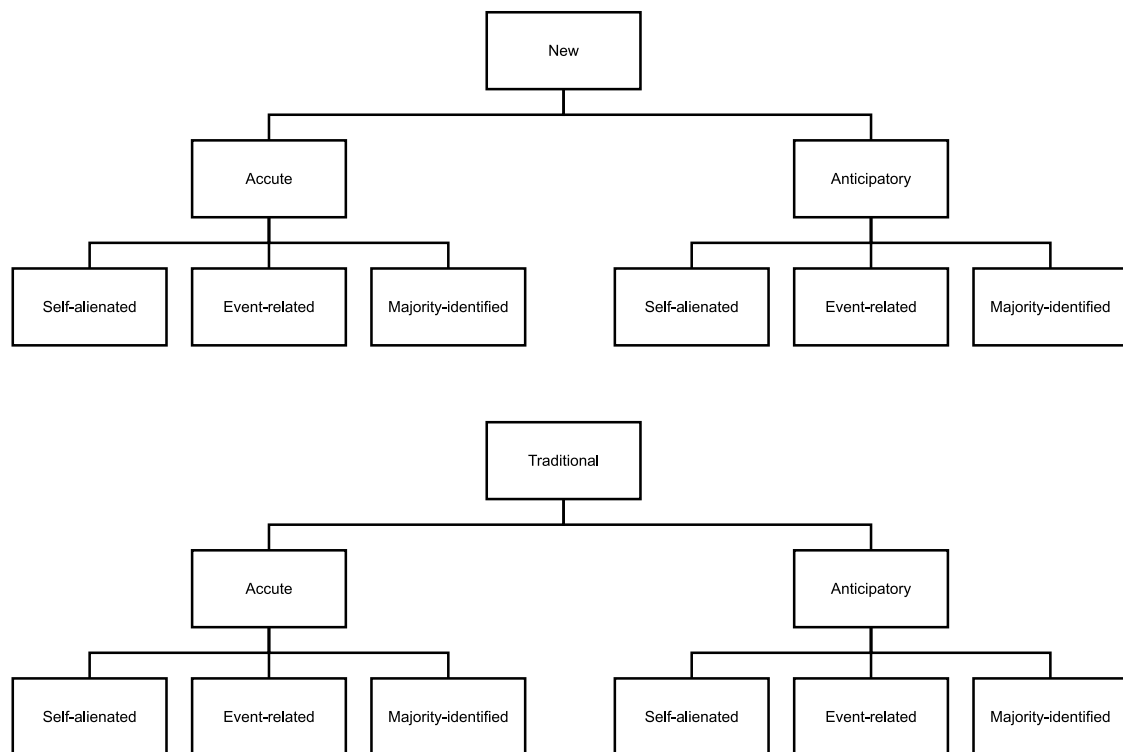


Figure 2.2: Refugees’ typology based on (George, 2010) model.

The first layer has two characterizations, “new” versus “traditional” (Kunz, 1973), which points to the culturally and ethnically similarity between refugees’ Country of

Origin (COO) and their Country of Residence (COR). Which is the case, for example, of a refugee fleeing from a developing country to a developed country.

The second layer relates to the flight conditions of the refugee. This layer has two characterizations, “accute” and “anticipatory” (Paludan, 1974). “Anticipatory” refugees are people who managed to plan their flight from COO while the “acute” didn’t. This is an important factor to be considered by the COR, as refugees that had to flight without prior planning go through higher risks which might lead to experiencing traumas (Kunz, 1973, 1981).

The last layer has three categorizations according to (J. S. Collins, 1996; George, 2010; Kunz, 1981). This layer identifies the reason behind the flight from COO. “Self-alienated” refugees are refugees who left their home countries for personal reasons (Kunz, 1981). Where “event-related” refugees have left because of discrimination that is being promoted against the group that they belong to (Kunz, 1981). Finally, “majority-identified” refugees are groups of people who had to flee the country because of opposing a ruling regime or events (Kunz, 1981).

2.4 DATA SELECTION

2.4.1 Identifying the Research Group

Highly skilled refugees

The literature review conducted for this research underscores the significant heterogeneity among refugees (See Section 3.3.9). Furthermore, the theory of refugee topology (Section 2.3.1) identifies 12 distinct refugee classifications. Given this diversity, this research specifically focuses on a very specified subgroup of refugees: those who are highly skilled, with the definition of “highly skilled” being those who have either completed higher education or garnered equivalent experience (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021). Moreover, the selected subgroup includes refugees who come from the same COO and are classified as new, acute, and majority-identified. Furthermore, they are those who did participate in at least one incubation program and are in the process of launching or have already launched their venture.

SYRIAN REFUGEES AS A RESEARCH GROUP

A research group consisting of highly skilled Syrian refugees residing in Germany or the Netherlands has been selected due to the following reasons:

1. They are originating from an underdeveloped country and residing in developed countries, thus, they are classifiable as “new”.
2. They have fled their COO because of the ongoing oppression by the ruling regime, so they identify as “majority-identified”.
3. The vast majority of them had to flee their hometowns without any prior planning, classifying them as “accute”.

Around 83 per cent of people displaced across borders originate from just ten countries, in line with previous years. Continued instability in the Syrian Arab Republic has led to several hundred thousand new displacements. The Syrian refugee population continues to be the largest globally, with 6.8 million refugees hosted in 129 countries. Syrian

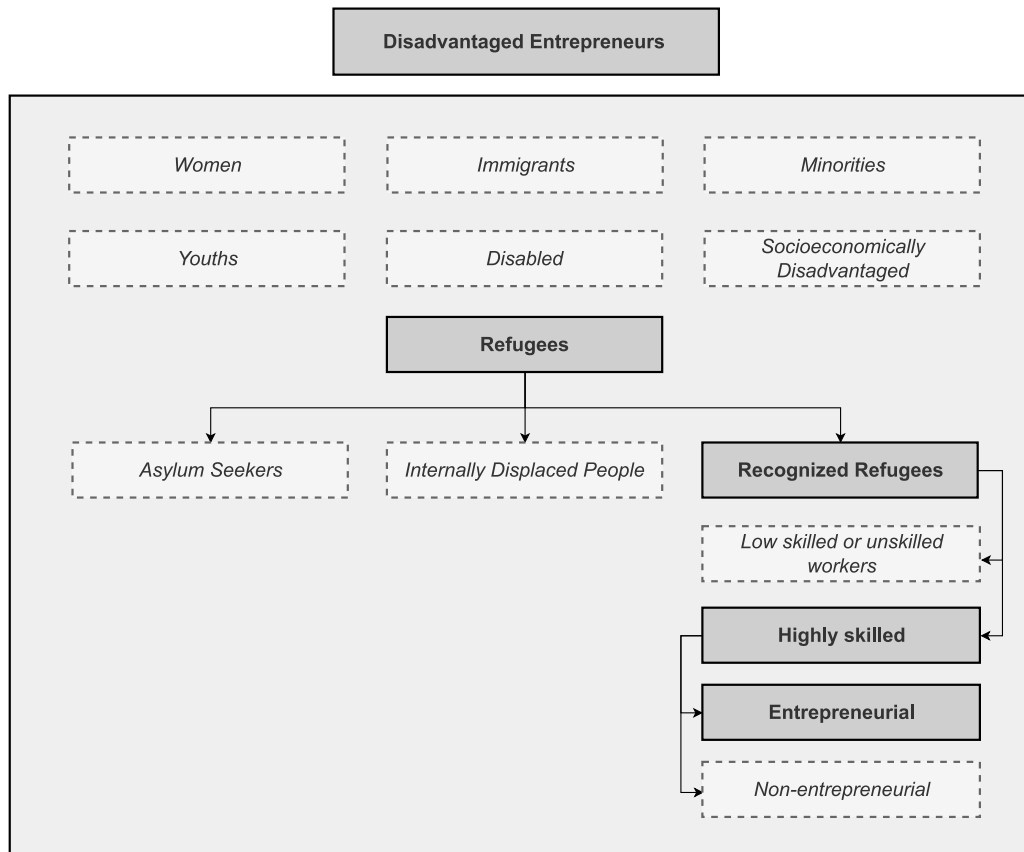


Figure 2.3: Typology of disadvantaged entrepreneurs (OECD & European Commission, 2021) and the selected research group.

refugees constituted 27 per cent of the global refugee population at the end of 2021. In the course of the last five years, the number of Syrian refugees in Germany increased by 158,528, and by 13,078 in the Netherlands. (UNHCR, 2023a). Furthermore, literature suggests that Syrian refugee entrepreneurs possess a strong determination, significant ability to establish social networks, high qualifications and relevant experience, as well as a desire for integration (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Bizri, 2017; Meister & Mauer, 2019).

Given these statistics and factors, conducting research on such a large population would be beneficial to the business incubators and policymakers in two major host countries, Germany and the Netherlands.

Business Incubators

Business incubators based in Germany and the Netherlands, which offer program(s) tailored for refugee entrepreneurs, were selected for interviews. Within these incubators, coaches, managers, and mentors with firsthand experience assisting refugee entrepreneurs were interviewed. Notably, two of the interviewees were themselves refugees, having navigated the asylum procedure and the subsequent integration process. Their personal journeys provided a unique perspective, making them ideally positioned to offer recommendations on policy-related questions.

2.4.2 Interviewees

To conduct the interviews, potential interviewees were identified by reaching out to business incubators, refugee organizations, and other relevant stakeholders who work

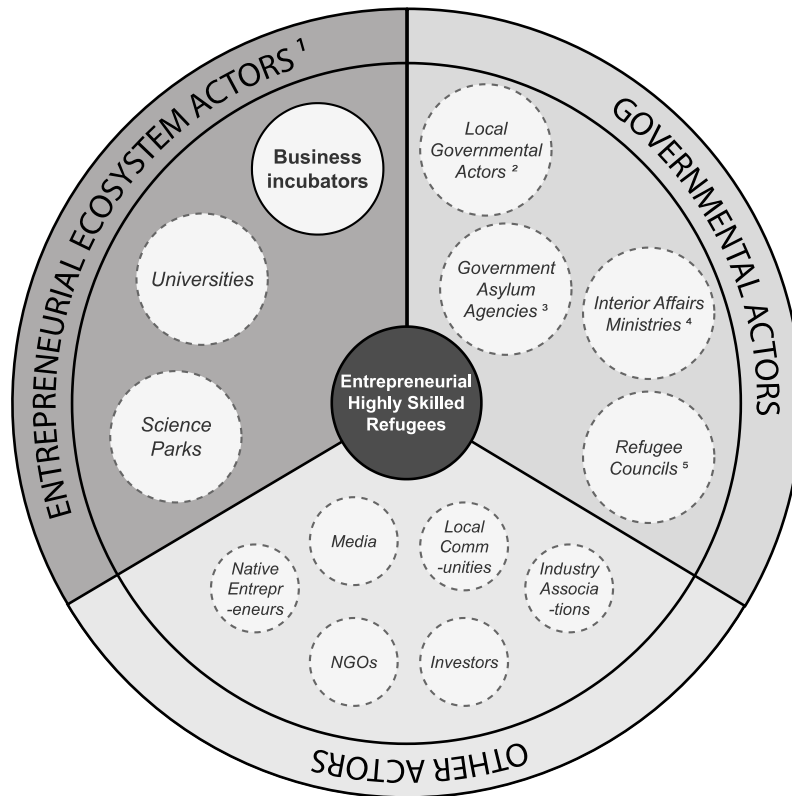


Figure 2.4: Three primary stakeholder categories have been identified, and research groups have been selected according to the research scope described in Section 1.5

with highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. Snowball sampling also is used to ask initial contacts for referrals to other potential interviewees who may be interested in participating in the research. Tables 2.1, and 2.2 show a breakdown of the interviewees with the relevant classifications.

Participant Index	Sector/Product	Degree	Startup Stage
HSR-1-NL	Food & Beverage Chain	Engineering, aerospace	Launched
HSR-2-NL	Blockchain Services	Financial, digital currencies	Launched
HSR-3-NL	Innovative Organic Food Product	Business management	Launched
HSR-1-DE	Medical Data Analytics	Medical, health care	Seed Stage/Not registered

Table 2.1: Participant List (Highly Skilled Refugees)

2.4.3 Data Collection, Management, and Ethics

Data management encompasses the collection, storage, and organization of research data. To ensure compliance with ethical standards and protect participant confidentiality, rigorous measures were implemented in accordance with Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) guidelines. Upon obtaining approval from faculty supervisors,

² As identified by (Pugh, Soetanto, Jack, & Hamilton, 2021)

³ An abstract term that represents different institutions in the countries of interest. Namely, in The Netherlands it represents Nederlandse gemeente whereas in Germany it represented by Gemeinde

⁴ In the countries of interest, it represents Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst (IND) in the Netherlands and Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) in Germany.

⁵ In the countries of interest, it represents Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid (JenV) in the Netherlands and Bundesministerium des Innern (BMI) in Germany.

⁶ In the countries of interest, it represents VluchtelingenWerk Nederland (VWN) in the Netherlands and Landesflüchtlingsräte in Germany.

Participant Index	Role	Business Incubator Targeting	Location
BI-1-NL	Support Manager	Internationals/Refugees	The Netherlands
BI-2-NL	Team Facilitator	Newcomers/Refugees/Internally Displaced People	The Netherlands
BI-3-NL	Couch	Newcomers/Refugees/Internally Displaced People	The Netherlands
BI-1-DE	CEO - Program Director	Newcomers/Refugees	Germany

Table 2.2: Participant List (Business Incubator Personnel)

the research author collaborated with the TU Delft Faculty of Technology, Policy and Management's data steward to develop a comprehensive data management plan. This plan addressed various data-related concerns and underwent thorough review and approval.

To safeguard participants' rights, each participant was provided with a clear description of the research objectives and a list of key points to which they voluntarily consented. Prior to conducting the interviews, participants were explicitly asked for their consent to participate in the study. Subsequently, all consent forms were securely stored in a designated Microsoft cloud storage account provided by TU Delft. Access to these files was strictly limited to authorized members of the research group. At the conclusion of the research, all data containing identifiable information will be permanently deleted to ensure participant confidentiality.

Throughout the report, participant identities are pseudonymized and referred to as "participants index" as outlined in Section 2.4.2. Additionally, as a gesture of gratitude, each participant will receive a separate thank-you note along with an 'Executive Summary' of the report.

Given the involvement of human subjects, the initial research proposal, supervisor approvals, and data management plans were submitted for review to the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of TU Delft (HREC, 2021). After receiving the necessary approval, the research was conducted, with participants being informed of the absence of known risks associated with their involvement. The consent form and data management plan can be found in Appendix: ?? for further reference.

Two different methods were employed to conduct the interviews: in-person interviews and video conferencing. During the in-person interviews, voice recording was utilized to accurately capture participants' verbal responses, ensuring meticulous data collection. Additionally, handwritten notes were taken concurrently to record non-verbal cues, observations, and any contextual details that may not be captured through audio alone.

For video conferencing interviews, video recording was employed to capture both the visual and auditory aspects of the interviews. This comprehensive approach enabled a nuanced analysis of participants' expressions, gestures, and overall communication dynamics. Basic note-taking was conducted using a dedicated note-taking application during the video conferences to document follow up questions, key points, themes, and noteworthy insights.

To enhance data analysis, the recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim, ensuring a detailed and thorough representation of participants' responses. The transcriptions served as the foundation for subsequent coding and thematic analysis, facilitating the

identification of patterns, themes, and meaningful insights as described in the following Section 2.5.

To ensure efficient data management, a dual approach was employed for data storage. Data files were securely stored in both a cloud-based platform provided, managed, and secured by TU Delft, and in local storage on the author's personal computer. This redundancy ensured data integrity and mitigated potential risks associated with data loss or unauthorized access.

By adhering to these comprehensive data management practices and ethical considerations, the research was conducted in a rigorous and responsible manner, preserving the integrity of the study and respecting the rights and privacy of the participants.

2.5 DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis of this research follows the methodology introduced by Gioia et al. (2013) to bring "qualitative rigor" to the conduct and presentation of inductive research. In summary, the methodology consists of three steps:

1. Coding of the interviews to identify concepts using a software program designed for computer-assisted qualitative and mixed methods data, text and multimedia analysis in academic, scientific, and business institutions.
2. Comparing initial codes to identify patterns to develop tentative second-order themes.
3. Aggregating dimensions by grouping second-order themes to relational mechanisms.

Following these guidelines, the research followed a meticulous and structured process in analyzing the data.

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS PREPARATION

Initially, transcripts generated by Microsoft Teams were exported. Upon listening to the interviews again, any major mistranscriptions were corrected. Parts of the discussions in Arabic were translated to ensure context and meaning were retained. Each interview was then dissected into three primary segments: barriers, business incubators, and policies.

ANALYSIS OF 'BARRIERS' SEGMENT OF THE INTERVIEW

For the section on barriers, each statement pointing towards a potential barrier was extracted and transferred to an Excel sheet. The categorization was based on a typology of potential barriers, namely legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related, as grounded in the framework developed by Alrawadieh et al. (2019). Each statement under the same aggregated dimension was merged while preserving the interviewee's identity. This data was then transformed by:

- Coding individual statements into concepts.
- Comparing initial codes to discern patterns and construct tentative second-order themes.
- Grouping second-order themes into aggregated dimensions.

Notably, some themes did not conform to the predefined typology of barriers by Alrawadieh et al. (2019). This led to the emergence of a new aggregated dimension, "access entrepreneurship." Given the interview's inclination towards business incubators, this dimension naturally surfaced, shedding light on barriers inherent to accessing entrepreneurship.

For a holistic understanding, Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, and 5.6 in Chapter 5 elucidate the process. These figures visually delineate the relationship between first-order concepts, second-order themes, and aggregated dimensions.

ANALYSIS OF 'BUSINESS INCUBATORS' SEGMENT OF THE INTERVIEW

Responses from the business incubators section were categorized in Excel sheets, labeled as 'BI - Exp,' 'BI - What they got,' 'BI - Ideal/lacking,' and 'BI - Strategies.' The sheets paved the way to discern main themes, and significant quotations directly or indirectly answering the research questions were spotlighted. These themes and quotations then formed the basis for the subsequent analysis.

ANALYSIS OF 'POLICIES' SEGMENT OF THE INTERVIEW

The policies section analysis mirrored the process for the business incubators section. However, it's worth noting that not all participants possessed comprehensive insights into policies or their workings, leading some to abstain from answering all related questions.

TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESSIBILITY

To ensure the integrity and clarity of the research process, complete interview transcripts, video recordings, utilized Excel sheets, and summaries were presented to the research supervisors. For future readers, the summaries can be accessed in Appendix A.

2.6 RESEARCH SUPERVISION

In order to mitigate researcher bias and enhance the rigor of this research, a series of regular meetings were conducted with the research committee. These meetings were scheduled at regular intervals throughout the duration of the study and served as a platform for thorough discussions on data analysis, interpretation of results, and overall research progress. The primary objective of these meetings was to foster transparency in the research process, ensuring that all aspects of data analysis and findings were critically examined and validated by multiple perspectives. By engaging in collaborative discussions with the research committee, the research process benefited from diverse insights, constructive feedback, and rigorous scrutiny, ultimately strengthening the validity and reliability of the study's outcomes.

3

BACKGROUND & LITERATURE REVIEW

A literature review is essential to analyze the existing scientific knowledge and identify potential knowledge gaps. The aim of this literature review is to analyze and synthesize the state-of-the-art literature on refugee entrepreneurship in relation to business incubators. First, the key definitions and theories about refugee entrepreneurship will provide a background. Second, the role of business incubators in helping entrepreneurs will be discussed. Third, a review of the current literature on the relationship between business incubators and refugees will be conducted. By acquiring, analyzing, and synthesizing relevant scientific literature, a knowledge gap may be unraveled, which will be the starting point of this thesis.

3.1 DISADVANTAGED ENTREPRENEURS

Entrepreneurship and self-employment have been celebrated as means of having freedom and independence, and of generating wealth for the individual while creating value for the economy and the society (Heilbrunn & Iannone, 2019). However, not all entrepreneurship is created equal as not all entrepreneurs have the same entrepreneurial advantages and disadvantages, not every ambitious person has an equal opportunity to turn their ideas into a business. Some groups are lacking the enabling factors for a successful entrepreneurship journey. These groups of entrepreneurs are called “disadvantaged entrepreneurs” (Maalaoui, Ratten, Heilbrunn, Brannback, & Kraus, 2020). Disadvantaged entrepreneurs incorporate a wide range of individuals or groups that differ in the causes of their pitfalls. The causes can stem from various reasons, mainly from their national and gender identity, disabilities, age, religion, or political affiliations (Yuval-Davis, 2015).

This group is also called “missing entrepreneurs” per the definitions of the OECD. Missing entrepreneurs are groups of people who need to receive support and access to equal opportunities and resources in order to create successful sustainable businesses. Immigrants, along with seniors, women, and young people, are key target groups of the OECD’s inclusive entrepreneurship policy agenda, which aims to expand entrepreneurship in order to create jobs, leverage technological development, and aid economic and social challenges. Due to a lack of adequate support for this group, the European Union (EU) countries are missing out on potential innovation, growth, and jobs. These missed opportunities are due to several factors, including difficulties accessing finance, skills gaps, lacking networks and institutional barriers (OECD & European Commission, 2021). Furthermore, disadvantage entrepreneurship is regarded as a new area of study that has recently gained traction in the academic community (Maalaoui et al., 2020).

3.1.1 Refugee Entrepreneurs

One of the groups that are thought to be disadvantaged entrepreneurs is refugee entrepreneurs. (Clercq & Honig, 2011; Maalaoui et al., 2020). Distinguishing refugees from other migrant groups occurs on fundamental levels such as; legal classification, migration motivations, and the institutional support they receive upon arrival (Heilbrunn, Freiling, & Harima, 2019). Refugees are people who have fled an armed conflict

or persecution and are entitled to certain, guaranteed rights under international law (Chiswick, Cohen, & Zach, 1997; Joly, 2002; Kunz, 1973). Before being granted refugee status, people who apply for asylum in host countries are classified as asylum seekers (Chiswick et al., 1997; Joly, 2002; Kunz, 1973). Their claims of fleeing armed conflict or persecution have yet to be verified by the host country's legal institutions (Chiswick et al., 1997; Joly, 2002; Kunz, 1973). IDP, victims of natural disasters, economic migrants, and victims of violence who are not also subject to persecution are excluded from that treatment and are not entitled to the same rights as refugees (Chiswick et al., 1997; Joly, 2002; Kunz, 1973). Refugees legal decisions are made in accordance with the international law rather than the national law, which has a direct impact on their human capital (Heilbrunn et al., 2019). However, compared to refugees, other migrant groups are subject to national immigration policies (Edwards, 2015).

According to Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention and the 1967 Protocol (UNHCR 1951), a refugee is a person who has fled their home country "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country" (UNHCR, 1951).

The highest levels of migration in history were recorded at the end of 2022, 108.4 million individuals worldwide were forcibly displaced due to persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or events seriously disturbing public order. Refugees account for 35.3 million of the aforementioned number, with asylum seekers accounting for 5.4 million and IDP accounting for 62.5 million (UNHCR, 2023a). Figure 3.1 shows the trend of rising refugee numbers over the last 20 years.

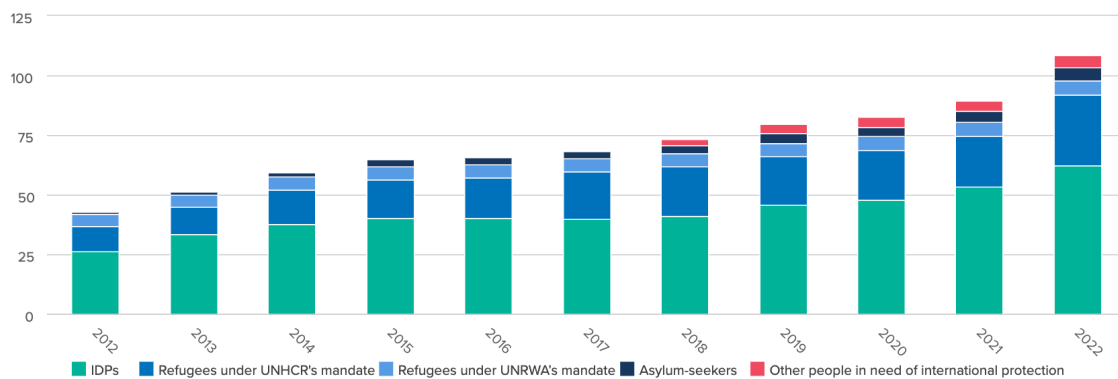


Figure 3.1: People forced to flee worldwide (1993 - 2022), by type (in millions) (UNHCR, 2023a)

The majority of the world's refugee population has sought refuge in neighboring Middle Eastern and North African (MENA) and Sub-Saharan African countries (SSA) (UNHCR, 2023a). UNHCR's report shows that by the end of 2022, developing countries were hosting 80% of those who had been forcibly displaced, while the remaining 20% were hosted in developed nations. Comparatively, 33% of the displaced population is hosted in upper-middle-income countries, 26% in lower-middle-income countries, and 16% in low-income countries. High-income nations host 24% of displaced people (UNHCR, 2023a). As of 2023 estimates, Germany is the largest refugee-hosting country in Europe and the fourth in the world, with 2.1 million refugees (UNHCR, 2023a).

Per OECD's estimates, if missing entrepreneurs were as active in business creation as core age men (30-49 years old), there could be an additional 9 million people starting and managing new businesses in EU – and 35 million across OECD countries. This would imply a 50% increase in early-stage entrepreneurship in the EU and a 40% increase in OECD countries (OECD & European Commission, 2021).

Refugees encounter substantial difficulties in the labor market of their host countries. This is due to a lack of skills and comprehension of the dynamics of their new societies, as well as discrimination (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). Often, these struggles are not faced by other groups (Maalaoui et al., 2020). This hinders refugees' economic integration (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). Therefore, refugees often need special support to get access to resources to have a successful entrepreneurship journey (Jürgens et al., 2022). Creating their own business would enable their integration with the socio-economic scene of their new society (Harima et al., 2019; Jürgens et al., 2022; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). Recently, many researches have been conducted to address the possible role of business incubators in fostering refugee businesses (Jürgens et al., 2022).

3.2 SEARCH DESCRIPTION AND SELECTION CRITERIA

The purpose of this literature review is to delve into the existing research on migrant and refugee entrepreneurship. The focus is to explore the challenges and support systems in place for highly skilled refugees in German and Dutch urban settings. The foundation for this inquiry rests on understanding the current body of knowledge, which provides context for this study and highlights potential gaps in research.

The primary search was conducted on Scopus, using the keyword "migrant entrepreneurship" in the title, which produced 774 results. A subsequent search with "refugee entrepreneurship" yielded 193 more. To ensure a comprehensive search, Google Scholar was consulted. The search was limited to articles written in English, published from 1980 onwards, and those that were peer-reviewed.

A four-step keyword search process was employed, using terms listed in Table 3.1. This methodology aimed to cover various expressions related to the research interests, refugee demographics, and different aspects of entrepreneurship.

Following the initial selection of articles based on the keyword searches, a snowballing method was implemented. This involved reviewing the references cited in the initial set of selected articles to identify any relevant additional studies. By following these citation trails, significant literature, which may not have been captured during the initial database searches, was considered. The snowballing process continued until no further relevant articles could be identified.

Research Interest	Targeted Group	Means of Entrepreneurship	Qualification
challenges	refugee*	(social) incubator*	highly educated
barriers	asylum seek*	accelerator*	highly skilled
	forcibly displaced	(social) entrepr*	highly qualified
	(im)migrant*	(social) ventur*	universit*
	ethnic	self employ*	
		entrepreneur*	

Table 3.1: Keywords and their associated variations used in the search.

For the selection criteria, articles were considered if they emphasized refugee entrepreneurship in urban settings, discussed the challenges and barriers these refugees faced, or focused on the intersection between refugees and business incubators. Studies not in English or those not directly related to the research questions were excluded.

After identifying the relevant articles, specific data like the author(s) and publication year, the main emphasis of the study, and its primary findings, especially those concerning refugee entrepreneurship, were extracted. The geographical setting of each study was noted.

Each chosen article underwent a quality assessment based on methodological rigor, sample size, clarity of objectives, and potential biases. Following data extraction, the findings were synthesized by grouping them into themes, facilitating a better understanding and comparison of the research landscape. A visual representation detailing the search and selection process can be found in Figure 3.2.

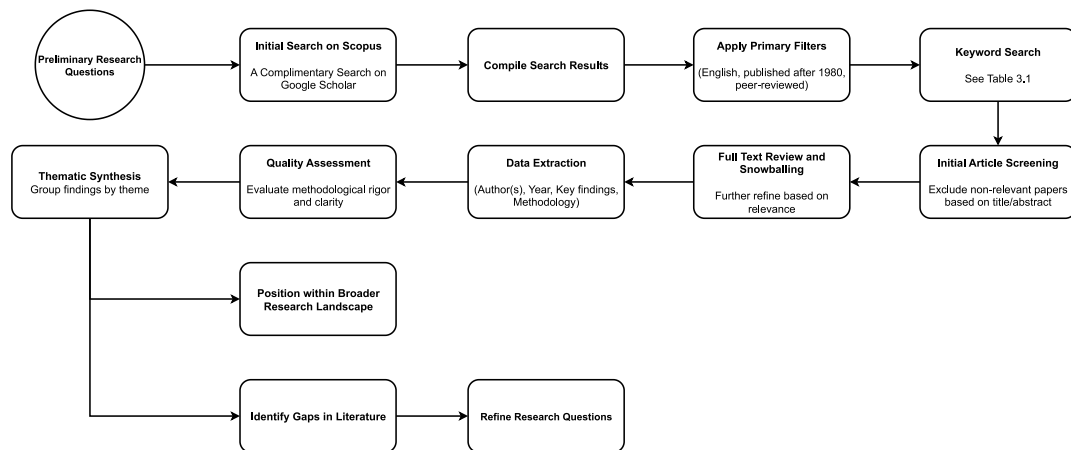


Figure 3.2: Flowchart Illustrating the Step-by-Step Process of Conducting a Literature Review

A significant observation indicated gaps in the literature. Despite the systematic search approach, there was a lack of in-depth analysis regarding highly skilled entrepreneurial refugees, especially in German and Dutch contexts.

This section concludes by providing an overview of the search findings and a focal point for the studies in Table 3.2.

Author(s), year, and article title	Purpose
(Heilbrunn & Iannone, 2020): From Center to Periphery and Back Again: A Systematic Literature Review of Refugee Entrepreneurship.	Systematic Literature Review
(Heilbrunn et al., 2019): Refugee Entrepreneurship A Case-based Topography: A Case-based Topography.	Refugees Entrepreneurship Typology
(Bizri, 2017): Refugee-entrepreneurship: A social capital perspective.	Characteristics of Refugee Entrepreneurship
(Gold, 1988): Refugees and small business: The case of soviet jews and vietnamese. (Gold, 1992): The employment potential of refugee entrepreneurship: Soviet jews and vietnamese in california.	Difference Between Refugees and Immigrant Entrepreneurship
(Wauters & Lambrecht, 2007): Barriers to Refugee Entrepreneurship in Belgium: Towards an Explanatory Model. (Alrawadieh et al., 2019): Understanding the challenges of refugee entrepreneurship in tourism and hospitality.	Challenges and Barriers Faced by Entrepreneurial Refugees
(Lange, Berntsen, Hanoeman, & Haidar, 2021): Highly Skilled Entrepreneurial Refugees: Legal and Practical Barriers and Enablers to Start Up in the Netherlands.	Enablers and Barriers and Faced by Highly Skilled Refugees
(Meister & Mauer, 2019): Understanding refugee entrepreneurship incubation – an embeddedness perspective. (Jürgens et al., 2022): Relational Dynamics within Refugee Business Incubators: Bridging Refugee Entrepreneurs to the Host-Country Entrepreneurial Ecosystem. (Harima et al., 2019): Functional domains of business incubators for refugee entrepreneurs.	Business Incubators and Refugee Entrepreneurship
(UNHCR, 2023a): Global Trends Forced Displacement in 2022.	Reporting on Refugees' Trends

Table 3.2: Key papers that highlight important aspects of refugee entrepreneurship.

3.3 LITERATURE REVIEW: REFUGEE ENTREPRENEURSHIP

3.3.1 Definition

According to scholars, migrants are entrepreneurial agents who contribute to the economies of both their COO and their COR (Aldrich & Waldinger, 2003; Rath, 2002). Migrants and refugees flee their COO in search of better opportunities and living conditions. While the former chooses to relocate to another country voluntarily, the latter is forced to do so (Harima, Periac, Murphy, & Picard, 2021). Following the current global refugee crisis, refugee entrepreneurship has emerged as a modern global phenomenon (Desai, Naudé, & Stel, 2021). Refugee entrepreneurship is defined as an entrepreneurial activity carried out in the COR by people who have been forcibly displaced from their COO due to war, conflict, or persecution (Fuller-Love, Lim, & Akehurst, 2006).

3.3.2 State of the Academic Research

Refugee entrepreneurship is an under developed research area and suffers from the fragmentation of previous research findings (S. A. Abebe, 2022; Harima et al., 2021). There have only been a few studies that directly examined the issue of refugee entrepreneurship prior to the current global refugee crisis. Despite the fact that there are major disparities between economic migrants and refugees, the literature considered refugees as a subset of immigrants and concentrated on refugees' economic activities without properly separating them from migrants (S. A. Abebe, 2022; Li, 2000; Tienda & Rajman, 2004). Wauters and Lambrecht (2008) were the first scholars who published one of the first studies describing refugees and migrants as distinct entrepreneurial agents, emphasizing the environmental settings of refugees, which affect the availability and access to resources in their new COR. Due to its potential to alleviate the grand socioeconomic challenges refugee entrepreneurship is getting the attention of scholars and policymakers (S. A. Abebe, 2022). Since 2015, the number of research studying refugees' entrepreneurial potential has expanded considerably (Betts et al., 2017; Bizri, 2017; Sak, Kaymaz, Kadkoy, & Kenanoglu, 2018).

3.3.3 Challenges Caused by Forced Displacement

In recent years, European countries have seen a surge in immigration (UNHCR, 2023a). This presents challenges in facilitating newcomers' integration. Often, the challenges faced by the forcibly displaced groups such as refugees, and stateless persons are more complex compared to other migrated groups. This is due to the exceptional conditions of their flight (Connor, 2010).

Forced displacement put refugees in an unfortunate situation compared to other foreign populations in the host countries. Forcibly displaced groups endure traumatic experiences, face language and cultural hurdles, lack recognized academic degrees and vocational certifications, and often lack access to resources in their COO (Colic-Peisker & Tilbury, 2007; Embiricos, 2020; Goodman, Vesely, Letiecq, & Cleaveland, 2017). As a consequence, refugees, even those with a rich business background in their home country, confront labor market challenges that prevent them from effectively integrating into the host country's economic scene (Jürgens et al., 2022).

3.3.4 Entrepreneurship as Means for Integration

Institutions in the European Union have made significant efforts to assist recently arrived refugees in finding employment, yet, scholars argue that refugees often face

labor-market disadvantages due to the “refugee gap” or “canvas ceiling”¹ (Bakker, Dagevos, & Engbersen, 2017; E. S. Lee et al., 2020). As a consequence of these disadvantages, refugees are pushed to work for themselves and view entrepreneurship as an alternative vocational path, a mean for socioeconomic integration, a way to immediately engage in business activities, and a course of action to rebuild their lives in their COR, and a mechanism to get over the psychological burden of having their careers disrupted in their COO (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Backman et al., 2021; Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019; Shneikat & Ryan, 2018; Wehrle et al., 2018).

3.3.5 Benefits and Positive Outcomes

Contrary to what is believed, refugees and their entrepreneurial activities could contribute positively to the economy of the host countries and bring new entrepreneurial potential (Betts et al., 2017; Bizri, 2017; Tumen, 2016). In addition to their economic contributions, researchers and policy argue that refugees contribute to the labor market integration; which is achieving the same range of labor market participation as natives through the use of their skills and the realization of their economic potential (J. Collins, 2017; Freudenberg & Halberstadt, 2018; Sak et al., 2018). On top of that, refugee entrepreneurship can create social innovations (S. Lee, 2018), bottom-up innovations (Betts, Bloom, & Weaver, 2015), and help in creating alternative narratives to fight xenophobia (Mello, 2018).

3.3.6 Immigrant Entrepreneurs in Comparison to Native Entrepreneurs

Furthermore, research shows that entrepreneurs with immigrant backgrounds are more likely to engage and succeed in entrepreneurial activities compared to the natives (Naudé, Siegel, & Marchand, 2015). It is argued that immigrant refugees hold key personality and cognitive traits that are needed in entrepreneurial ventures (Kupferberg, 2003). They demonstrate high levels of motivation, and confidence (Fong, Busch, Armour, Heffron, & Chanmugam, 2007). Besides, taking a decision to move to a new country and start a new life is a risky activity and reflects a certain risk attitude which might be crucial to start a new venture (Neville, Orser, Riding, & Jung, 2014; Petrakis, 2005). Moreover, someone who seizes the opportunity to migrate is more likely to spot business opportunities (Hart & Acs, 2011).

3.3.7 Barriers

Naturally, there are significant barriers to business creation for both native and immigrant populations. However, refugees specifically, and immigrants more broadly, face unique and intensified barriers compared to non-immigrants (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). Alrawadieh et al. (2019) developed a typology detailing the five² primary barriers encountered by refugee entrepreneurs. The challenges outlined below are based on Alrawadieh et al.’s categorization, which also served as a foundation to categorize other barriers discovered in the literature:

1. **Legislative Barriers:** Refugees often grapple with a complex legal framework in their host countries. Issues like uncertain legal status, restrictions on the right to

¹ “A systemic, multilevel barrier to refugee workforce integration and professional advancement” (E. S. Lee, Szkudlarek, Nguyen, & Nardon, 2020)

² Note that in (Alrawadieh et al., 2019), the legal and administrative barriers were merged due to their extensive interplay in the context of tourism and hospitality. In contrast, this research treats these two barriers independently.

work or start a business, and navigating a foreign legal system can hinder their entrepreneurial ambitions (B. Y. Abebe & Moog, 2019; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Kessler, 2018; Lange et al., 2021).

2. **Administrative Barriers:** This barrier pertains to the bureaucratic hurdles and institutional obstacles that refugees face. They might struggle with obtaining the necessary permits, licenses, or understanding administrative processes in an unfamiliar system (B. Y. Abebe & Moog, 2019; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Kessler, 2018; Lange et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 2018).
3. **Financial Barriers:** Financial constraints are a common challenge for many entrepreneurs, but refugees often face added difficulties like a lack of credit history in their host country. Traditional financing policies might not cater to their needs, making it challenging to secure loans or other financial resources (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Heilbrunn et al., 2019; Johnson & Shaw, 2019; Lyon, Sepulveda, & Syrett, 2007; Maalaoui, Razgallah, Picard, & Leloarne-Lemaire, 2019; Tengeh, 2019).
4. **Socio-cultural Barriers:** Refugees, moving from different cultural backgrounds, might face issues like language barriers, discrimination, or adjusting to new social norms and values. These challenges can affect their ability to network, market, or even understand local consumer preferences (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Katis, 2017; Lyon et al., 2007; Maalaoui et al., 2019; Tengeh, 2019).
5. **Market-related Barriers:** Entering a new market can be daunting for refugees due to their limited professional networks in the host country. They might lack knowledge about the local market dynamics, consumer behavior, and competition, which can impede their business growth (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Lyon et al., 2007; Maalaoui et al., 2019; Pilková, n.d.; Tengeh, 2019; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008).

Beyond the five barriers defined by Alrawadieh et al. and elaborated upon in various studies, refugees, due to limited human, social, and financial capital, often remain unaware of available assistance tailored to help them navigate these barriers. This includes resources such as grants and entrepreneurship programs. Furthermore, such assistance might prove less accessible if not presented in a language familiar to them or if it does not align with their specific needs and circumstances (OECD & European Commission, 2021). It is crucial to highlight the significant heterogeneity found among entrepreneurial refugees when explored in academic literature (Harima et al., 2019).

3.3.8 Refugee Entrepreneurship as a Separate Domain

Although studies on entrepreneurial activities among migrant groups have received considerable academic attention, prior to the current refugee crisis, research interest in refugee entrepreneurs was limited. Refugee entrepreneurs have rarely been treated as a distinct entrepreneurial group; instead, they have been treated as an integral part of the immigrant population. If there was a distinction between the two, it would be based on nationality or ethnicity (Hammarstedt, 2001; Li, 2000; Lunn & Steen, 2005; Tienda & Rajman, 2004).

Despite similarities in observations, phenomena, and difficulties faced by immigrants and refugees, recent studies have revealed that refugee entrepreneurs' entrepreneurial activities differ from those of other migrant groups. This is due to the reasons for

refugees' migration and flight conditions (Bernard, 1976; Cortes, 2004; Gold, 1992; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2007).

Both immigrants and refugees leave their COO in search of better living conditions. However, in comparison to immigrants, refugees leave their countries due to push factors (forced) caused by a life-threatening situation rather than pull factors (voluntarily) caused by economic opportunity-driven reasons and in search of a better job and more economic security and opportunities (Crockett, 2013; Gold, 1992; Thai & Turkina, 2012).

Furthermore, refugees often cut ties with their home countries, leaving them with no or limited access to resources and networks in their COO (Gold, 1992). Moreover, due to the forced displacement refugees return to their COO less frequently than immigrants, who may even become returnee entrepreneurs or conduct transnational entrepreneurial activities with their home countries (Mayer, Harima, & Freiling, 2015; Wright, Liu, Buck, & Filatotchev, 2008). While refugees opt to focus on their long-term network connections, shared norms, competencies, and knowledge in the host countries (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Bizri, 2017).

Due to their forced displacement, refugees often go through traumatic experiences and events while in their home countries or on their way to a new safe destination. This may result in psychological issues that impede self-reliance and self-employment (Bernard, 1976; Goodman et al., 2017).

Furthermore, refugees face unique challenges during the economic integration process, which may be caused by the absence or a lack of recognition of educational achievements due to their unexpected flight, as well as a lack of financial resources in COR (Cortes, 2004; Gold, 1988; Harima et al., 2021).

Moreover, contrasted with immigrants, refugees are likely to have a smaller social network in their new COR. Refugees come from a wide range of nations and often leave their COO on an individual basis (Gold, 1992).

Lastly, in comparison to migrants, refugees face more significant institutional barriers in the host country because they often do not know where their journey to safety will end, making it impossible for them to prepare in advance for their stay in a specific country (Gold, 1988). Besides, their legal status as refugees limits their socioeconomic activities in the host countries (Embiricos, 2020; Mohammed, Omar, Saad, & Kayadibi, 2016).

3.3.9 Heterogeneity of Refugees

Scholars have acknowledged the significant heterogeneity of entrepreneurial refugees in their studies of refugee entrepreneurship (Brown, Mackie, Dickenson, & Gebre-Egziabher, 2018; Harima et al., 2019). This heterogeneity highlights the need to consider the barriers faced by highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs on an individual basis, as no one-size-fits-all solution is possible. While groupings can be useful in understanding the economic activities of different refugee groups, critics have warned that categorizing a diverse and heterogeneous population under a single label such as "refugees" fails to account for the different countries of origin, cultures, characteristics, and experiences of the studied entrepreneurs (Betts, Bloom, Kaplan, & Omata, 2014).

3.3.10 Typology of Refugees

In order to better understand refugees' trauma, George (2010) compiled a model to draw a typology of refugees. The model helps to analyze three layers of characterization which gives 12 different categorizations for refugees. As shown in figure 3.3. George's (2010) model was stimulated by the work of (Kunz, 1973, 1981; Paludan, 1974).

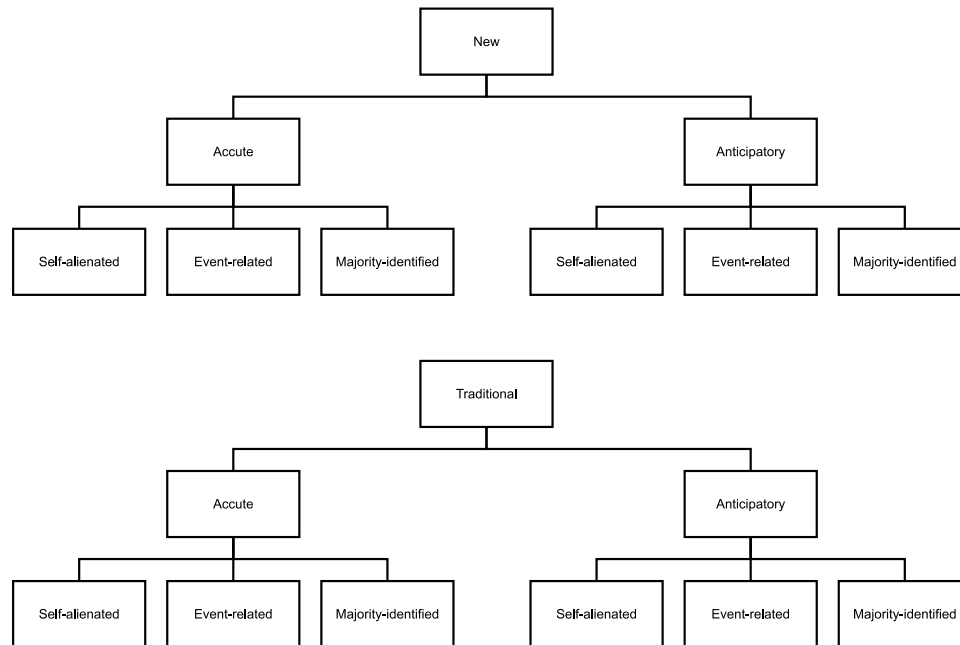


Figure 3.3: Refugees' typology based on (George, 2010) model.

The first layer has two characterizations, "new" versus "traditional" (Kunz, 1973), which points to the cultural and ethnic similarity between refugees' COO and their COR. Which is the case, for example, of a refugee fleeing from a developing country to a developed country.

The second layer relates to the flight conditions of the refugee. This layer has two characterizations, "accute" and "anticipatory" (Paludan, 1974). "Anticipatory" refugees are people who managed to plan their flight from COO while the "acute" didn't. This is an important factor to be considered by the COR, as refugees that had to flee without prior planning go through higher risks which might lead to experiencing traumas (Kunz, 1973, 1981).

The last layer has three categorizations according to (J. S. Collins, 1996; George, 2010; Kunz, 1981). This layer identifies the reason behind the flight from COO. "Self-alienated" refugees are refugees who left their home countries for personal reasons (Kunz, 1981). Where "event-related" refugees have left because of discrimination that is being promoted against the group that they belong to (Kunz, 1981). Finally, "majority-identified" refugees are groups of people who had to flee the country because of opposing a ruling regime or events (Kunz, 1981).

These 12 categorizations serve as an initial framework to be able to conduct comparative research with an emphasis on the context and characteristics of a refugee entrepreneur (Heilbrunn et al., 2019).

3.4 LITERATURE REVIEW: BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Due to their newness and foreignness, refugees require special assistance from the host country's entrepreneurial ecosystems in order to access the available entrepreneurial resources (Harima et al., 2019; Jürgens et al., 2022; Meister & Mauer, 2019). This section shed light on how business incubators can assist refugees in starting their entrepreneurial journey.

3.4.1 Definition

A business incubator is an organization that provides incubation services and support to a portfolio of entrepreneurs or start-up companies in order to increase the chances of the incubatees survival and to accelerate incubatees development (George, 2010; Pauwels et al., 2016; Scillitoe & Chakrabarti, 2010). The literature has backed this definition and has shown that business incubators influence the entrepreneurial process, speed up growth, and increase survival rates through offering capital, services, networks, competitiveness, business training, and mentoring (Ayatse, Kwahar, & Akuraun, 2017; Scillitoe & Chakrabarti, 2010).

3.4.2 Benefits

Furthermore, business incubators stimulate the economy by helping start up businesses (Moreira & Martins, 2009; Wynarczyk & Raine, 2005). Moreover, business incubators have a social utility, and startups that participate in business incubation programs contribute more to job creation compared to startups that do not (Arlotto, Sahut, & Teulon, 2011).

3.4.3 Roles & Services

The literature shows that business incubators play various roles in assisting incubated businesses both during and after the incubation period. The roles can be summed up into five main aspects: financial, qualifications, networking, internationalization, and fostering innovation.

1. Financial: Equity funding or an equity fee can be used as a financial assistant. Incubatees receive this assistance so that they can focus on developing their ventures without having to work. Notably, some incubators do not provide financial assistance (Chan & Lau, 2005). According to Totterman and Sten (2005), when considering incubation, incubated businesses do not consider financial assistance to be an important factor.
2. Qualification: Business incubators provide incubatees with the necessary knowledge to help them navigate the business and entrepreneurial obstacles (Gassmann & Becker, 2006). This knowledge is provided through workshops, seminars, and lectures. Incubators provide four types of knowledge to their incubatees: entrepreneurial, organizational, technological, and complementary market knowledge (Gassmann & Becker, 2006).
3. Networking: Incubation can result in two types of networking, the first is between incubatees, and the second is between incubatees and external parties such as institutions and organizations (Soetanto & Jack, 2013). According to studies, business incubation programs have a positive impact on the development and expansion of incubatees' social capital (Honig & Karlsson, 2010; Rothschild & Darr,

2005; Scillitoe & Chakrabarti, 2010). The network of the business incubator can help incubated firms perform better (Lin, Wood, & Lu, 2012). Furthermore, as a result of business incubator networking, incubatees rely on business-oriented networks rather than informal ones (Honig & Karlsson, 2010). Moreover, networking allows incubatees to gain access to external intangible resources (Soetanto & Jack, 2013).

4. Internationalisation: Business incubators help their incubatees enter foreign markets, which can be a difficult process (Blackburne & Buckley, 2019).
5. Fostering innovation: Business incubators are widely acknowledged for promoting innovation (Barbero, Casillas, Wright, & Garcia, 2014). Furthermore, studies have shown that different types of business incubators produce different types of innovation: product, technological process, and organizational innovation (Barbero et al., 2014; Caiazza, 2014; Hausberg & Korreck, 2020).

3.4.4 Typology of Business Incubators

Scholars debate several business incubator typologies. Their claim is that business incubator is becoming an “umbrella word” (Aernoudt, 2004). Aernoudt (2004) chose to categorize incubators based on their objectives rather than their sponsors/stakeholders, believing that this is more accurate in terms of economic realities. Table 4.2 summarizes Aernoudt’s (2004) classification of business incubators into five types.

However, according to Barbero et al. (2014), four main types of business incubators can be deduced from the literature’s broader consensus each with its own strategic goals, and sources for funding. These four categories are as follows:

1. Economic development: These incubators aim to reduce economic disparities by maintaining a local economic network (Aernoudt, 2004).
2. University Business Incubator (UBI): These incubators are established by universities to encourage academic entrepreneurship and to assist newly established technology firms. (Cooper, Hamel, & Connaughton, 2012; Guerrero, Urbano, Cunningham, & Organ, 2014; Mian, 1994).
3. Basic research incubator: These ones are formed by companies within research institutions with the goal of conducting fundamental research (Aernoudt, 2004).
4. Private incubator: These are created by large organizations and serve the parent organization’s interests by assisting in the creation of new businesses (Becker & Gassmann, 2006; Grimaldi & Grandi, 2005). This type of incubator has two subcategories: corporate business incubator and independent private incubator (ibid).

3.4.5 Social Incubators

Due to its recent re-emergence, Barbero et al.’s (2014) classification of incubators left out one more type of incubator that has recently attracted the attention of scholars: social incubators. Social incubators seek social impact while addressing social and environmental issues in an effort to bridge social gaps and foster social innovations (Alvord, Brown, & Letts, 2004; Dacin, Dacin, & Tracey, 2011; Nicolopoulou, Karataş-Özkan, Vas, & Nouman, 2017). They do so by facilitating the development, growth, and sustainability of social startups employing people with low employment capacities

	Main philosophy: dealing with	Main objective	Secondary	Sectors involved
Mixed incubators	Business gap	Create start-ups	Employment creation	All sectors
Economic development incubators	Regional or local disparity gap	Regional development	Business creation	All sectors
Technology incubators	Entrepreneurial gap	Create entrepreneurship	Stimulate innovation, technology start-ups, and graduates	Focus on technology, recently targeted, e.g. IT, speech biotechnology
Social incubators	Social gap	Integration of social categories	Employment creation	Non profit sector
Basic research incubators	Discovery gap	Bleu-Sky research	Spin-offs	High tech

Table 3.3: Typology of business incubators (Aernoudt, 2004)

such as refugees, disabled persons, low-skilled workers, long-term unemployed, and others who have limited employment options (Dacin et al., 2011; Nicolopoulou et al., 2017). These social startups adopt a hybrid organizational structure that combines a social mission with conventional business practices. (Battilana & Lee, 2014; Doherty, Haugh, & Lyon, 2014; Santos, Pache, & Birkholz, 2015). Social incubators provide their incubatees with the same services as the mainstream ones, including and not limited to: business development, support and accommodation, and logistic support (Aernoudt, 2004). Over the last decade, the interest in social entrepreneurship has increased. However, there is still a lack of literature that focuses on social incubation models that support refugees or migrant entrepreneurs (Meister & Mauer, 2019).

3.4.6 Relation to Refugees

Business incubators have been studied in relation to refugee entrepreneurship. Scholars studied these programs using qualitative research methods in the EU, where business incubators have created incubation programs curated for refugees (Harima et al., 2019; Jürgens et al., 2022; Meister & Mauer, 2019). Business incubators have had a positive impact on five major aspects:

1. Business incubators assisted refugees in developing human, social, and financial capital, all of which they lacked due to their newness in the host country (Pellegrini et al., 2020).
2. Business incubators were able to increase refugee entrepreneurs' social inclusion in their new societies (Salamoun & Azad, 2017).
3. These incubation and acceleration programs provided entrepreneurship education (Rashid, 2018).
4. By connecting refugee entrepreneurs to the local entrepreneurial system, they have better opportunities to integrate and engage with the host society (Meister & Mauer, 2019)

5. Business incubators provided refugee entrepreneurs with soft and emotional support to overcome institutional differences and personal issues caused by their forced displacement (Harima et al., 2019).

3.5 KNOWLEDGE GAP: HIGHLY SKILLED REFUGEES

According to OECD estimates, one in five refugees in Europe has completed a tertiary education, a noteworthy proportion that is often overshadowed by the typical portrayal of refugees. More startling is that over 60 per cent of the refugees with tertiary education who are in employment find themselves overqualified for their positions. This presents a significant paradox in the labor market that requires nuanced examination. The following sections attempt to highlight the distinct areas that exhibit gaps in current knowledge and understanding.

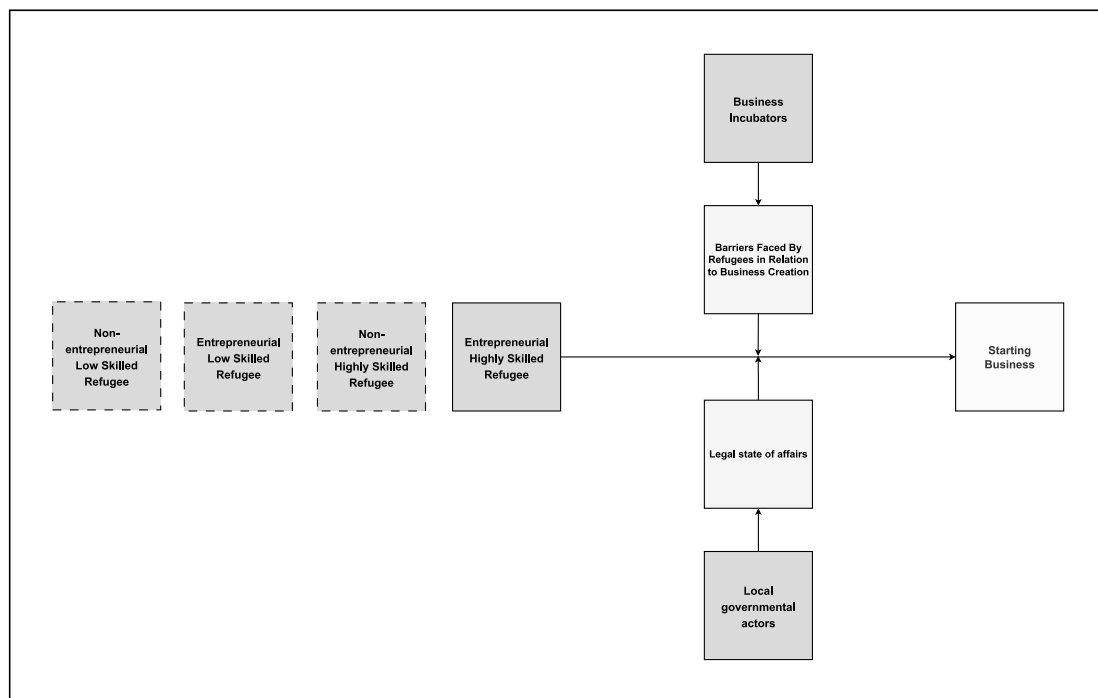


Figure 3.4: Conceptual Model for the Relationships and Targeted Actors

3.5.1 Overlooking Highly Skilled Refugees in Literature

Literature on refugees' labor market integration and entrepreneurial activity, in most instances, fails to recognize that a substantial portion of the refugee community is highly educated. This lack of attention has led to a dearth of analytical work focusing on the specific barriers that highly skilled refugees face when attempting to re-enter their professions, or when they wish to venture into businesses relevant to their studies or previous job experiences. More research is needed to understand the unique challenges and opportunities for this subpopulation of refugees, whose skills could be leveraged for mutual benefits to both the refugees and the host countries.

3.5.2 Policy Gaps in Addressing Highly Skilled Refugees

Existing research regarding the effects of labor integration policies primarily centers on general employment outcomes for refugees. Unfortunately, this research does not usually discriminate between different skill levels, leading to a lack of focus on highly skilled refugees. Literature rarely investigates how policies directed at those most dis-

connected from the labor market, such as low-skilled refugees, indirectly shape policies affecting the highly skilled. This gap highlights the need for targeted research and policies. The one-size-fits-all approach to labor market integration has proven ineffective, demonstrating that different skill levels among refugees necessitate specialized strategies. An examination of the multi-level perspective on highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship could inform new policies to facilitate and stimulate entrepreneurial activities among these individuals.

3.5.3 Role of Highly Skilled Refugees in Policymaking

Often, refugees have little to no influence on the policies that affect them. These policies are governed by different authorities at national, regional, and local levels of policymaking, involving various public, private, and voluntary actors. A participatory approach, involving highly skilled refugees in policy development and decision-making processes, could lead to more effective and tailored solutions. This approach would recognize the unique insights and needs of highly skilled refugees, leading to policies that are more aligned with their actual challenges and potentials.

3.5.4 Business Incubators and Highly Skilled Refugees

Lastly, a small but growing body of work has begun to explore how business incubators interact with and facilitate refugee entrepreneurship. However, there is an urgent need to address the question of what type of business incubator is best suited to meet the needs and challenges of highly skilled refugees. Adding a skills perspective to the research on refugee entrepreneurship in relation to business incubators could have widespread benefits. This would offer valuable insights for highly skilled refugees, business incubators, and policymakers in host countries, allowing for the development of more targeted and effective support systems.

The knowledge gap regarding highly skilled refugees is a multifaceted issue that spans literature, policy, integration strategies, and entrepreneurial support. Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort across academic research, policy formulation, and practical implementation. The potential contributions of highly skilled refugees to host countries' economies and societies are immense, but realizing this potential requires recognizing and addressing the unique challenges and opportunities they present. Investing in research and policies tailored to the specific needs of highly skilled refugees could lead to more inclusive, efficient, and beneficial outcomes for all parties involved.

3.6 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature review highlights several key points regarding the challenges and potential of highly skilled refugees in establishing businesses aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds. Firstly, the review emphasizes that highly skilled refugees face unique challenges due to forced displacement, such as traumatic experiences, language and cultural barriers, lack of recognized credentials, and limited access to resources in their countries of origin. These challenges hinder their integration into the host country's labor market and make entrepreneurship an attractive alternative for socioeconomic integration and rebuilding their lives.

Secondly, it is recognized that refugee entrepreneurship has the potential to contribute positively to the economy of host countries, create job opportunities, and foster social innovations. Highly skilled refugees, with their diverse backgrounds and en-

trepreneurial traits, can bring new perspectives and drive economic growth if provided with the necessary support.

Thirdly, the review emphasizes the importance of business incubators in assisting refugees in their entrepreneurial journeys. Business incubators offer a range of services such as financial support, qualifications, networking opportunities, internationalization support, and fostering innovation. These services can help bridge the gaps and overcome the barriers faced by highly skilled refugees, enabling them to access entrepreneurial resources and increase their chances of success.

Furthermore, the review highlights the heterogeneity among refugee entrepreneurs and emphasizes the need to consider individual barriers and circumstances when designing support programs. One-size-fits-all solutions are not suitable, and a tailored approach is necessary to address the specific needs of highly skilled refugees.

The literature review also identifies a knowledge gap in the research, particularly regarding highly skilled refugees. Existing studies often focus on low-skilled refugees, neglecting the specific barriers faced by highly educated individuals. Additionally, there is a lack of research on the types of business incubators that are most effective in supporting highly skilled refugees.

To fully harness the potential of highly skilled refugees, it is crucial to conduct research that delves into the specific barriers and challenges they encounter. This research should explore the intricacies of their educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and the impact of forced displacement on their careers. By understanding these factors, policymakers and stakeholders can develop targeted policies and support programs that address the needs of highly skilled refugees, facilitate their integration into the entrepreneurial ecosystems of their host countries, and unlock their potential for sustainable entrepreneurship.

Addressing these research gaps and developing targeted policies and support programs can facilitate the economic integration of highly skilled refugees, unlock their potential, and contribute to more inclusive societies that recognize and harness the skills and talents of these individuals. By combining efforts in supporting highly skilled refugees and leveraging the resources and expertise of business incubators, it is possible to create an environment where these individuals can thrive, make significant contributions to the economy, and foster sustainable socio-economic growth in their host countries.

4

RESULTS: THE STATE OF AFFAIRS AND LEGALITIES

This chapter presents the findings derived from a qualitative desk-based research conducted to explore the current situation and legal framework pertaining to highly skilled refugees in the Netherlands and Germany. A combination of primary and secondary sources was employed, with a predominant focus on governmental websites such as the Immigration and Naturalisation Service (IND)¹ in the Netherlands and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)² in Germany. Additionally, online platforms dedicated to asylum-related matters, such as the website of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)^{3,4}, were consulted. By examining these sources, a comprehensive understanding of the state of affairs and the legal landscape surrounding highly skilled refugees in both countries was achieved. These findings will be utilized to address the first sub-research question: **How does the current asylum process function for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands? Additionally, what is the current state of affairs regarding their integration and support?** Furthermore, these findings serve as a foundation for further analysis and interpretation in Chapter 6.

4.1 THE NETHERLANDS

This section focuses specifically on the Netherlands and provides an analysis of the current situation and legal framework concerning highly skilled Syrian refugees. The findings encompass vital aspects and insights acquired through the desk-based research. Firstly, it discusses the prominent governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. Subsequently, it examines the asylum process and explores the integration phase that follows the recognition of refugee status. Additionally, it assesses whether any laws or programs have been established to cater to the needs of highly skilled refugees. Lastly, the research reveals the existence of programs targeting highly skilled migrants, which can serve as a basis for formulating recommendations to expedite the asylum process for this particular group.

4.1.1 Governmental Entities and Other Relevant Stakeholders

When discussing the issue of refugees in the Netherlands, it is crucial to examine the roles and contributions of various entities and stakeholders involved in addressing their needs. These entities and stakeholders encompass both governmental and non-governmental entities. The subsequent section provides an overview of the significant governmental entities, offering concise explanations of their involvement. Subsequently, the section highlights the non-governmental stakeholders involved in this context.

¹ <https://ind.nl/en/residence-permits/asylum/apply-for-asylum-in-the-netherlands>

² <https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/asylfluechtlingsschutz-node.html>

³ <https://help.unhcr.org/ermany/asylum-in-the-netherlands/>

⁴ <https://help.unhcr.org/netherlands/asylum-in-the-netherlands/>

Governmental Entities

1. Ministry of Justice and Security (Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid, JenV): Assumes responsibility for formulating and implementing policies related to refugees. This entails the establishment of laws, regulations, and procedures concerning asylum seekers and refugees, as well as the management of reception centers and oversight of the integration process.
2. The Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND): As a governmental agency, the IND is tasked with processing asylum applications and determining the eligibility of individuals seeking refugee status. Their responsibilities encompass the evaluation of the credibility of asylum claims, conducting interviews, and rendering decisions pertaining to asylum and residence permits.
3. Local Municipalities (Gemeenten): Local municipalities in the Netherlands occupy a significant role in the reception and integration of refugees. They provide accommodation, social welfare support, education, healthcare, and language training within their jurisdictions. Moreover, municipalities collaborate with other organizations to facilitate the integration process.
4. The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (Centraal Orgaan opvang asielzoekers, COA): Functioning as a government organization, the COA oversees reception centers and offers temporary accommodation for asylum seekers during their application process. Their primary objective is to ensure the provision of basic necessities, including shelter, sustenance, and healthcare.
5. Dutch Council for Refugees (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland, VWN): Although *not a governmental agency*, the Dutch Council for Refugees is a prominent organization that works *closely* with the government. It provides legal aid, support, and advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers during the asylum process and integration.
6. Repatriation and Departure Service (Dienst Terugkeer en Vertrek, DT&V): The DT&V is responsible for the voluntary or forced return of rejected asylum seekers and other migrants who are not granted legal status to stay in the Netherlands.

Other Relevant Stakeholders

1. Humanitarian and Refugee Support Organizations: Numerous NGOs actively contribute to supporting refugees in the Netherlands. These organizations offer a broad array of services such as legal assistance, counseling, language training, job placement, and programs aimed at facilitating social integration. Prominent examples include the aforementioned Dutch Refugee Council (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland) and the Red Cross.
2. Educational and Healthcare Institutions: Educational institutions, ranging from schools to universities, as well as healthcare providers, play a vital role in the integration process. These entities provide refugees with access to education and medical services, which are fundamental for successful integration into Dutch society.

3. **Employers and Business Community:** Employers and business organizations engage in various initiatives to provide employment opportunities for refugees. This involvement encompasses vocational training, internships, and job placements, with the ultimate aim of fostering self-reliance among refugees and enabling their contribution to the Dutch labor market.
4. **Community and Religious Organizations:** Local community groups and religious organizations often assume a significant role in supporting refugees. They provide social support, cultural orientation, language exchange programs, and community-building activities, which foster a sense of belonging and facilitate integration.

Stakeholder	Level	Involvement	Power to influence policies on HSR
Governmental Entities			
Ministry of Justice and Security (JenV)	State	Pre	Yes
The Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND)	State	Pre	Yes
Local Municipalities (Gemeenten)	Local	Post	No
The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA)	State	Pre	No
Repatriation and Departure Service (DT&V)	Local	Pre	No
Dutch Council for Refugees (VWN) <i>- not a governmental agency, but works closely with the government</i>	Local	Pre & post	Yes
Other Relevant Stakeholders			
Humanitarian and Refugee Support Organizations <i>- encompass VWN, Red Cross, and similar entities</i>	Local	Post	Yes
Educational and Healthcare Institutions	Local	Post	Yes
Employers and Business Community	Local	Post	Yes
Community and Religious Organizations	Local	Post	No

Table 4.1: Relevant stakeholders in the Netherlands categorized by their typology, operational hierarchy, engagement within the asylum procedure, and their capacity to exert influence on policy-making.

These stakeholders collaborate to ensure the well-being, rights, and integration of refugees in the Netherlands. The concerted efforts of these entities are pivotal in creating a supportive environment and assisting refugees in rebuilding their lives within their new host country.

4.1.2 Asylum Process

The asylum process in the Netherlands encompasses a series of stages that apply universally to refugees, *irrespective of their nationality*. It is imperative to acknowledge the potential variations that may arise due to individual circumstances, legislative modifications, and specific situations. This section presents an academic examination of the sequential phases involved in the asylum process for refugees in the Netherlands,

with a focus on providing a comprehensive analysis of these stages and their potential contingencies:

1. **Arrival in the Netherlands:** Refugees typically enter the Netherlands through either regular channels, such as airports, or irregular channels, including border crossings. Upon arrival, they are often transported to reception centers managed by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). This initial stage marks the beginning of their asylum journey.
2. **Registration:** After arrival, refugees are required to register their asylum claim with the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND). The registration process entails providing personal information, submitting fingerprints, and presenting relevant documentation necessary to initiate the formal asylum process. Typically, this registration occurs at the designated reception center.
3. **Interview and Documentation:** The IND schedules an interview with the refugee to gather comprehensive information about the reasons motivating their asylum application. This interview serves as a critical assessment tool to evaluate the credibility of their claims. During this stage, the refugee is expected to provide any pertinent documents, such as identification papers, passports, or supporting evidence substantiating their need for protection.
4. **Medical Examination:** Refugees are generally offered a medical examination to assess their overall health status and identify any immediate healthcare requirements. This examination serves to ensure their well-being and can also contribute to the substantiation of their asylum claims, particularly if they have experienced physical or psychological trauma.
5. **Asylum Application Processing:** The IND conducts a comprehensive review of the asylum application, incorporating factors such as the interview report, supporting documents, and available country-of-origin information. The purpose of this examination is to evaluate the credibility of the refugee's claims based on their well-founded fear of persecution or exposure to serious harm in Syria. Although the processing time may vary, it typically spans several months.
6. **Decision:** Following the assessment, the IND issues a decision on the asylum application. The possible outcomes include the granting of refugee status, subsidiary protection, or the rejection of the application. If the application is approved, the refugee is awarded a residence permit, which confers legal stay in the Netherlands and enables access to various support services.
7. **Appeal Process:** In the event of a rejected asylum application, the applicant retains the right to appeal the decision within a specified timeframe. During the appeal process, the individual may submit additional evidence or present further arguments to strengthen their case. Adjudication of the appeal rests with the courts, and a decision is rendered based on the merits of the case.
8. **Integration and Resettlement:** Upon the successful recognition of asylum status, refugees enter the integration phase. This stage involves active participation in integration programs, including language courses, civic orientation programs, and vocational training, designed to facilitate their social and economic integration.

into Dutch society. Support may also be provided in finding suitable housing and employment opportunities.

It is pertinent to acknowledge that this outline provides a general framework of the asylum process in the Netherlands and *does not pertain solely to Syrian refugees*. Moreover, individual cases may involve additional steps, requirements, or specific circumstances. Relevant governmental sources strongly recommend that refugees seek legal counsel and support from organizations like the Dutch Refugee Council (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland) to effectively navigate the asylum process and secure the most favorable outcome for their individual situation.

4.1.3 Processing Times of Asylum Requests

The evaluation of asylum requests in the Netherlands has its own unique set of complexities and practices. The following points sheds light on the processing times and the different factors contributing to their variations.

- **Standard and Extended Procedures:** The asylum process in the Netherlands comprises two main tracks: the standard procedure, typically completed within six days, and an extended procedure that can take up to six months. Circumstances necessitating further investigation or legal complexities may lead to the use of the extended procedure.
- **Dublin Regulation:** As part of the EU, the Netherlands adheres to the Dublin Regulation, determining which member state is responsible for processing an asylum request. This can add delays, particularly if transfer to another EU country is deemed necessary.
- **Factors Influencing Timeframes:** Similar to other European countries, processing times in the Netherlands can be affected by various factors, including the influx of applications, the country of origin, the complexity of individual cases, and the availability of interpreters and legal representation. Strategic staffing and efficiency measures are used to mitigate delays.
- **Accelerated Tracks and Safe Country Procedures:** For applicants from countries deemed “safe” by the Dutch government, an accelerated procedure may be applied. This has raised both efficiency and concerns regarding fairness and thorough evaluation.
- **Implications of Processing Times:** Delays in processing have significant implications for asylum seekers in the Netherlands, affecting their access to housing, education, and integration programs. Prolonged times also influence public sentiment and political discourse around immigration and asylum policies.

Recent Trends in Syrian Refugee Processing Times

As of 2023, the IND’s target for completing the General Asylum Procedure remains at six months, but the actual data tell a different story. In 2023, the processing times for asylum requests under track 4 of the General Asylum Process, specifically pertaining to Syrian refugees, were observed to be prolonged, exhibiting variability in decision-making efficiency. In January, the processing time was recorded at 42 weeks, with only 33% of the decisions being made within the decision period. This time slightly

increased to 43 weeks in both February and March, yet a positive trend was observed in the decisions made within the decision period, escalating from 44% in February to 55% in March. This data represents a marked contrast in processing efficiency and consistency in decision-making, potentially highlighting an underlying need for policy evaluation and procedural reforms within the General Asylum Process for this period.

In conclusion, the processing times of asylum requests in the Netherlands are a multifaceted issue, influenced by administrative, legal, and individual factors. Continued attention to both efficiency and adherence to international and national legal standards is essential in ensuring the robustness and integrity of the Dutch asylum system.

4.1.4 Post Asylum Recognition (Integration)

After receiving recognition as a refugee in the Netherlands, individuals enter a process of integration to help them adapt to Dutch society, access services, and become self-sufficient. This integration process applies universally to all refugees, regardless of their country of origin, and generally encompasses the following elements:

1. **Residence Permit and Basic Services:** Upon receiving refugee status, individuals are granted a residence permit, allowing them to legally reside in the Netherlands. They gain access to basic services such as healthcare, social welfare, and housing assistance.
2. **Dutch Language Training:** Language proficiency is a crucial aspect of integration. Refugees are offered Dutch language courses to acquire the necessary language skills for effective communication, employment, and social integration. These courses are often provided by municipalities or language institutes and may be mandatory for certain individuals.
3. **Civic Orientation:** Civic orientation programs aim to familiarize refugees with Dutch society, culture, norms, and values. These programs provide information on various aspects of daily life, such as education, healthcare, housing, labor rights, and Dutch legal and political systems. Civic orientation courses may be organized by municipalities or other organizations.
4. **Education and Vocational Training:** Children of refugee families are enrolled in regular education systems, with additional support provided through integration classes if needed. Adult refugees are encouraged to pursue further education or vocational training to enhance their skills and qualifications for the Dutch job market. Scholarships and financial assistance may be available for this purpose.
5. **Employment and Job Training:** Integration efforts focus on promoting employment opportunities for refugees. Job training programs, mentoring initiatives, and career guidance services are offered to help refugees develop job search skills, understand the Dutch labor market, and find suitable employment. Employers may collaborate with municipalities and organizations to provide internships, apprenticeships, or employment opportunities for refugees.
6. **Social Support and Community Involvement:** Local communities and organizations play a vital role in supporting refugees' integration. Social support networks, community groups, and religious organizations often provide assistance, mentoring, and social activities to foster a sense of belonging and facilitate interac-

tion with Dutch residents. Refugees are encouraged to participate in community events and engage with the broader society.

7. **Housing and Accommodation:** Refugees may initially reside in reception centers or temporary housing facilities managed by the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers (COA). The goal is to help them transition to more permanent housing arrangements, either through social housing or private rentals. Municipalities collaborate with housing associations and organizations to facilitate the housing process for refugees.
8. **Cultural Mediation and Intermediaries:** Cultural mediators or intermediaries, who are often individuals with a similar background or shared experiences, can assist refugees in navigating the integration process. They provide support, guidance, and interpretation services, helping refugees understand cultural nuances and address any challenges they may encounter.

It is crucial to note that the integration process is not limited to these steps and can vary based on individual circumstances, such as age, education level, proficiency in the language, and prior experiences, and is not exclusive to Syrian refugees. The Dutch government, municipalities, NGOs, and various organizations collaborate to provide comprehensive support and services throughout the integration journey, with the ultimate goal of facilitating refugees' successful integration into Dutch society.

4.1.5 Policies for Highly Skilled Refugees

In the Netherlands, highly skilled refugees are not subject to separate laws or regulations solely based on their skill level. However, there are certain policies and programs in place that can benefit highly skilled refugees in their integration process. These initiatives aim to support their access to the labor market and facilitate their transition into Dutch society. Here are some key considerations:

1. **Recognition of Qualifications:** The Dutch government recognizes the importance of evaluating the qualifications and expertise of highly skilled refugees. They have established procedures to assess and validate the educational credentials and professional qualifications of refugees. This recognition can help refugees in pursuing employment opportunities that align with their skills and qualifications.
2. **Recognition of Experience:** While formal qualifications are essential, the Dutch labor market also recognizes the value of professional experience. Highly skilled refugees with significant work experience in their home countries may receive recognition or consideration for their relevant expertise, which can enhance their prospects for employment in the Netherlands.
3. **Tailored Support from Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs):** NGOs and support agencies, such as the Dutch Refugee Council (VluchtelingenWerk Nederland) and local initiatives, provide specialized assistance to refugees, including highly skilled individuals. These organizations offer guidance on job placement, networking opportunities, mentoring, and other support services to help refugees navigate the Dutch labor market.

It's important to note that while these initiatives exist, the actual experiences and outcomes for highly skilled refugees can vary depending on individual circumstances,

such as language proficiency, cultural adaptation, and the specific job market conditions.

Highly Skilled Migrant Programs

The Netherlands has implemented a range of programs intended to attract and retain highly skilled migrants, with the aim of leveraging their expertise to bolster the Dutch economy and address labor market gaps. These programs provide avenues for facilitating the entry and residence of talented individuals. This section provides an academic overview of the key programs available:

1. **Highly Skilled Migrant Program (HSM):** The Highly Skilled Migrant Program, also known as the “Kennismigrant” scheme, targets non-EU/EEA nationals who have received a job offer from a recognized Dutch employer. This program enables employers to sponsor highly skilled migrants by providing them with a job contract that meets predefined salary threshold criteria. The HSM program streamlines administrative procedures and facilitates the issuance of work permits for these migrants.
2. **European Blue Card:** The European Blue Card serves as a residence and work permit specifically tailored for highly skilled non-EU/EEA nationals who have received employment offers in the Netherlands. Eligible individuals must possess higher education degrees and intend to work in positions that meet predetermined salary requirements. The Blue Card offers various benefits, including simplified family reunification processes and the potential for mobility within the European Union.
3. **Orientation Year for Highly Educated Persons:** The Orientation Year, also known as the “Search Year,” represents a program that permits international graduates from recognized Dutch educational institutions to remain in the Netherlands for up to one year subsequent to completing their studies. During this period, graduates are given the opportunity to search for employment or establish their own businesses. The Orientation Year facilitates the acquisition of work experience and aids in the transition from study to employment.
4. **Startup Visa:** The Startup Visa program caters to innovative entrepreneurs from outside the EU/EEA seeking to establish startup ventures in the Netherlands. To be eligible, applicants must possess innovative business ideas, receive endorsement from recognized facilitators (e.g., startup incubators or accelerators), and meet specific financial requirements. The Startup Visa provides a one-year residence permit, with the possibility of extension contingent upon the fulfillment of specific criteria by the startup.
5. **Intra-Corporate Transfers (ICT):** The ICT program allows multinational companies to transfer their non-EU/EEA employees to Dutch branches or subsidiaries. This program simplifies the temporary relocation of highly skilled employees within the same company. The ICT permit is subject to certain conditions, including minimum salary thresholds and work experience requirements.
6. **Science and Research Programs:** The Netherlands has implemented dedicated programs aimed at attracting researchers and scientists, such as the “Scientific

Researcher” scheme. These programs provide opportunities for researchers to work at recognized research institutes, universities, or companies. Specialized residence permits are available for researchers, facilitating their stay and work in the country.

These programs represent key initiatives offered exclusively to highly skilled migrants in the Netherlands and *are not accessible or available to highly skilled refugees*. Each program has distinct eligibility criteria, salary requirements, and application procedures. Prospective candidates are strongly advised to carefully review the program requirements and consult with relevant authorities or seek advice from immigration lawyers to ensure compliance with the requirements and obtain a clear understanding of the application process.

4.1.6 Summary

The Netherlands has a well-established system for supporting and integrating refugees. Various stakeholders, such as governmental institutions, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND), local municipalities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), collaborate to provide essential services and assistance to refugees.

The asylum process for refugees in the Netherlands involves several steps, including arrival, registration, interviews, medical examinations, application processing, decision-making, and, if necessary, the appeal process. Successful applicants enter the integration phase, where they receive a residence permit, access to basic services, language training, civic orientation, education, vocational training, employment support, and community involvement.

While highly skilled refugees in the Netherlands are not subject to separate laws based solely on their skill level, there are policies and programs in place to benefit them. These include the recognition of qualifications, integration support programs, recognition of professional experience, and tailored assistance from NGOs.

The Netherlands has also implemented programs specifically designed to attract and retain highly skilled migrants, such as the Highly Skilled Migrant Program (HSM), European Blue Card, Orientation Year for Highly Educated Persons, Startup Visa, Intra-Corporate Transfers (ICT), and science and research programs. These initiatives aim to facilitate the entry, residence, and employment of talented individuals and contribute to the Dutch economy.

Overall, the Netherlands demonstrates a commitment to providing comprehensive support and services to refugees, to ensure their successful integration into Dutch society.

4.2 GERMANY

This section provides an academic analysis of Germany context regarding highly skilled Syrian refugees. Drawing on desk-based research, it presents key findings on various aspects related to this group. Specifically, it examines the roles of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders, explores the asylum process, investigates the integration phase post-recognition of refugee status, evaluates existing laws and programs for highly skilled refugees, and highlights relevant programs targeting highly skilled migrants. The insights gained from this analysis can inform recommendations for expediting the asylum process for this specific group.

4.2.1 Governmental Entities and Other Relevant Stakeholders

When addressing the matter of refugees in Germany, it is essential to thoroughly analyze the roles and contributions of a range of entities and stakeholders who are actively involved in addressing their needs. These entities and stakeholders comprise governmental and non-governmental entities. The following section presents a comprehensive overview of the prominent governmental entities, providing succinct explanations of their respective involvements. Subsequently, the next section emphasizes the key non-governmental stakeholders operating within this context.

Governmental Entities

1. Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Innern, BMI): The Ministry of the Interior is responsible for formulating and implementing policies related to migration, asylum, and refugee issues. It provides guidance to other agencies involved in refugee matters.
2. Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF): BAMF assumes responsibility for processing asylum applications and making determinations on refugee status in Germany. It conducts interviews, evaluates eligibility for international protection, and provides legal and administrative assistance throughout the asylum process.
3. Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit, BA): The BA focuses on facilitating the labor market integration of refugees. It offers job placement services, vocational training opportunities, and support measures to help refugees secure employment and access relevant training programs.
4. Federal Office for Family Affairs and Social Services (Bundesamt für Familie und zivilgesellschaftliche Aufgaben, BAFzA): BAFzA is responsible for the implementation of social welfare programs for refugees, including financial support, accommodation, and social assistance.
5. State Refugee Councils (Landesflüchtlingsräte): These councils exist at the state level and act as coordination bodies, providing advice, support, and advocacy for refugees and asylum seekers. They work closely with local authorities and NGOs.
6. State and Local Governments (Länder and Kommunen): In Germany's federal system, state and local governments bear significant responsibility for receiving and accommodating refugees within their respective jurisdictions. State govern-

ments oversee integration policies, while local governments manage reception centers and provide essential support in areas such as housing, education, and social welfare.

7. Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (Bundesamt für Bevölkerungsschutz und Katastrophenhilfe, BBK): The BBK supports the federal and state authorities in emergency situations, including the provision of emergency accommodation and humanitarian assistance during large-scale refugee arrivals.

Stakeholder	Level	Involvement	Power to influence policies on HSR
Governmental Entities			
Ministry of the Interior (BMI)	State	Pre	Yes
Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)	State	Pre	Yes
Federal Employment Agency (BA)	Local	Post	Yes
Federal Office for Family Affairs and Social Services (BAFzA)	State	Post	No
State Refugee Councils (Landesflüchtlingsräte)	Local	Pre & post	No
State and Local Governments (Länder and Kommunen)	Local	Pre & post	No
Federal Office for Civil Protection and Disaster Assistance (BBK)	State	Pre	No
Other Relevant Stakeholders			
Civil Society Organizations	Local	Post	No
Social Welfare Agencies	Local	Post	No
Education Institutions	Local	Post	No
Employers and Business Community	Local	Post	Yes
Healthcare Providers	Local	Post	No
Volunteer Networks	Local	Pre & post	No

Table 4.2: Relevant stakeholders in Germany categorized by their typology, operational hierarchy, engagement within the asylum procedure, and their capacity to exert influence on policy-making.

Other Relevant Stakeholders

1. Civil Society Organizations: Numerous civil society organizations operate at the national, regional, and local levels to support refugees. These organizations deliver a range of services, including language courses, counseling, legal assistance, vocational training, and social integration programs. They often bridge gaps in services provided by government agencies.
2. Social Welfare Agencies: Including municipal social welfare offices and non-profit organizations, play a pivotal role in providing social and financial support to refugees. They assist refugees in accessing social benefits, healthcare services, housing, and other essential resources during the integration process.

3. **Education Institutions:** Schools, universities, and vocational training centers have a key role in the education and skill development of refugee children, young adults, and adults. They offer language courses, integration classes, academic programs, and vocational training opportunities to facilitate the integration of refugees into the education system and the labor market.
4. **Employers and Business Community:** Employers and business associations actively engage in initiatives to provide employment opportunities for refugees. They offer internships, apprenticeships, and job placements, thereby assisting refugees in acquiring work experience, building professional networks, and achieving self-sufficiency.
5. **Healthcare Providers:** Healthcare institutions and professionals contribute to meeting the healthcare needs of refugees. They offer medical services, mental health support, and access to healthcare facilities, thereby ensuring the physical and mental well-being of refugees.
6. **Volunteer Networks:** Germany benefits from a robust tradition of volunteerism, with numerous individuals and grassroots organizations providing support to refugees. Volunteer networks offer language assistance, mentorship, community integration activities, and cultural exchange programs, fostering social connections and assisting refugees in adapting to their new environment.

These governmental entities, along with non-governmental stakeholders, collaborate to ensure the welfare, rights, and successful integration of refugees in Germany. By pooling their efforts and resources, they strive to provide comprehensive support and services to refugees throughout their asylum and integration journey.

4.2.2 Asylum Process

The asylum process in Germany comprises various stages that are relevant to all refugees, *regardless of their nationality*. It is essential to recognize that these steps are subject to potential variations influenced by individual circumstances, legislative amendments, and specific situations. This section provides an academic analysis of the sequential phases involved in the asylum process for refugees in Germany:

1. **Arrival:** Refugees arrive in Germany via regular or irregular channels and undergo registration, where they provide personal information and receive initial accommodation and support.
2. **Registration:** Asylum seekers must register their asylum claim at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), submitting biometric data and detailing the reasons motivating their asylum application.
3. **Initial Interview:** The BAMF conducts an initial interview to gather comprehensive information regarding the asylum seeker's background, reasons for leaving their home country, and circumstances justifying refugee status or subsidiary protection.
4. **Documentation and Investigation:** Asylum seekers are expected to submit relevant documentation substantiating their asylum claim, such as identification papers or evidence of persecution. The BAMF may also conduct investigations

and compile country-of-origin information to assess the credibility of the asylum application.

5. Accommodation: During the asylum process, asylum seekers are provided with temporary accommodation in reception centers or designated facilities until a decision is rendered on their application.
6. Asylum Application Processing: The BAMF undertakes a thorough review of the asylum application, taking into account individual circumstances and country-specific information. This evaluation involves assessing the reasons for seeking asylum, potential risks faced in the home country, and eligibility for refugee status or subsidiary protection.
7. Substantiation Interview: As part of the application process, asylum seekers undergo a detailed interview, referred to as the "substantiation interview." This interview focuses on the individual's personal experiences, reasons for leaving their home country, and specific grounds for seeking protection.
8. Decision: Following a comprehensive review, the BAMF renders a decision on the asylum claim, which may entail granting refugee status, subsidiary protection, or rejecting the application. The decision is conveyed through written correspondence outlining the grounds for the determination.
9. Appeal Process: In cases where the asylum application is rejected, the applicant has the right to appeal within a specified timeframe. The appeal is subject to review by an administrative court, which evaluates legal and factual aspects of the case. If the appeal is successful, the case may be remanded to the BAMF for reconsideration.
10. Integration and Resettlement: Approved refugees enter the integration phase, engaging in programs aimed at their social integration, language proficiency, and employment prospects. These programs include language courses, orientation sessions, vocational training, and employment support measures.

It is pertinent to acknowledge that this outline provides a general framework of the asylum process in Germany and *does not pertain solely to Syrian refugees*. Moreover, individual cases may involve additional steps, requirements, or specific circumstances.

4.2.3 Processing Times of Asylum Requests

The processing of asylum requests in Germany has seen marked variations over the years, influenced by numerous interconnected factors. The following points offer an analytical insight into the timeframe and the elements affecting it.

- Administrative Capacity: The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) oversees the processing of asylum applications. An influx of applications during critical periods, such as the refugee crisis of 2015-2016, led to substantial delays. Efforts to increase the staffing and resources of the BAMF have subsequently improved processing times but remain an ongoing challenge.
- Legal Framework: Governed by the Asylum Act and the Residence Act, Germany's process also adheres to the Dublin Regulation, adding complexity and potential delays in determining the responsible EU member state. Reforms aimed

at expediting the process have led to the introduction of accelerated procedures for specific cases, though variations in implementation still persist.

- **Complexity of Individual Cases:** The processing time for an individual asylum request in Germany can range from a few months to several years. Factors affecting this include the applicant's country of origin, the complexity of the claim, availability of documentation, legal representation, and any subsequent appeals. Priority is sometimes given to cases perceived as more straightforward or originating from countries with high recognition rates.
- **Implications of Delays:** Extended processing times hold significant implications for asylum seekers, affecting access to various rights and integration measures. These delays also have broader social and political ramifications, influencing public opinion and policy debates.
- **Efforts to Reduce Processing Times:** Recognizing the challenges associated with lengthy processing times, the German government has implemented measures to increase efficiency. These include targeted staffing increases, the use of technology to streamline processes, and ongoing monitoring and adaptation of policies and practices.

Recent Trends in Syrian Refugee Processing Times

Over the seven-year period from 2016 to 2022, the processing times for asylum requests from Syrian refugees in Germany exhibited considerable fluctuations. In 2016, the processing time was relatively low at 3.8 months, but witnessed a significant spike to 7.0 months in 2017. Subsequently, there was a decline to 4.9 months in 2018, followed by a moderate increase to 5.3 months in 2019 and 6.0 months in 2020. A decrease was observed in 2021, bringing the processing time to 4.8 months, before it surged again to 7.9 months in 2022. This oscillating pattern in processing times reflects a complex interplay of administrative, social, and political factors that may have impacted the efficiency and efficacy of the asylum process for Syrian refugees in Germany ⁵.

In conclusion, the processing times of asylum requests in Germany are multifaceted and subject to a wide array of influences. Understanding these complexities requires a nuanced approach that considers legal, administrative, humanitarian, and individual factors. Continued efforts to balance efficiency with fairness and adherence to international obligations are vital for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of Germany's asylum system.

4.2.4 Post Asylum Recognition (Integration)

Upon the recognition of asylum in Germany, refugees undergo a series of steps aimed at facilitating their integration into society. The following outlines the general process that ensues after the recognition of asylum:

1. **Issuance of Residence Permit:** Following the granting of asylum, refugees receive a residence permit, which serves as official documentation of their legal status

⁵ Source: Federal Government, Reply to parliamentary questions by The Left: 18/11262, 21 February 2017, 19/1631, 13 April 2018; 19/13366, 19 September 2019, 19/23630, 23 October 2020, 20/940, 7 March 2022, 10/20/6052, 14 March 2023, available in German at: <https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/20/060/2006052.pdf>

within Germany. This permit enables them to reside in the country and affords certain rights and entitlements.

2. **Integration Support:** Recognized refugees are eligible for various integration measures and support programs. These initiatives are designed to assist refugees in acquiring the German language, comprehending the intricacies of German society, and developing essential skills for employment. Integration courses, vocational training programs, and counseling services are commonly provided to facilitate the successful integration of refugees into their newfound communities.
3. **Housing and Social Welfare:** Recognized refugees have access to housing support and social welfare benefits. Local authorities are responsible for aiding refugees in finding suitable accommodation and offering financial assistance for fundamental necessities such as food, clothing, and healthcare. The social welfare system ensures that refugees have access to essential services and support during their initial settlement phase.
4. **Employment and Vocational Training:** Recognized refugees possess the right to work and pursue employment opportunities within Germany. They can seek employment in diverse sectors based on their qualifications, skills, and the demands of the labor market. Furthermore, vocational training programs are available to refugees who aspire to enhance their existing skills or embark on alternative career paths.
5. **Family Reunification:** Recognized refugees may be eligible to initiate family reunification procedures to bring their immediate family members to Germany. The specific requirements and procedures for family reunification can vary, but typically involve demonstrating the capacity to financially support family members and providing suitable accommodation.
6. **Permanent Residency and Citizenship:** After several years of residing in Germany as recognized refugees, individuals may be eligible to apply for permanent residency. This status offers enhanced stability and additional rights. Additionally, refugees can pursue German citizenship by fulfilling specific criteria, including demonstrating proficiency in the German language, passing a citizenship test, and exhibiting long-term integration into German society.

It is of utmost importance to acknowledge that the specific steps and procedures involved in the asylum process may vary depending on individual circumstances, regional regulations, and updates to asylum and immigration policies. It is essential to emphasize that the information provided is not exclusive to Syrian refugees but applies to all refugees seeking asylum in Germany.

Given the dynamic nature of asylum and immigration policies, it is highly recommended that refugees seek guidance and support from local authorities, refugee support organizations, or legal professionals. This will ensure that they receive accurate and up-to-date information tailored to their unique circumstances, enabling them to navigate the asylum process effectively and make informed decisions.

4.2.5 Highly skilled refugees

Germany does not have specific legislation exclusively targeting highly skilled refugees. However, recognized refugees, including those possessing high skills or qualifications,

generally enjoy the same rights and benefits as other refugees in Germany. The German government is committed to supporting the integration of all refugees, irrespective of their skill level.

To assist highly skilled refugees in their integration and employment prospects, Germany has implemented several policies, initiatives, and programs. These include:

1. **Recognition Act:** The Recognition Act (Anerkennungsgesetz) facilitates the recognition of foreign qualifications held by highly skilled refugees in Germany. This legislation streamlines and expedites the recognition process for professions that require formal qualifications, such as doctors, engineers, and teachers. The act provides guidance, counseling, and financial support to refugees seeking recognition of their qualifications, empowering them to pursue professional opportunities in their respective fields.
2. **Integration Courses:** Germany offers integration courses (Integrationskurse) designed to support the integration of refugees, including highly skilled individuals. These courses provide language training and orientation on German culture, society, and the labor market. The objective of these courses is to enhance refugees' language proficiency, facilitate their social integration, and improve their employability.

These initiatives reflect Germany's commitment to fostering the successful integration of highly skilled refugees into German society and the labor market. By recognizing foreign qualifications and providing integration support, Germany aims to harness the potential of highly skilled refugees and facilitate their contribution to the country's social and economic fabric.

Highly Skilled Migrant Programs

Germany has established several programs aimed at attracting and facilitating the immigration of highly skilled migrants. These programs seek to address labor market demands, stimulate economic growth, and promote the successful integration of skilled individuals into German society. The following are key programs available:

1. **EU Blue Card:** The EU Blue Card is a residence and work permit designed for highly skilled non-EU nationals. It is applicable to individuals who possess recognized qualifications and have a job offer in Germany that meets specific salary requirements. The Blue Card offers benefits such as streamlined family reunification procedures and the ability to move within the European Union.
2. **Skilled Immigration Act:** Implemented in March 2020, the Skilled Immigration Act aims to attract skilled workers from outside the EU to fill gaps in the labor market. This act provides opportunities for individuals with vocational training, higher education degrees, or specific professional qualifications to seek employment in Germany. It simplifies the immigration process by offering more flexible requirements and facilitating the recognition of foreign qualifications.
3. **Specialist Worker Program:** The Specialist Worker Program, also known as the Fachkräftezuwanderungsgesetz, focuses on attracting highly skilled workers in sectors where there is a shortage of qualified professionals. It streamlines the en-

try and residence process for individuals with specialized skills or qualifications in areas such as IT, engineering, healthcare, and skilled crafts.

4. Job Seeker Visa: The Job Seeker Visa allows highly skilled individuals from non-EU countries to stay in Germany for up to six months to explore employment opportunities. This visa provides individuals with a dedicated period to search for jobs, attend interviews, and secure employment. Upon finding employment, they can transition to a work permit or another appropriate residence permit.
5. Self-Employment Visa: The Self-Employment Visa enables highly skilled individuals to establish their own businesses in Germany. It is designed for entrepreneurs, freelancers, and self-employed professionals who have a viable business plan and sufficient financial resources to support themselves.

While these programs provide specialized routes for highly skilled migrants to enter and work in Germany based on their qualifications, expertise, and the prevailing employment prospects, *highly skilled refugees are unable to access or participate in these programs*. Each program entails specific eligibility criteria, requirements, and application procedures. It is strongly recommended that prospective applicants conduct thorough research, conscientiously evaluate their individual circumstances, and seek guidance from relevant authorities or immigration professionals to effectively navigate the application process.

4.2.6 Summary

In conclusion, Germany has a comprehensive system in place to support the integration of refugees, including highly skilled individuals. The country has a range of stakeholders involved, including the federal government, migration and employment agencies, local authorities, civil society organizations, and healthcare providers, all working together to address the needs of refugees and facilitate their successful integration.

The asylum process in Germany involves several stages, including arrival, registration, interviews, documentation, accommodation, application processing, and decision-making. Upon receiving asylum recognition, refugees are granted a residence permit and can access various integration support programs, housing assistance, employment opportunities, vocational training, and family reunification procedures. They also have the opportunity to apply for permanent residency and citizenship after residing in Germany for a certain period.

While there are no specific laws exclusively targeting highly skilled refugees in Germany, recognized refugees with high skills are entitled to the same rights and benefits as other refugees. Integration courses and the recognition of foreign qualifications further support the successful integration of highly skilled individuals.

The German government has implemented programs such as the EU Blue Card, Skilled Immigration Act, Specialist Worker Program, and Job Seeker Visa, which provide pathways for highly skilled migrants to live and work in Germany.

Overall, Germany demonstrates a commitment to integrating highly skilled refugees and migrants into society, providing them with opportunities for employment, education, and social welfare. The collaborative efforts of various stakeholders and the availability of programs and initiatives contribute to the overall integration and well-being of refugees in Germany.

4.3 COMPARISON OF COUNTRIES OF INTEREST

4.3.1 On Governmental Entities and Other Relevant Stakeholders

Both the Netherlands and Germany have similar stakeholders involved in supporting refugees. The Dutch and German governments, along with their respective immigration agencies, oversee the asylum process and provide support structures. Local municipalities and NGOs play essential roles in accommodating and integrating refugees into society. The main difference lies in Germany's federal structure, where collaboration between the federal government and individual states is crucial for effective coordination and implementation of refugee-related policies.

4.3.2 On Asylum Process

The asylum processes in the Netherlands and Germany exhibit both similarities and differences. In both countries, individuals seeking asylum are required to initiate the asylum application procedure and undergo interviews to furnish pertinent information regarding their background and motives for seeking refuge. The immigration authorities, namely the IND in the Netherlands and the BAMF in Germany, meticulously assess the applications and determine the refugee status. In case of rejection, applicants retain the right to challenge the decision through an appeals process in both jurisdictions. Upon successful asylum grant, refugees receive comprehensive integration support, encompassing language instruction, employment guidance, and housing assistance. Nonetheless, it is important to note that specific details and timelines may exhibit variances. The schematic representation in Figure (4.1) below illustrates the three distinct phases of the asylum process.

4.3.3 On Integration

The Netherlands and Germany both prioritize refugee integration through comprehensive policies. Both countries emphasize language learning as a crucial aspect of integration and provide access to language courses. Education and vocational training opportunities are offered to enhance skills and employability. Employment support and job placement services are available to facilitate economic integration. Social support services and community engagement programs aim to foster social connections and community integration. While there are similarities in their approaches, specific programs and implementation methods may differ.

4.3.4 On Highly Skilled Refugees

While there are no specific laws targeting highly skilled refugees, both countries have implemented initiatives to support them. Germany's Recognition Act expedites qualification recognition, and integration courses enhance language skills and social integration. In the Netherlands, qualifications and experience of refugees are recognized, NGOs provide tailored support, and the labor market values expertise. Individual circumstances and factors like language proficiency and cultural adaptation impact outcomes in both countries. Overall, both nations strive to tap into the potential of highly skilled refugees for social and economic contributions.

It is important to consider that while these support initiatives exist, the experiences and outcomes for highly skilled refugees can vary depending on individual circumstances, including language proficiency, cultural adaptation, and the specific job market conditions. However, both Germany and the Netherlands share a commitment to facilitating

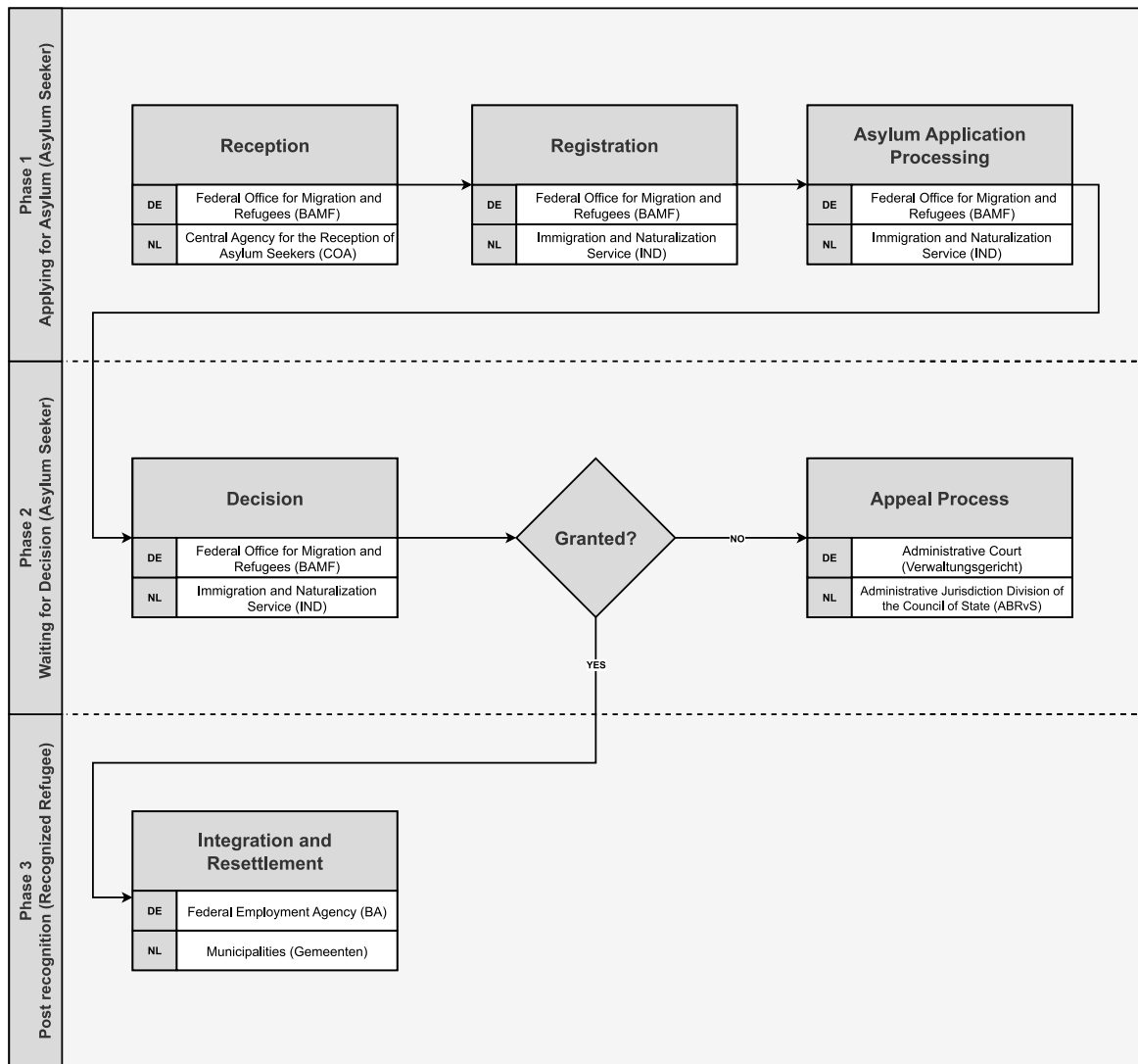


Figure 4.1: An overview of the asylum process in countries of interest, focusing on the governmental entities involved.

the successful integration of highly skilled refugees into their respective societies, recognizing the valuable contributions they can make to the labor market and broader societal benefits.

5 | RESULTS: INTERVIEWS

This chapter provides a comprehensive data analysis based on the method discussed in Section 2.5 of Chapter 2. It delves into the interviews conducted with highly skilled refugees and business incubators. The primary objective of this chapter is to set the groundwork for addressing the subsequent sub-research questions:

- What are the legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related barriers faced by highly skilled refugees starting a ventures aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds?
- What is the ideal business incubator for providing services to address the barriers faced by highly skilled entrepreneurial refugees?
- How can business incubators collaborate with local governmental actors to develop and implement long-term solutions for highly skilled refugees and host countries?

The chapter is structured into three distinct sections: "On Barriers", "On Business Incubators", and "On Policies", corresponding to the aforementioned sub-research questions. Each section provides valuable insights and perspectives on the respective topic.

5.1 ON BARRIERS

This section outlines the analysis of interviews conducted with highly skilled refugees, thereby providing insights into the multifaceted perspectives and experiences of this cohort in the context of the entrepreneurial journey and attendant obstacles. The analytical process that was employed involved a rigorous examination of the raw data, with an initial breakdown into first order concepts, representing immediate interpretations.

These concepts were subsequently grouped into second order themes, encompassing broader abstractions and thematic insights. Through a systematic synthesis, these themes were aggregated into five distinct dimensions that encapsulate the overarching challenges faced by highly skilled refugees. These dimensions are as follows:

1. **Legislative Barriers**
Legal obstacles that hinder entrepreneurial endeavors.
2. **Administrative Barriers**
Bureaucratic obstacles that hinder entrepreneurial endeavors.
3. **Financial Barriers**
Challenges related to capital, funding, and financial management.
4. **Socio-cultural Barriers**
Cultural and social constraints affecting integration and entrepreneurial success.
5. **Market-Related Barriers:**
Difficulties related to market access, competition, and positioning.
6. **Access Entrepreneurship Barriers**
Issues in accessing resources, networks, and opportunities vital for starting and growing a business.

The specific process by which these aggregated dimensions were derived is illustrated in Figures 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6. These diagrams explain the relationship between the first order concepts, second order themes, and aggregated dimensions, providing a visual and comprehensive representation of the analytical methodology.

Additionally, this section incorporates the insights obtained from interviews with managerial staff in business incubators. These supplementary viewpoints augment the understanding of the barriers encountered by highly skilled refugees, extending the analysis to include the observations and perspectives of salient stakeholders. Together, these elements come together to form a nuanced, multi-dimensional understanding of the complexities underlying the entrepreneurial experiences of highly skilled refugees.

5.1.1 Legislative Barriers

This sub-section delves into the legislative barriers that highly skilled refugees encounter in the Netherlands and Germany, exploring the complex landscape they must navigate to pursue entrepreneurial endeavors. The discussion is structured around three principal challenges: legal and regulatory restrictions, bureaucratic obstacles and the protracted nature of credential recognition, and the complexity of legislation and legal literacy.

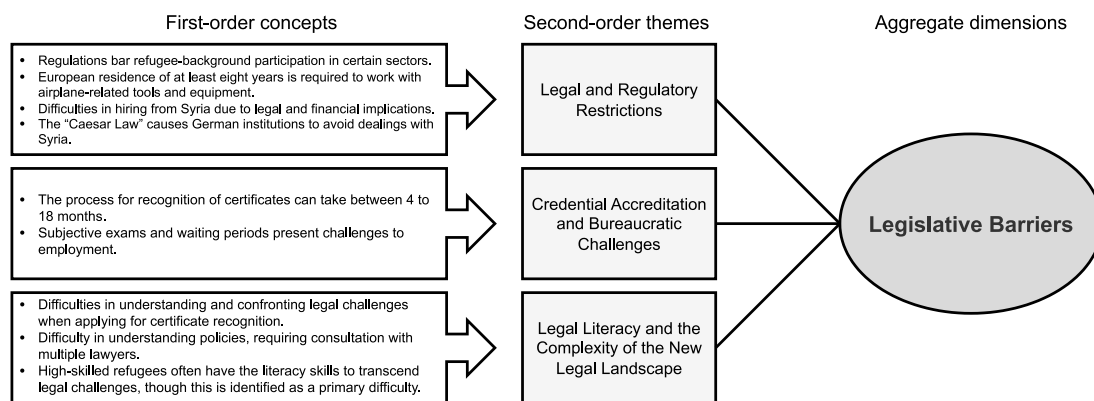


Figure 5.1: Data structure - Legislative Barriers

1. Legal and Regulatory Restrictions

A significant challenge faced by highly skilled refugees, such as HSR-1-NL and HSR-1-DE, lies in the stringent legal and regulatory frameworks that limit their entrepreneurial endeavors.

HSR-1-NL's attempt to venture into the airplane supply chain in the Netherlands illustrates this constraint vividly. The regulations required living in European countries for at least eight to ten years for those engaging in activities related to airplane parts and tools due to perceived security hazards. Such stipulations inadvertently barred HSR-1-NL from executing his business ideas solely based on his refugee background. Similarly, the anecdote about HSR-1-NL's acquaintance being unable to undertake a project in security systems emphasizes this hindrance further.

In HSR-1-DE's case, his experience in Germany also highlights legal barriers such as the Caesar Law ¹ and apprehension towards dealing with Syrian entities. These issues not only complicate hiring processes but also raise concerns for financial institutions, casting a "big question mark and exclamation mark" over transactions involving Syria.

The legal and regulatory barriers highlighted by HSR-1-NL and HSR-1-DE are consistent with previous research that has shown how legal status, immigration laws, and security concerns can create significant obstacles for refugees trying to establish businesses (Betts et al., 2017; Bloch, Galvin, & Harrell-Bond, 2000). The focus on security hazards and restrictions based on refugee background adds to the body of literature illustrating that regulations often reflect a broader societal fear of refugees, which can lead to policies that are more exclusionary (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016).

2. Credential Accreditation and Bureaucratic Challenges

HSR-1-DE's narrative also exposes the bureaucratic obstacles and the protracted nature of credential recognition in Germany. The lengthy waiting period, sometimes extending between four to 18 months for certificate recognition, coupled with the lack of clear criteria for medical language exams, underlines a systemic inefficiency that cripples the professional progress of refugees.

HSR-1-DE's experiences related to bureaucratic delays and credential recognition find resonance in the broader literature on labor market integration for refugees (Bauböck & Tripkovic, 2017; Brücker et al., 2016). Studies have shown that complex administrative procedures and delays in recognizing qualifications often hinder refugees' access to suitable employment, and in this context, affect their ability to engage in entrepreneurial activities (Konle-Seidl, 2016).

HSR-2-NL's perspective adds a contrasting viewpoint to HSR-1-DE's discourse, emphasizing entrepreneurial skills over certificates. According to HSR-2-NL, the entrepreneurial space in the Netherlands does not necessarily rely on certificates or degrees, especially in fields that do not require specific credentials. This perspective suggests that, while legislative barriers may exist in certain industries and sectors, opportunities may still be accessible for highly skilled refugees, particularly those seeking entrepreneurial paths rather than traditional employment.

HSR-2-NL's insights into the entrepreneurial space in the Netherlands reflect the growing body of research that emphasizes the role of self-employment and entrepreneurship as alternative pathways to labor market integration for refugees (Ram, Jones, & Villares-Varela, 2017; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). HSR-2-NL's assertion that degrees and certificates may not be barriers to entrepreneurship aligns with studies showing that entrepreneurial success often depends more on experience, networking, and other non-formal skills (Volery, 2007).

3. Credential Accreditation and Bureaucratic Challenges

BI-2-NL, as a mentor for highly-skilled refugees in the Netherlands, emphasizes

¹ The Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act, commonly referred to as the Caesar Act or Caesar Law, is a United States sanctions law that aims to hold the Syrian government accountable for war crimes. Enacted in 2019, the law imposes sanctions on foreign persons who are found to be supporting the Syrian government in various ways, including financial, technical, or military support.

the complexity of the legal landscape that refugees must navigate. Even though highly skilled refugees might have the cognitive capacity to grapple with legal challenges, the intricacies of policies and the need to consult multiple legal experts underline a daunting layer of difficulties.

However, BI-2-NL also observes that the literacy levels of high-skilled refugees often equip them to transcend these legal barriers, indicating a potential area of strength and resilience in their journey.

BI-2-NL's observation about the intricacy of legal navigation aligns with existing research showing that refugees, even when highly skilled, may face difficulties understanding host country laws and regulations (de Lange, Berntsen, Hanoe-man, & Haidar, 2021; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). However, the potential for high-skilled refugees to transcend these barriers, as mentioned by BI-2-NL, adds to the ongoing conversation about the role of education, legal literacy, and mentoring in overcoming these challenges (Phillimore, 2011; Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008)

The analysis underscores a multifaceted landscape of legislative barriers confronting highly skilled refugees in the Netherlands and Germany. Ranging from stringent regulations and security concerns to bureaucratic delays and complex legalities, these challenges present tangible impediments to professional growth and business establishment. While some refugees may find ways to navigate these barriers, others, particularly those in specialized fields, may continue to encounter substantial obstacles.

5.1.2 Administrative Barriers

This sub-section examines the myriad administrative barriers faced by highly skilled refugees attempting to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the Netherlands and Germany. These barriers range across five distinct but interrelated domains: the complexity of bureaucratic procedures compounded by language barriers, a lack of support and expertise from local authorities, financial constraints and socio-economic barriers that impact business establishment and operation, discrimination and cultural barriers that may lead to biases and misunderstandings, and the general business climate and regulatory challenges that can slow down or even halt entrepreneurial progress.

1. Bureaucratic and Administrative Complexity and Language Barriers

Both HSR-1-NL and HSR-1-DE highlight the difficulties of understanding the complexities of accounting and administration in their respective host countries. HSR-1-NL describes it as a "big challenge," particularly in relation to the rules and regulations. HSR-1-DE agrees, noting that even native Germans struggle with the technical financial and legal language.

The language barrier plays a significant role in these difficulties, particularly in legal and financial contexts. This is also echoed by BI-1-NL, who notes a widespread lack of understanding of tax systems and other financial mechanisms. This is largely due to the language barriers.

HSR-1-DE further elaborates on the issue, pointing out the technical language used in German applications as a significant hurdle. As such, they recommend hiring a specialist to navigate these complexities.

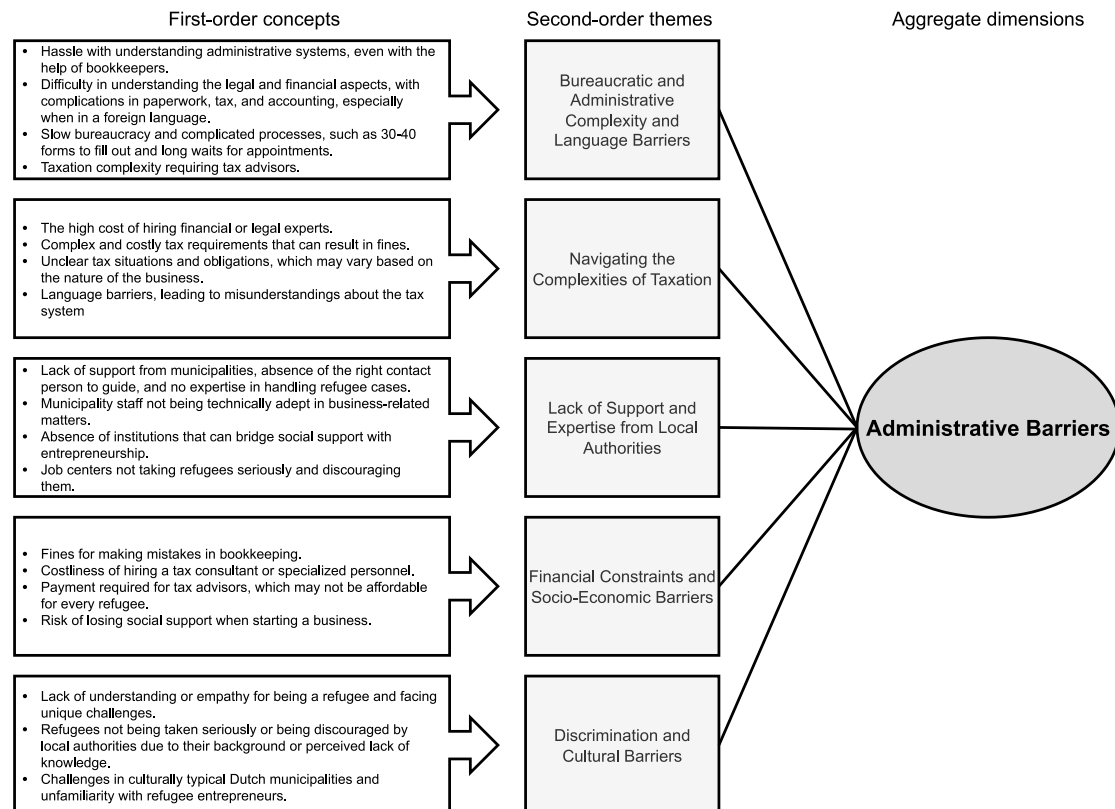


Figure 5.2: Data structure - Administrative Barriers

In both Germany and the Netherlands, bureaucratic processes pose additional challenges. They are often slow and cumbersome, which is emphasized by BI-1-DE. They point out slow response times for appointments and complicated paperwork. BI-2-NL agrees, remarking on the slow bureaucracy in the Netherlands. Despite these difficulties, BI-2-NL is optimistic that people can eventually figure out the system.

This can be linked to the broader literature on institutional barriers in entrepreneurship. The World Bank's "Doing Business" reports, for example, highlight the importance of streamlining administrative procedures to promote entrepreneurship (World Bank, various years). According to Welter and Smallbone (2011), bureaucratic complexity disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, including refugees, and can discourage business formation.

2. Navigating the Complexities of Taxation

In the context of entrepreneurial challenges faced by refugees and small business owners in Germany and the Netherlands, the complexity of the tax system emerges as a critical factor. Respondents such as BI-1-NL, BI-2-NL, and BI-1-DE have underscored the multifaceted challenges associated with understanding and navigating the tax system, including deductions, obligations, and compliance with taxation laws. The intricate nature of taxes often necessitates the employment of a tax consultant, imposing a significant financial burden on fledgling entrepreneurs. Furthermore, this complexity extends beyond mere administrative barriers and interweaves with broader cultural understanding, particularly for those new to the country. As highlighted by BI-2-NL, these barriers are not

exclusive to refugees but are pervasive challenges for anyone aspiring to establish a small business in these countries. Such difficulties in understanding taxes and the ensuing high obligations may impede the scaling of a business. The complexities, though less emphasized in refugee-related literature, align with general challenges faced by small businesses and entrepreneurs (Bruce, 2000) and present a distinct area that warrants further exploration, particularly considering its profound impact on personal income, social support, and the overall entrepreneurship landscape.

3. Lack of Expertise from Local Authorities

HSR-3-NL's experience illustrates the limited expertise in municipalities, specifically the lack of experience and expertise within local government bodies to assist refugees in their unique circumstances. The absence of guidance, particularly with legal and administrative procedures, delayed HSR-3-NL's business endeavors for 18 months, while he remarked that the municipality is "not really technical in business." On the subject of the absence of customized pathways, HSR-1-NL and BI-1-NL emphasize that existing support systems, such as incubators, may not provide comprehensive assistance tailored to the needs of refugees, with BI-1-NL stating that there is "no such institution" providing help with entrepreneurship for refugees. Literature on support systems for refugees, such as Fairlie and Lofstrom (2015), argues that specialized mentoring and assistance tailored to refugees' unique needs can significantly ease their integration into the business ecosystem.

4. Financial Constraints and Socio-Economic Barriers

Both HSR-1-NL and HSR-3-NL express concerns about the potential loss of social support if they start a business. HSR-3-NL highlights that there is an official track known to everyone, but for refugees like him who want to start a business, there's no defined track. This situation creates confusion and uncertainty regarding social care and unemployment benefits. This aligns with research on welfare systems and their impact on entrepreneurship (Hennebry & Preibisch, 2012). Studies show that the tension between receiving social support and pursuing entrepreneurial endeavors can create legal and psychological barriers for refugees, often resulting in a "welfare trap."

In terms of the cost of professional assistance, HSR-1-DE emphasizes the high cost of hiring tax consultants, something that may not be feasible for refugees starting a business. BI-1-DE further stresses the complexity of the taxation system in Germany, leading to an added cost of around 300 Euro per month for a tax advisor. This echoes research on the financial barriers faced by refugee entrepreneurs, where lack of access to capital and financial literacy has been identified as significant hurdles (Ram et al., 2017). According to Newland and Tanaka (2010), refugee entrepreneurs often have to navigate complex tax systems without adequate support, leading to additional financial burdens.

5. Discrimination and Lack of Support

BI-1-DE's experiences draw attention to possible perceptions and discrimination within administrative bodies. His account includes being discouraged by comments that disregard his prior education and experiences, underlining an underlying bias that what was learned outside of Germany is "not valid." HSR-3-NL's

account highlights the absence of specialized support for individuals aspiring to start a business as refugees, especially in regions unfamiliar with engaging refugee entrepreneurs.”. Discrimination and stereotyping have also been identified by scholars like Phillimore (2010) as barriers that can hinder refugees’ entrepreneurial success.

In conclusion, the administrative barriers faced by highly skilled Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and Germany can be viewed through the lenses of bureaucratic complexity, lack of support, financial constraints, discrimination, and general business climate challenges. These themes offer a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted obstacles faced by this specific group and underscore the need for tailored support mechanisms and a more empathetic administrative framework.

5.1.3 Financial Barriers

Highly skilled refugees in host countries such as the Netherlands and Germany encounter several financial barriers when attempting to launch entrepreneurial ventures. This analysis explores the financial challenges encountered by refugees, ranging from legal constraints and systemic discrimination to lack of capital and familiarity with local financial systems. Through interviews and alignment with existing literature, seven key barriers are identified, providing a nuanced understanding of the multifaceted hurdles that refugees must overcome in their entrepreneurial endeavors.

1. Hindered Accessibility to Financial Systems and Investors

A recurring obstacle highlighted by the respondents is the legal constraints associated with refugee status. Some host countries restrict refugees’ ability to open business bank accounts, limiting their ability to operate a formal business. These legal restrictions might be tied to their temporary accommodation permits and nationality, as illustrated by BI-1-DE’s comments on the German context. Existing literature often highlights legal constraints as a major hurdle for refugees in various host countries. The findings align with studies that detail how legal status, visa restrictions, and regulatory environments can hinder business endeavors (Betts et al., 2017; Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015).

2. Risk Perception and Discrimination

Several respondents emphasized the perception of refugees as high-risk individuals by financial institutions. HSR-1-NL’s testimony underscores a fear among potential investors that refugees might be forcibly repatriated, resulting in a loss of investment. Similarly, HSR-1-DE mentioned experiences of discrimination by banks in Germany, which translated into higher interest rates and even outright refusals to open accounts. This illustrates a systemic bias where nationality is directly linked to risk assessment, leading to unfavorable financial conditions. The perception of refugees as risky or undesirable has been a recurring theme in the literature (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008). The discriminatory practices by financial institutions found in the interviews connect with the broader discourse on xenophobia and bias against immigrants and refugees in many Western societies.

3. Lack of Startup Capital, Credit, and Financial History

HSR-3-NL and HSR-2-NL emphasized the challenge of securing initial capital to launch a business. The problem is further compounded by a lack of assets guarantee in the refugees’ home country, making it difficult for investors to lend

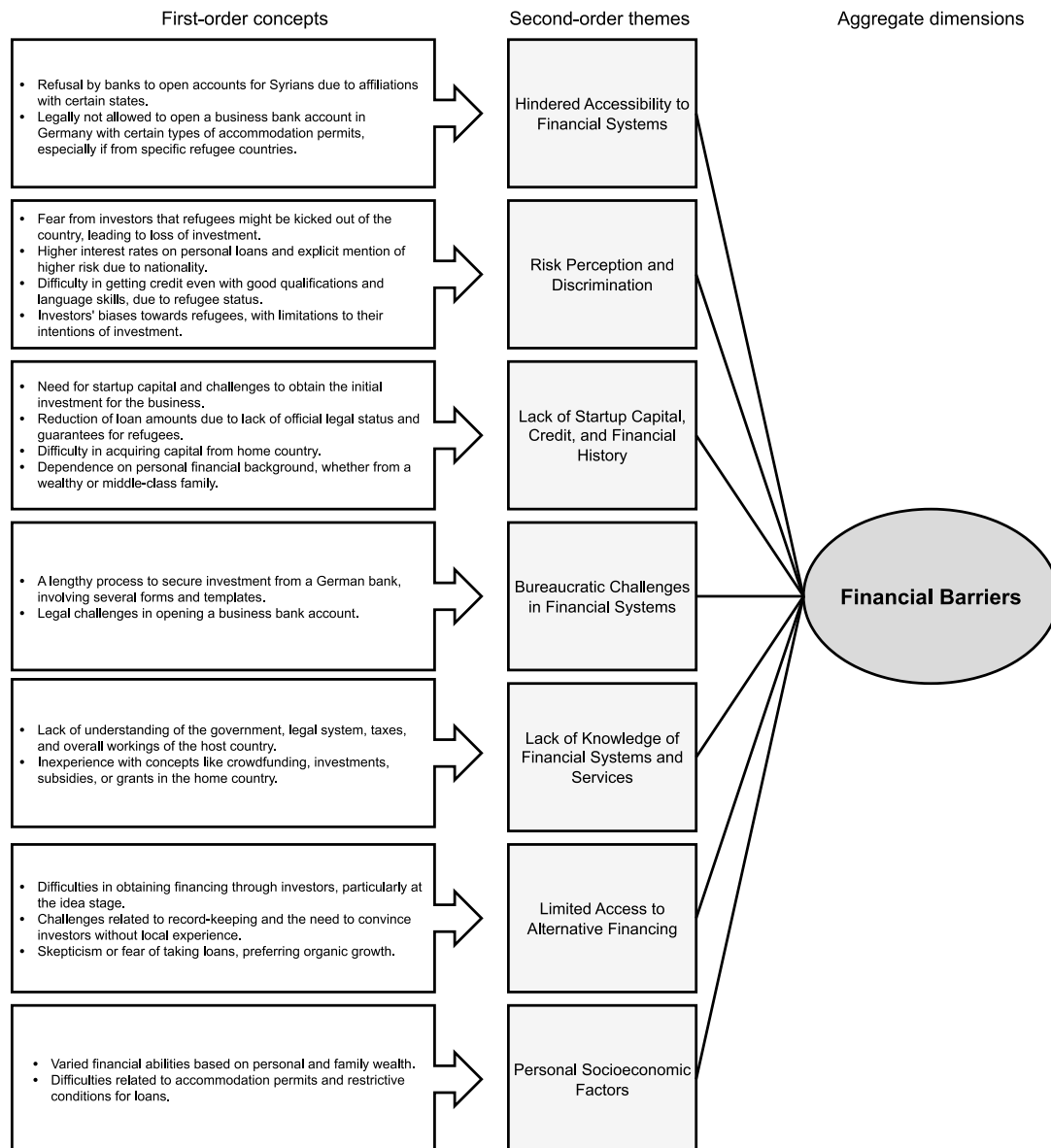


Figure 5.3: Data structure - Financial Barriers

money. As BI-1-NL noted, refugees often arrive in host countries without sufficient funds and the absence of a local entrepreneurial track record and the inability to present previous business experience within the host country can deter investors. This lack of financial resources and information creates a significant hurdle in accessing funds needed to kickstart a business. Research on immigrant and refugee entrepreneurship often emphasizes the challenge of accessing capital (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Kachkar, Mohammed, Saad, & Kayadibi, 2016). The lack of collateral and initial financial resources identified in the findings mirrors this well-established barrier in existing studies.

4. Bureaucratic Challenges in Financial Systems

Another significant barrier is the lengthy and complex bureaucratic process, especially when applying for investments or loans from banks. HSR-1-DE provided insights into the long process involved in applying to a German bank, emphasizing the cumbersome paperwork and extended timelines. These bureaucratic hurdles add to the difficulties faced by refugees seeking financial support. The bureau-

cratic complexities have been recognized as significant barriers to entrepreneurship in general (Djankov, La Porta, Lopez-de Silanes, & Shleifer, 2002), and the additional challenges faced by refugees have been noted in specific refugee-focused studies (R. Kloosterman & Rath, 2003).

5. **Lack of Knowledge of Financial Systems and Services**

Refugees' unfamiliarity with the host country's legal and financial systems further exacerbates these challenges. As HSR-1-NL indicated, a lack of understanding of taxes, legal requirements, and general workings of the country often leads to apprehension among potential investors. Furthermore, BI-1-NL noted, refugees often arrive in host countries without sufficient knowledge of investment opportunities such as crowdfunding, subsidies, or grants. This lack of financial resources and information creates a significant hurdle in accessing funds needed to kickstart a business. The unfamiliarity with the host country's financial systems identified in the interviews resonate with the literature on the social and cultural capital required for successful entrepreneurship (Deakins & Freel, 2012; Jack & Anderson, 2002; Minniti & Lévesque, 2008).

6. **Limited Access to Alternative Financing**

While refugees might attempt to seek alternative financing sources, these options are often constrained. As BI-3-NL's interview illustrates, not all business models are suitable for venture capital, and fear or skepticism towards loans may prompt entrepreneurs to pursue more organic growth, thereby limiting their options. BI-2-NL's observation further indicates a bias among investors that may categorize support for refugees as charitable donations rather than serious investments. This challenge correlates with the literature that emphasizes the constraints faced by minority and immigrant entrepreneurs in accessing traditional and alternative financing channels (Bates & Robb, 2014).

7. **Personal Socioeconomic Factors**

BI-2-NL also alluded to the varying financial capacities among refugees themselves, depending on their social and economic background. This distinction highlights that not all highly skilled refugees have equal opportunities or face the same barriers, and personal financial resources can be a decisive factor in their entrepreneurial endeavors. Differentiating barriers based on socioeconomic background among refugees aligns with the intersectionality perspective in studies focusing on entrepreneurship, where race, gender, class, and immigrant status intersect to create unique challenges and opportunities (Nkrumah, 2016; Tedmanson, Verduyn, Essers, & Gartner, 2012).

In summary, highly skilled refugees aspiring to become entrepreneurs in their host countries face a multifaceted set of financial barriers. From legal restrictions and risk perceptions to a lack of startup capital and bureaucratic challenges, these barriers collectively impede their access to essential resources. This situation calls for systemic changes in policy, banking practices, and societal perceptions to foster an environment that is more conducive to the entrepreneurial ambitions of refugees. Addressing these barriers requires a concerted effort from governments, financial institutions, incubators, and society at large to recognize and support the potential contributions of highly skilled refugees to the economic and social fabric of their host countries.

5.1.4 Socio-cultural Barriers

The interviews with highly skilled Syrian refugee entrepreneurs and those who work with them in business incubators in the Netherlands and Germany provide rich insights into the socio-cultural barriers they encounter when establishing businesses in their host countries. Below is an analysis based on the themes of language barriers, cultural barriers, stigma and discrimination, and social capital.

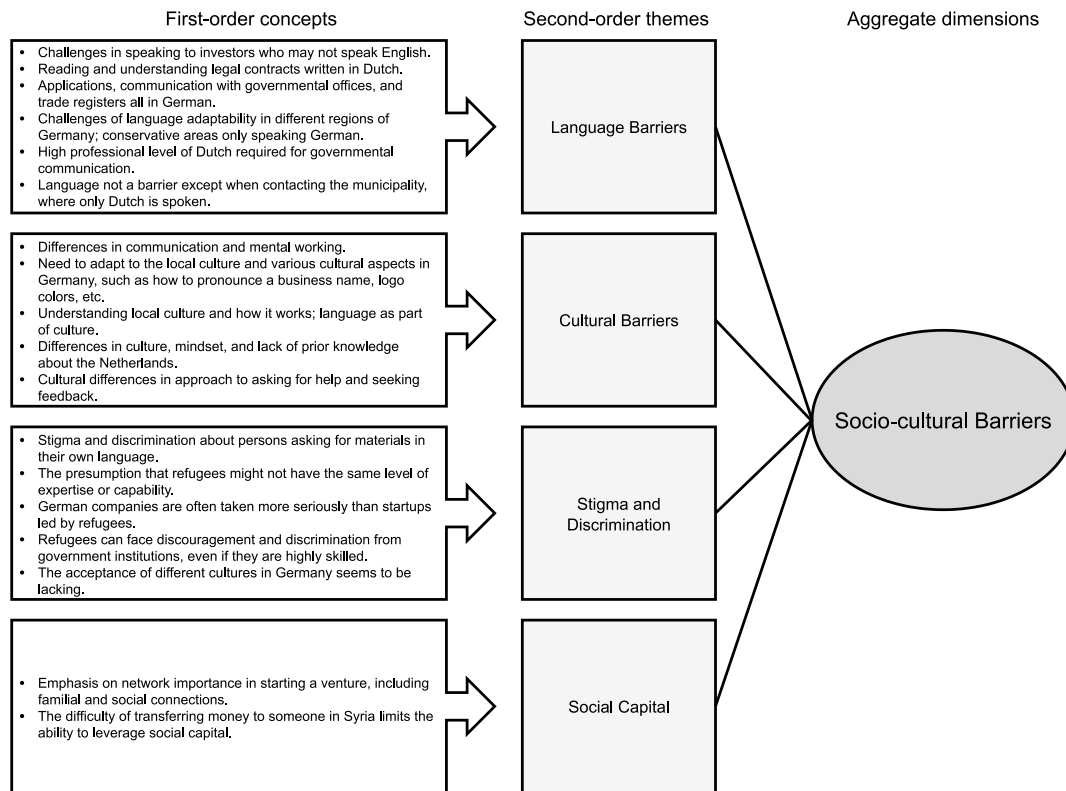


Figure 5.4: Data structure - Socio-cultural Barriers

1. Language Barriers

The interviews reveal a prominent theme of language barriers manifesting in various forms across both the Netherlands and Germany. For instance, HSR-1-NL in the Netherlands points out that while the Dutch speak English, understanding their way of thinking and communicating is a different matter. It's about deciphering the mental constructs, not just language proficiency. This view is echoed by HSR-2-NL, who had challenges speaking with Dutch investors who did not speak English, necessitating a translator. HSR-2-NL's language difficulties extended to legal matters, having to sign contracts in Dutch without full comprehension, leading to later issues. These hurdles were not just personal but also reflected the Netherlands' legal environment.

In Germany, HSR-1-DE and BI-1-DE emphasize that all forms of communication from applications to governmental correspondence are in German. BI-1-DE notes regional variations, with some areas being more conservative about language usage, refusing to communicate in English. Meanwhile, BI-1-NL and BI-3-NL, mentors in the Netherlands, stress the importance of Dutch proficiency when dealing with governmental institutions, but they also note that language might not always be a barrier for those fluent in English.

These findings align with existing research on migration and integration. Studies, such as Dustmann and Van Soest (2002), underscore the importance of language proficiency in immigrants' labor market performance, reflecting the challenges HSR-2-NL and HSR-1-DE faced with Dutch and German language legal contracts and governmental communication. Similarly, Chiswick and Miller (2001) argue that language skills are crucial not just for job performance, but for job attainment. This observation resonates with HSR-1-NL's comments about the need for more profound comprehension of socio-linguistic cues, beyond mere language proficiency.

2. Cultural Barriers

Cultural barriers pose a significant challenge to highly skilled refugees, as exemplified by accounts from the Netherlands and Germany. HSR-3-NL, based in the Netherlands, notes the vast cultural differences between the Middle East and the Netherlands, extending beyond language to mentality. BI-1-NL, a mentor, agrees, asserting that understanding these cultural aspects is critical.

Similarly, BI-1-DE in Germany highlights the necessity to adapt to the local culture, such as business logo color or business name pronunciation - an expected challenge for anyone starting a business in a new country. BI-3-NL, who mentored a refugee in the Netherlands, illuminates a more subtle cultural barrier: the reluctance to ask for help, which is viewed as a sign of weakness. This emphasizes that cultural barriers also involve deep-seated personal beliefs and attitudes.

The literature on immigrant entrepreneurship also recognizes these cultural barriers. Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory, for instance, could be used to interpret the cultural disparities that HSR-3-NL mentioned, suggesting that differences in individualism vs. collectivism, power distance, and uncertainty avoidance could pose substantial challenges in navigating the business environment in a new country. Schwartz (1994) underlines the role of cultural value orientations in shaping individual behaviors and social interactions, which could elucidate BI-3-NL's observations about the reluctance to ask for help, seen as a sign of weakness, reflecting a deeper cultural value orientation.

3. Stigma and Discrimination

Stigma and discrimination also emerge as a theme in these interviews, affecting the refugees' experiences in different ways. HSR-2-NL's account illustrates how investors, knowing they are going to meet refugees, may have preconceived notions and biases, perhaps leading to reluctance in engaging in English or a lack of understanding. HSR-1-DE emphasizes the existence of stigma in Germany, especially regarding the request for materials in one's mother tongue, which is met with discrimination. BI-1-DE mentions the conservativeness in some regions of Germany, leading to a reluctance to speak English and an expectation that newcomers should be proficient in German, reflecting a form of cultural pride that can border on exclusion.

Stigma and discrimination are significant themes in migration studies. Literature by (Esses, Dovidio, Jackson, & Armstrong, 2001) has explored how negative stereotypes and prejudice against immigrants can create barriers to their integration and success. This aligns with HSR-2-NL's experience where investors had

preconceived notions about engaging with refugees. Ager and Strang's (2008) work on integration identifies markers of integration, such as acceptance by the host society, which directly connects with BI-1-DE's insights on the conservatism in some German regions and expectations related to language proficiency.

4. Social Capital

BI-2-NL, HSR-2-NL, and HSR-1-DE's insights collectively illuminate the paramount importance of social capital for entrepreneurs. BI-2-NL's statement about the importance of connections, kinship, and networking provides a significant insight into the challenges of social capital. His observations draw attention to the lack of a network for refugees, contrasting it with the connections that native entrepreneurs might have. The lack of a support system or connections can be a significant barrier in starting a business, affecting everything from finding partners and investors to understanding the local business environment. Furthermore, HSR-1-DE's comments on the inability to access social capital in his home country due to sanctions further emphasize the complex interplay of global politics and personal entrepreneurial efforts. Lastly, social capital, although not directly articulated by all interviewees, emerges as an underlying theme. The lack of connections, familiarity with the legal environment, and access to support networks all contribute to the challenges faced by the refugees. HSR-2-NL's experience in dealing with legal contracts without knowing lawyers in the country exemplifies the difficulty of navigating unfamiliar systems without social capital and limited professional networks.

BI-2-NL's recognition of the significance of familial connections and networks in business success mirrors Putnam's (2000) concept of social capital, a principle that underscores the role of trust, norms, and networks in fostering coordination and collaboration. However, the absence of an established network can introduce added obstacles, a sentiment captured by M. S. Granovetter's (1973) research on the strength of weak ties, which brought attention to the crucial impact of social connections on economic results.

In synthesizing these rich insights, it's clear that the socio-cultural barriers faced by highly skilled refugees in the Netherlands and Germany are multifaceted and deeply intertwined. Language barriers, while significant, are mediated by individual skills and regional attitudes. Cultural barriers extend beyond mere differences in customs and traditions to the very fabric of social interactions. Stigma and discrimination permeate various levels, from individual biases to structural challenges, while the lack of social capital amplifies these difficulties. Collectively, these insights offer a nuanced and complex understanding of the challenges faced by highly skilled refugees, illuminating the ways in which socio-cultural factors can both hinder and shape their entrepreneurial journeys in their new host countries.

5.1.5 Market-related Barriers

The narratives from highly skilled Syrian refugee entrepreneurs and mentors working in business incubators in the Netherlands and Germany provide rich insights into the multifaceted market-related barriers that these individuals face. By distilling their experiences into common themes, the following analysis offers a structured understanding of the barriers.

1. Market Understanding and Integration

The importance of understanding the local culture and market dynamics was repeatedly emphasized by many of the interviewees, including HSR-1-NL, HSR-3-NL, BI-1-NL, BI-3-NL, and BI-2-NL. HSR-1-NL pointed to the difficulty in comprehending the mentality of people in the host country, which he found challenging even with testing and validation efforts. BI-1-NL highlighted the role of culture, indicating how the values and environmental concerns differ between Syria and the host country. HSR-3-NL's struggle with the unfamiliarity of the Dutch market with dates illustrates the difficulty of marketing a product that is not recognized or understood in the host country. The barrier of market understanding spans across areas such as customer behavior, local values, and even how investors in the host country might approach investment differently. The challenge of introducing new products or concepts to an unfamiliar market is a common theme in international business and entrepreneurship literature Johanson and Vahlne. This barrier is exacerbated for refugees who may lack the local knowledge and connections needed to effectively market and adapt their products (Portes & Sensenbrenner, 1993).

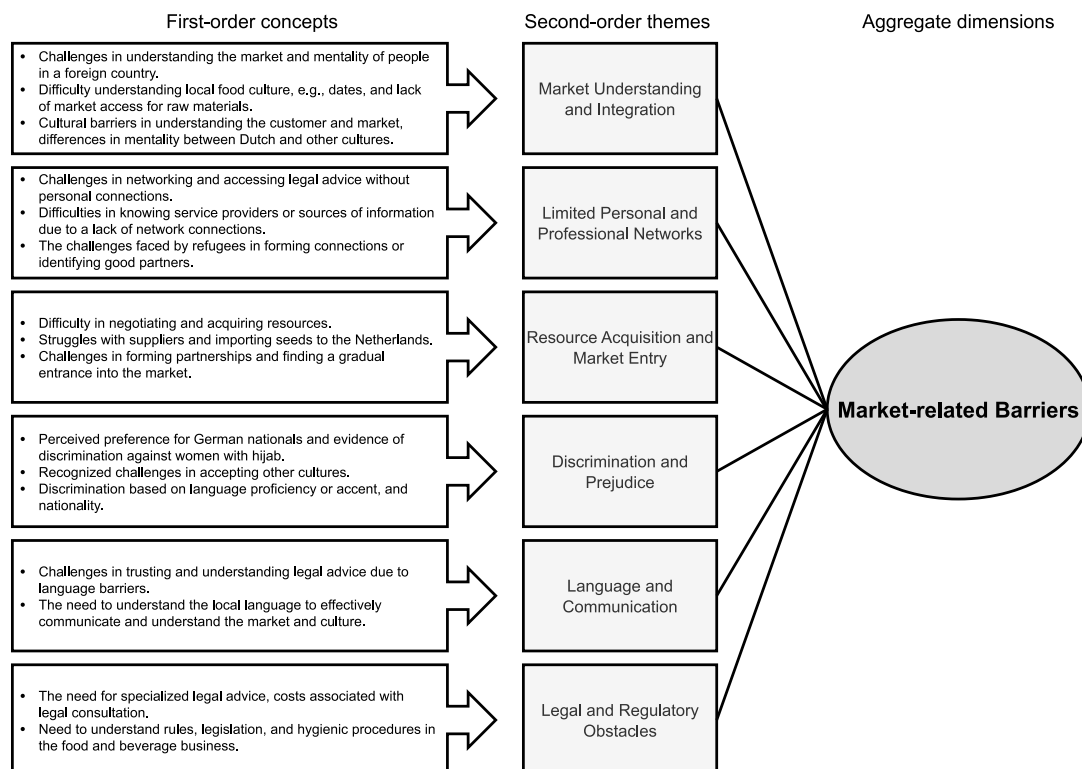


Figure 5.5: Data structure - Market-related Barriers

2. Limited Personal and Professional Networks

The importance of having a network and connections emerges as a strong theme in the interviews. HSR-3-NL, BI-3-NL, and BI-2-NL all speak to the struggles with networking and building relationships with lawyers, suppliers, and even potential business partners. HSR-3-NL expressed the challenges in finding trustworthy advice and connections, mentioning the loss of familiar connections like neighbors and family who could provide assistance in their home country. BI-3-NL and BI-2-NL also highlighted the difficulties their mentees faced in forming

connections and partnerships necessary to push their business forward with emphases on how entrepreneurship is “highly reliant on network”. The lack of network restricts the access to essential resources and support systems for starting and scaling businesses. The importance of social capital and networks has been widely documented in the literature on entrepreneurship (Zimmer, 1986). For refugees and immigrants, a lack of local networks can hinder access to resources, information, and opportunities, making the process of establishing a business more complex and risky (Putnam, 2001).

3. Resource Acquisition and Market Entry

From HSR-3-NL’s experience, it is evident that there are barriers associated with accessing raw materials and understanding the supply chain within the host country. He highlighted specific challenges encountered while importing date seeds, which necessitated establishing connections with suppliers and navigating unfamiliar market structures. These challenges encompassed resistance from suppliers, the local market’s lack of familiarity with date culture, and the eventual adaptation by sourcing waste seeds from local factories. This extends into a broader theme of difficulties in entering a new market, not only in terms of understanding customer behavior, as BI-1-NL observes, but also in obtaining essential raw materials. HSR-3-NL’s discussion about difficulties in understanding the product and accessing raw materials is reflective of broader challenges in global supply chain management and market adaptation (Christopher, 2016). It also underscores the unique obstacles faced by refugee entrepreneurs in navigating unfamiliar and sometimes hostile supplier networks.

4. Discrimination and Prejudice

An underlying theme that emerges from the accounts of HSR-1-DE and BI-1-DE is the presence of perception and bias towards refugees and migrants. HSR-1-DE’s personal observations and references to studies reveal a preference among German customers for businesses of German origin. Additionally, he highlights instances of German customers and employers showing a preference for individuals of German origin or those who do not visibly display religious affiliation. These inherent biases may significantly impact the market acceptance of refugee entrepreneurs. BI-1-DE’s comments further shed light on the discriminatory tendencies or biases that refugee entrepreneurs might encounter. Their proposals or businesses might not be taken as seriously as those of their German counterparts. However, BI-1-DE also acknowledges the existence of supportive individuals who actively seek to assist refugees, reflecting a more nuanced perspective on this issue. Discrimination in the market and workplace has been discussed in research related to minority entrepreneurship (Light & Gold, 2000). The perception or reality of discrimination can hinder business opportunities and growth for refugees and immigrants, impacting both hiring practices and customer relationships (Rath & Kloosterman, 2000).

5. Language and Communication

The role of language and communication as a barrier was evident from BI-1-NL’s insights, which emphasized the need to understand the language to effectively comprehend the market and communicate concepts. BI-1-DE’s observation about speaking German with an accent and the subsequent credibility challenges illus-

trates how language can form a barrier in establishing credibility in the market. Language, as discussed by BI-1-NL and BI-1-DE, is a well-known barrier in literature (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003). Not knowing the local language can hamper understanding of market dynamics, networking, and building trust with local consumers.

6. Legal and Regulatory Obstacles

HSR-3-NL and BI-3-NL also raised the issue of legal and bureaucratic barriers. HSR-3-NL mentioned the cost and trust issues related to seeking legal advice, while BI-3-NL provided an example of an entrepreneur's struggles with the rules and legislation related to the food and beverage business. This indicates a lack of streamlined information, making the process of compliance more labor-intensive and complex, although her mentee managed to navigate this aspect successfully. Research on entrepreneurial barriers often highlights legal and regulatory challenges as key obstacles for new businesses (Dana, 1997). For refugees, unfamiliarity with local laws, regulations, and administrative processes can create additional barriers to entry (Rath & Kloosterman, 2000).

In summary, the experiences of Syrian refugee entrepreneurs and mentors in the Netherlands and Germany unveil a complex array of market-related barriers that span understanding local market dynamics, limited networks, resource acquisition, discrimination, language challenges, and legal hurdles. These interwoven barriers underscore the multifaceted challenges faced by refugees in their entrepreneurial pursuits, reflecting broader themes in international business. The findings emphasize the importance of comprehensive support that addresses these interconnected challenges, highlighting the potential for refugee entrepreneurship to contribute positively to social inclusion and economic development in host countries, provided these barriers are adequately addressed.

5.1.6 Access Entrepreneurship

The data collected from HSR-1-NL, HSR-2-NL, and HSR-1-DE offers significant insights into the complex obstacles confronted by highly skilled refugees in their pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities in their respective host countries. This segment analyses the barriers without rigidly classifying them into distinct categories, opting instead to interlace them seamlessly into a cohesive narrative.

1. Challenges in Finding and Accessing Incubators

HSR-1-NL's experiences in the Netherlands have highlighted several issues in the entrepreneurship ecosystem tailored for highly skilled refugees. One of the most significant challenges he faced was finding an incubator that could assist him. His experiences resonate with the difficulties many entrepreneurs encounter when looking for suitable incubation support. The lack of feedback and encouragement he received from his initial attempts to pitch can be seen as a disheartening barrier, as HSR-1-NL himself expressed a frustration regarding the selective nature of incubators, stating, "They'll be like, yes, but you're not ready."

This paradoxical situation raises questions about how an entrepreneur can become ready without having access to the right incubator. The overarching problem here is the complexity of the onboarding process and the general lack of specialization within incubators. According to HSR-1-NL, the current market for

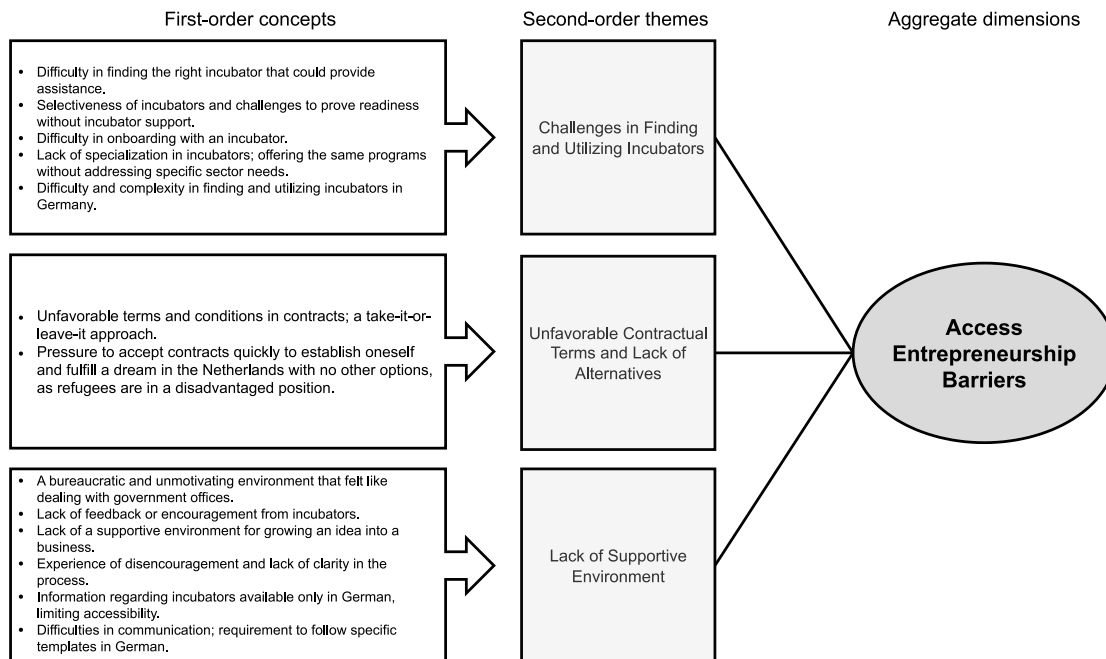


Figure 5.6: Data structure - Access Entrepreneurship Barriers

incubators tends to offer similar programs that don't adequately address the specific needs and challenges of different sectors. His observations on the juxtaposition of a SaaS² solution company and a food company within the same incubator underline the necessity for more nuanced support tailored to individual business requirements.

The literature on business incubation has recognized the need for sector-specific support and the locating of suitable incubators (Bergek & Norrman, 2008). The absence of tailored programs can exacerbate difficulties for refugees, who often lack both the local context and the sector-specific networks to which native entrepreneurs might have access (Portes & Zhou, 1992).

2. Contractual Barriers and the Lack of Negotiating Power

HSR-2-NL's account provides further nuances to the challenges faced by highly skilled refugees. He highlights not just the challenges specific to refugees but the issues that extend to other entrepreneurs as well. The "take it or leave it" contracts reflect a broader systemic problem in the business incubation environment. However, the urgency expressed by HSR-2-NL, the need to move quickly to establish oneself in the Netherlands and fulfill one's dream, shows that this barrier might be felt more acutely by refugees. The pressures of their unique situation may lead them to accept unfavorable terms and conditions in their haste to make progress.

Studies on power dynamics in entrepreneurship have acknowledged that imbalanced contract terms can disadvantage those with lesser negotiating power, such as minority entrepreneurs (Fairlie & Robb, 2008). Refugees' eagerness to secure a foothold may further accentuate this vulnerability (Desiderio, 2016).

² Software as a service.

3. Lack of Supportive Environment

HSR-1-DE's experiences in Germany give voice to another significant barrier: the lack of a supportive environment. His mention of the limited information available, particularly the fact that essential details were only in German, illustrates the difficulty non-native speakers may encounter when attempting to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape. The lack of networking connections, supportive networks, and clear pathways to entrepreneurship reveal a system that can feel exclusive and discouraging. HSR-1-DE's description of his attempts to find support through German incubators further emphasizes the lack of welcoming or motivation for international professionals. The complex process, combined with a response that seemed bureaucratic and disinterested, underscores the need for a more human-centered approach in the entrepreneurship support system.

The difficulties in receiving supportive feedback have been discussed in the literature related to immigrant entrepreneurship. Such challenges are often linked to a lack of social capital and network connections (M. Granovetter, 1983), and to a deficiency in localized information and guidance (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008).

The collective experiences of HSR-1-NL, HSR-2-NL, and HSR-1-DE illustrate the multifaceted barriers faced by highly skilled refugees seeking to become entrepreneurs in their host countries. These barriers range from the difficulty of finding the right incubator, lack of specialized support, language and cultural barriers, to systemic issues in the contractual environment of business incubators.

5.2 ON BUSINESS INCUBATORS

This section explores the findings obtained from different perspectives related to business incubators. It includes the perspectives of highly skilled refugees who have engaged with business incubators targeting refugees, as well as the insights and experiences of the business incubators themselves. Furthermore, this section incorporates the perspectives of local governmental actors who interact with business incubators in the context of supporting highly skilled refugees.

5.2.1 Analyzing the Experience with Business Incubators

The overall experiences of the four Syrian refugee entrepreneurs with business incubators targeting refugees were predominantly positive, with some challenges. All participants appreciated the opportunities for skill development, a recognized outcome in entrepreneurship literature (Aernoudt, 2004). HSR-1-DE's transformation, as he puts it, from thinking "in a certain way to the problems" to a new entrepreneurial mindset.

HSR-1-NL expressed a preference for a university incubator specifically designed for highly skilled personnel, aligning with the idea that specialized incubators can effectively meet unique needs (Peters, Rice, & Sundararajan, 2004). He also emphasized the community aspect of the refugee-specific incubator, saying, "we all having the same challenges as the refugees," a sentiment related to the literature on social capital within entrepreneurship (Putnam, 2001). Additionally, HSR-1-NL's mention of an incubator focusing on international connections underscores the global dimension of entrepreneurial networks, a key success factor in business incubation (Mian, 1996).

However, these positive aspects were accompanied by certain challenges. HSR-1-NL's observation that one incubator's quality was "less than the one for the university" echoes concerns in literature about the heterogeneity in incubator quality (Hackett & Dils, 2004). HSR-2-NL's experience with contractual aspects, describing them as "not very favorable. So it's a type of a contract that you take it or you leave it," sheds light on a need for ethical and fair practices in incubator agreements.

In conclusion, the experiences of these Syrian highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs, such as HSR-3-NL's summarization of his experience as "in general, positive," align with and extend existing literature on business incubation (Bergek & Norrman, 2008).

5.2.2 Resources and Support Received

The experiences of the four interviewed Syrian refugee entrepreneurs – HSR-1-NL, HSR-1-DE, HSR-2-NL, and HSR-3-NL – provide a diverse account of the various benefits they obtained from their respective business incubator engagements in the Netherlands and Germany. Each entrepreneur extracted different resources and support systems from the incubators, demonstrating the broad nature of the offerings these programs provide.

HSR-1-NL's experience in the Netherlands underscored the incubator's provision of structured programming. These programs range from ideation, business marketing, investor readiness, to pitch development. He accentuated the significance of mentoring, emphasizing that in every program he attended, there was a mentor to assist him with the specific problems he was encountering.

HSR-1-DE, based in Germany, elaborated on the supportive team offered by the incubator. The team comprised a business coach, a team coordinator, and a group of volunteers. This team offered human resources, business knowledge, templates, and legal consultations tailored to the Netherlands market. The provision of networking opportunities was also a prominent component of the incubator support system.

HSR-2-NL, another entrepreneur based in the Netherlands, valued the practical support the incubator provided. This took the form of office space, mentoring, and access to critical networks like investment groups. He noted that this support is vital in the early stages of business development and continues to be significant even after the program's completion through the continuation of networking opportunities for alumni.

HSR-3-NL's experience in the Netherlands highlighted access to extensive networks and increased awareness about investor mindsets and start-up concepts. This awareness was crucial for him to understand the differences between investment cultures in various regions. HSR-3-NL also mentioned gaining knowledge about common grounds for startups and how to reach out to investors. Additionally, he benefited from access to funding, and the concept of a "knowledge voucher" – financial support directed towards acquiring further knowledge, such as funding mentorship programs.

These narratives underline the multifaceted role that incubators play in supporting refugee entrepreneurs. They offer structured training, human resources, knowledge resources, practical facilities, access to networks, and financial support. However, each entrepreneur's journey and needs are unique, meaning that their takeaways from these programs are diverse and tailored to their individual circumstances.

5.2.3 Successful Strategies and Initiatives

Mentors from interviewed business incubators have employed various successful strategies and initiatives to facilitate the entrepreneurial development of highly skilled refugees. Based on insights from interviews conducted with mentors from business incubators in the Netherlands and Germany, key strategies can be identified.

One essential strategy involves connecting refugees with their skill sets and communities, thereby strengthening their entrepreneurial roots. According to BI-1-NL, a mentor from a Dutch business incubator, the tactic of grounding refugees in their existing strengths and linking them to similar professionals from their community has proven highly effective. This approach not only builds confidence but also enhances the chance of entrepreneurial success. For instance, connecting a refugee entrepreneur aiming to establish an IT company with other successful Syrian engineers in the same field helps create a sense of assurance and reinforces the potential for success.

Additionally, respect for the refugees' knowledge and experiences has been instrumental in gaining their trust and fostering a conducive learning environment. BI-1-DE, a mentor in Germany, emphasized the importance of recognizing and appreciating refugees' prior professional accomplishments, which often involves skills and knowledge transferable to their new environments. This sense of recognition contributes significantly to their integration and engagement within the incubator.

A series of well-structured workshops has also been instrumental in nurturing the entrepreneurial spirit among refugees. According to BI-1-DE, the German incubator offers comprehensive, fun-filled, and educational workshops led by industry ex-

perts, including financial managers from Mercedes Benz and marketing managers from Porsche.

These workshops are deliberately designed to be interactive and task-oriented, rather than traditional lectures. A key rationale behind this design is to ensure that refugees, particularly those who do not have German as their mother tongue, do not get overwhelmed or bored during the extended sessions. As BI-1-DE puts it, “we know that seven hours is a long time... So what we did is our strategy was to have this day as a fun day.” By keeping the sessions lively and engaging, the participants can maximize their learning experience without the language barrier becoming a hindrance.

Refugees work closely with their mentors to complete specific tasks, ensuring the application of learned knowledge in real time. The strategy, inspired by the Lean Startup method, encourages small beginnings that gradually build into comprehensive business strategies. These interactive sessions ensure that learning is not merely theoretical but involves practical problem-solving and business planning, thus making it more effective and enjoyable for the entrepreneurs.

Finally, the provision of small awards to entrepreneurs has been successful in instilling confidence. BI-2-NL, a mentor in the Netherlands, observed that tangible achievements, such as monetary transactions and prize-winning, could serve as significant confidence-boosting factors for refugee entrepreneurs. This strategy tends to validate their entrepreneurial ideas and aids in measuring their progress, providing a concrete marker of success.

These strategies, founded on principles of respect, practical learning, community connection, and tangible achievements, collectively foster a supportive and encouraging environment for the entrepreneurial development of highly skilled refugees. Consequently, they contribute significantly to their success in their new entrepreneurial journeys.

5.2.4 Identifying Shortcomings in Their Contributed Programs

In an endeavor to optimize the effectiveness of incubation programs, highly skilled entrepreneurial Syrian refugees were engaged. They were asked to elucidate the deficiencies they perceived during their participation in business incubator programs. Their unique insights shed light on the potential gaps and areas of improvement in these entrepreneurial support structures.

1. Facilitating Networking Opportunities

HSR-1-NL highlights that an area where business incubators can improve is in facilitating networking opportunities. Specifically, he emphasizes the importance of access to events where entrepreneurs can meet potential customers, investors, and partners. This is particularly crucial for refugees who are new to a country and need to establish business networks.

“Networking, I would say yeah, access, access to events when you can actually meet potential customer, uh, potential investor, uh, partnerships. Those kind of networking events that I think are extremely important, especially if you are new in the country, getting, expanding your network is what MA might make your business happen.”

2. Provide Legal Support and Knowledge

HSR-2-NL identified a significant gap in legal support provided by the business incubators he engaged with. He stresses the importance of understanding contracts, liabilities, and potential debts, which he believes is currently not adequately addressed.

"I would say just the legal, the legal part, like it would be good if not only for, for the refugees, but for everyone who was, who was involved in, uh, these type of, uh, accelerators is to have, uh, It's to have the appropriate legal support."

3. Lack of Specialized Knowledge and Successful Stories

HSR-3-NL expresses the need for trainers specialized in his field, namely food and beverage. He also emphasizes the importance of showcasing successful stories from individuals who share similar backgrounds, i.e., refugees.

"First, speciality and, and, uh, knowledge. So I would to, to get knowledge more, uh, from, um, uh, trainers in food and beverage... Second, I went to, to see a successful stories, same, same, uh, background for, for my story. So in this case refugee. I would to see another refugee. Uh, was enrolling in the same program or in different program"

4. Absence of Entrepreneurial Residencies

HSR-3-NL points out the absence of opportunities for entrepreneurial residencies with large companies as a significant limitation of the business incubators he participated in.

"Entrepreneurship, entrepreneur, uh, ship programs and residents with, like, with the big companies, but still it's very big dream for them."

5. Inflexible Approach

BI-1-NL criticizes the one-size-fits-all approach adopted by many business incubators. Instead of attempting to understand the unique circumstances and needs of each entrepreneur, these incubators try to mold individuals into a preconceived model.

"Or they try to take you and fit you in their box instead of understanding. How you work and put you in the, in the place that suits."

6. Overemphasis on Courses Rather Than Processes

BI-1-NL also identifies an over-reliance on a prescriptive, course-based approach rather than a more holistic, process-oriented approach, which he finds lacking.

"So they, they just go with the courses more than the process itself."

7. Improved Access to Influential Networks

BI-2-NL identifies a disconnect between the motivation level of individuals involved in the incubation process and their actual impact. To increase this impact, business incubators should prioritize connecting entrepreneurs with individuals or entities who possess a significant influence in relevant industries or sectors.

"one thing that I've experienced, I think, like if I would talk about my personal experience, I would say that like these are networks that have highly motivated people with low impact. So, um, so these networks

have people that are like that create a very beautiful atmosphere and really show their desire to change. And but at the same time, they are low impact in their positions and and access to power.”

8. Assistance Beyond Incubation Period

Lastly, BI-2-NL draws attention to the limitation of the incubation period. While helpful for addressing legal issues and developing business concepts, incubators fall short when it comes to providing post-incubation support. This support is critical in helping entrepreneurs establish good networks, secure investment, and effectively market their business.

“The things that you really get to connect, like this is where, yeah, I would say like the incubator has, um, has a limit.”

5.2.5 The Ideal Business Incubator

This section discusses the critical elements required for an ideal business incubator, specifically designed to support highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial journey. Drawing upon the experiences and insights of HSR-1-NL, HSR-2-NL, HSR-3-NL, BI-1-NL, and BI-1-DE, it delves into various aspects of such an incubator, ranging from specific support mechanisms, networking opportunities, legal guidance, to mental health resources and skill development. The section further explores the idea of shared experience in leadership and the importance of recognizing and respecting the professional capabilities and unique challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs. Through these diverse perspectives, it seeks to outline an empathetic, comprehensive, and effective approach to constructing a business incubator that can truly empower highly skilled refugees.

● Addressing Administrative Barriers

1. High Level of Collaboration Among Relevant Actors

HSR-3-NL stresses the need for better communication among business incubators, local municipalities, and non-governmental organizations to ensure that entrepreneurs are directed to the most suitable program.

2. Proactive Support Over Passive Mentorship

HSR-1-NL emphasizes the need for a proactive approach. Instead of merely connecting refugees to a mentor, incubators should provide solutions. For instance, when trying to establish a company, it would be beneficial if the incubator could recommend trusted legal offices adept at understanding the nuances of small businesses, thus saving the entrepreneur both time and potential costly mistakes.

● Addressing Legal Barriers

1. Legal Support with Refugee-specific Considerations

HSR-2-NL and HSR-3-NL emphasize that the ideal business incubator must understand and account for the unique legal circumstances that refugees face. This understanding can be achieved by having a proficient legal team that is fluent in Arabic and English and deeply versed in the Dutch legal system. They stress the importance of this support for refugees new to the Netherlands and unfamiliar with its robust legal system.

2. Affordable Legal Partnerships

There is a need for a balance between quality and affordability. HSR-1-NL's experience with a high-end legal agency underscores the challenge of affording such services as a startup. HSR-3-NL further suggests improving existing services by facilitating in-person meetings with local authorities. The presence of a representative from the incubator during meetings could lend more credibility to the refugee entrepreneur, assisting in smoother administrative processes.

• Addressing Financial Barriers

1. Guarantor Role of Business Incubators

HSR-1-NL highlights the challenges refugees face in securing loans due to a lack of guarantees. While incubators currently struggle with fully funding businesses, one solution could be for them to act as a guarantor. This would involve vouching for the entrepreneur's skills and potential, thereby building trust with potential investors. HSR-3-NL echoes this sentiment, suggesting the incubator act as a middleman between the refugee entrepreneur and clients, ensuring payment security. BI-1-NL, a mentor, offers a different perspective, suggesting the harnessing of social connections for crowdfunding. He also discusses the potential of immigrant investors who may better understand and believe in the refugee entrepreneurs.

2. Diversified Access to Funds

BI-2-NL highlights a potential challenge for business incubators working with refugees—the reliance on donations or foundation funds. While such sources are valuable, they might limit the network and opportunities available to the entrepreneurs. Therefore, an ideal business incubator should ensure diverse funding streams, including individual investors, to create a more impactful and useful network.

3. Offer Transportation Reimbursements

HSR-3-NL suggests that business incubators should provide financial support for expenses such as travel and parking, acknowledging the financial constraints faced by refugees.

• Addressing Socio-cultural Barriers

1. Cultural Classes

HSR-1-NL believes that cultural education is key. By understanding the behavioral nuances between different nationalities, refugee entrepreneurs can better navigate business interactions. BI-1-NL recommends courses that focus on entrepreneurial concepts in the Dutch language. While basic language courses teach everyday vernacular, they often miss out on business-specific terminologies and practices.

2. Networking and Collaboration with Peers of the Same Background

HSR-1-NL emphasizes the importance of connecting highly skilled refugees across universities and geographic locations. He believes this would not only broaden their individual networks but also facilitate mutual support and knowledge sharing.

3. **Appreciation and Recognition**

Finally, BI-1-DE underscores the need for business incubators to create an environment where highly-skilled refugees feel genuinely appreciated. By recognizing that their skills and experiences may exceed those in the host country in some industries, incubators can help these refugees regain confidence in their professional capacities and adapt more smoothly to the new business environment.

4. **Respect for Knowledge and Experience**

BI-1-DE highlights the importance of deeply respecting the professional knowledge, experiences, and capacities of refugee entrepreneurs. This respect is not merely about acknowledging skills and experiences, but also about valuing their potential to contribute and excel in the host country's business environment. Moreover, this approach helps counter any discriminatory or belittling treatment the entrepreneurs may have faced before, thus bolstering their trust and willingness to learn.

5. **Emphasis on Community Building**

BI-1-NL underscores the importance of building a sense of community among the entrepreneurs, which he deems as important as the provision of information.

● **Addressing Market-related Barriers**

1. **Dedicated Client Managers**

HSR-1-NL suggests adopting a model similar to large businesses, wherein a dedicated client manager or mentor assists the refugee entrepreneur. This person would be a consistent touchpoint, aiding with various challenges and facilitating connections within and outside the incubator. HSR-3-NL emphasizes the role of the incubator in marketing. By connecting entrepreneurs with events, like weddings or other social functions, the incubator can help introduce and validate their products in the market.

2. **Advisory Board**

BI-1-NL proposes an advisory board within the incubator comprising Dutch individuals who understand immigrant cultures. Such a board could offer nuanced advice, aiding in smoother communications and faster processes.

3. **Focus on Networking, not just Content**

Despite acknowledging the high-quality content provided by business incubators, BI-2-NL argues that a successful entrepreneurial journey is more dependent on networking. Hence, an ideal business incubators should allocate sufficient resources and efforts towards establishing a robust, diverse, and influential network that entrepreneurs can tap into for guidance, collaboration, or investment opportunities.

4. **Specialization in Different Sectors**

HSR-1-NL suggests that incubators can provide better support if they specialize in certain sectors. This would allow for deeper understanding of entrepreneurs' needs and more targeted assistance.

5. Providing Active Support

BI-1-NL emphasizes the need for warm introductions to potential investors and supportive networking events to reinforce the startup's community and knowledge base.

• Addressing Access Entrepreneurship Barriers

1. University-oriented Incubators with Understanding of Refugees' Needs

HSR-1-NL envisions the ideal incubator as one that balances rigorous support for highly skilled individuals while also understanding and addressing the unique challenges faced by refugees.

2. Understanding the Limitations of Certain Sectors

HSR-1-NL acknowledges that some business sectors are riskier and more challenging than others, requiring more investment and attention. He suggests that the ideal incubator should be fully prepared to provide the necessary support for these sectors.

3. Shared Background and Experience

BI-1-DE suggests that the most effective business incubators are designed and managed by individuals who share the same journey and experiences as the refugee entrepreneurs they are supporting. This shared experience provides an intimate understanding of the unique challenges and opportunities these entrepreneurs face, thus making the support provided more tailored and effective.

4. Rigorous Admission to Incubation Programs

HSR-3-NL recommends the creation of differentiated programs, including a pre-incubator program to ensure the serious involvement of all participants, thus improving motivation levels.

5. Cultivation of Awareness and Knowledge

BI-1-NL stresses the importance of educating startups about the entrepreneurial system in the Netherlands.

6. Mental and Psychological Health Support

HSR-2-NL highlights the need for mental and psychological health support within the incubator framework. He emphasizes that refugees, in particular, may need support with conflict resolution and communication skills, as their backgrounds may not have provided the necessary training in these areas.

7. Emphasis on Tolerance, Empathy, and Flat Leadership

HSR-2-NL underscores the need to foster tolerance, empathy, and flat leadership, attributes he sees as being taught in the Netherlands but lacking in his native educational experience. He stresses the necessity of moving away from a hierarchy-driven approach to leadership and more towards a cooperative, team-focused mindset.

8. Inclusive Leadership in Business Incubators

BI-1-NL proposes that at least half the board of the incubator should be refugees or newcomers. This diversity, he believes, would enable better understanding and mitigation of language and cultural barriers.

9. Skill Recognition and Activation

BI-1-NL argues for the need to recognize and activate the skills of highly skilled refugees. This would involve understanding their existing competencies and helping them update these as necessary.

In conclusion, the ideal business incubator for highly skilled refugees, as portrayed through the insights of HSR-1-NL, HSR-2-NL, HSR-3-NL, BI-1-NL, and BI-1-DE, must cater to refugees' unique challenges while recognizing their professional capabilities. It should integrate university-oriented assistance, specialized sector support, networking opportunities, mental health resources, robust legal guidance, and skill development. Furthermore, it should acknowledge and address refugee-specific legal issues, provide financial aid, and foster conflict resolution and communication skills.

Moreover, it's important for the incubator to have leadership that shares refugees' experiences, improving empathy and effectiveness in assistance. Other key factors include fostering a community among entrepreneurs, providing active investor introductions, recognizing and activating refugees' skills, and encouraging respect and appreciation for their knowledge. Therefore, a truly empowering business incubator for refugees is not merely a platform for entrepreneurial development but a respectful, empathetic, and supportive environment recognizing their unique experiences and potentials.

5.3 ON POLICIES

This section delves into the findings concerning policies relevant to supporting highly skilled refugees. It encompasses the perspectives of highly skilled refugees, and business incubators, shedding light on their observations and experiences with policies aimed at facilitating the integration of this target group.

5.3.1 The Impact of Integration and Asylum Policies on Refugee Entrepreneurship

Influence of Integration Policies on Entrepreneurial Aspirations

The responses from the interviewees highlight the complex relationship between integration policies and entrepreneurial ambitions. HSR-1-NL's experience reflects the overwhelming demands of integration, including language learning and exams, which have delayed his entrepreneurial journey. The integration process, often necessary for refugees to settle into a new country, can introduce additional stress and time commitments, potentially hindering their ability to pursue entrepreneurial ventures. This suggests a need for a more balanced approach that considers the unique challenges faced by refugees with entrepreneurial aspirations.

HSR-3-NL's response stands out as he navigated the challenges posed by integration policies to pursue his entrepreneurial vision. He demonstrates resilience and adaptability, suggesting that while these policies present obstacles, they do not necessarily dictate the trajectory of entrepreneurial ambitions. This indicates that some individuals can find ways to overcome these challenges and pursue their goals, highlighting the importance of individual agency and resourcefulness.

HSR-2-NL's perspective underscores the notion that integration policies might not have a direct impact on entrepreneurial ambitions, particularly for those who are focused on finding solutions to challenges. He suggests that entrepreneurial mindset and determination can drive individuals to navigate and transcend the barriers posed by integration policies. This suggests that while integration policies may have an impact, the mindset and determination of the individual also play a significant role in shaping their entrepreneurial path.

HSR-1-DE's response highlights the potential negative impact of integration policies on entrepreneurial pursuits. The stressors of integration, coupled with limited support for entrepreneurship during this phase, can delay or even deter refugees from starting their businesses. The lack of alignment between integration policies and entrepreneurial ambitions can lead to frustration and lost opportunities. This emphasizes the importance of policies that recognize the multifaceted aspirations of refugees and provide necessary support to balance integration and entrepreneurship.

Influence of Asylum Policies on Entrepreneurial Aspirations

The interviewees' responses reveal a range of experiences regarding how the asylum process has influenced their entrepreneurial ambitions. HSR-1-NL's account of a three-year delay due to the asylum process underscores the need for policies that facilitate entrepreneurial pursuits during this critical phase. The absence of support for entrepreneurial endeavors while seeking asylum highlights a gap that can hinder refugees' abilities to capitalize on their skills and aspirations.

HSR-3-NL's perspective reflects an individual who uses the asylum process as a preparatory phase for entrepreneurial endeavors. His emphasis on validation and preparation during this time showcases the strategic thinking that some refugees adopt to ensure they are ready to launch their business ventures once they receive the necessary legal status. This highlights the resourcefulness and adaptability of some refugees to work within the limitations of the asylum process.

HSR-2-NL's viewpoint sheds light on the lack of tailored support for highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship during the asylum process. His comment on generalized policies that do not consider the unique circumstances of skilled refugees suggests that there is a missed opportunity for governments to tap into the expertise and aspirations of this demographic. Policies that acknowledge and cater to the potential of highly skilled refugees could yield greater benefits for both refugees and host countries.

HSR-1-DE's response underscores the challenges posed by the asylum process for highly skilled professionals. The inability to work legally or access resources during this phase can hamper the entrepreneurial ambitions of individuals with valuable skills. His mention of diverse experiences within the asylum process further highlights the need for more comprehensive policies that address the diverse aspirations and capabilities of refugees.

The Role of the Asylum Process in Shaping Entrepreneurial Aspirations

The responses of the interviewees highlight the varying degrees to which asylum and integration policies influence their choices of sectors for entrepreneurial activities. The example of HSR-1-NL illustrates how policies can positively influence these choices by encouraging social impact. His decision to operate a restaurant business, providing access and opportunities to refugees, aligns with his personal experiences and desire to make a meaningful contribution to the refugee community. This example reflects the potential for policies to indirectly shape sectors by creating incentives for socially responsible entrepreneurship.

HSR-3-NL's response suggests that, in his case, policies did not affect his sector choice significantly. His focus on pursuing his specific entrepreneurial vision indicates that individual passion and opportunity outweigh policy-driven considerations. This reflects the importance of fostering an environment where entrepreneurs can follow their creative instincts and business passions without undue constraints.

HSR-2-NL's perspective echoes his earlier sentiment that policies didn't impact his sector choice, reinforcing his belief in pursuing entrepreneurial goals regardless of external influences. His viewpoint emphasizes the importance of intrinsic motivation and a clear vision for entrepreneurial endeavors that can guide individuals' decisions on sector choices.

HSR-1-DE's response doesn't explicitly mention sector choice, but it highlights the bureaucratic hurdles refugees face while trying to pursue their entrepreneurial ventures. This may indirectly affect sector choices, as refugees may be limited to sectors that are more accessible due to policies or institutional barriers. A lack of support for recognition of professional qualifications could influence refugees' decisions to explore sectors that do not require extensive certifications.

Assessing Government Policy Support for Entrepreneurship Among Highly Skilled Refugees

The responses offer nuanced perspectives on the extent to which government policies support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship. HSR-1-NL's view is pessimistic, citing societal and political challenges as barriers to more supportive policies. His concern about societal pushback against prioritizing refugees' entrepreneurial ambitions reflects the complex landscape governments must navigate when considering policies for highly skilled refugees.

HSR-2-NL's response acknowledges the supportive aspects of government policies for entrepreneurs in general but highlights the lack of specific support for highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs. He points out that the existing policies do not address the unique needs and challenges faced by this subgroup of refugees. This highlights a gap that could be addressed with more targeted policies and resources.

HSR-1-DE's perspective reinforces the challenges posed by bureaucratic processes and subjective assessments. His illustration of the lengthy and uncertain journey toward recognition of medical qualifications underscores the potential barriers that highly skilled refugees encounter. This indicates a need for policies that streamline and expedite the recognition of professional credentials to better align with refugees' skills and aspirations.

In contrast, HSR-3-NL's response doesn't directly address whether government policies support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship, but his experience highlights the importance of individual resourcefulness and creativity in overcoming policy-related obstacles. His ability to navigate challenges and find his way to entrepreneurial success suggests that, while policies may not always be directly supportive, determined individuals can make progress by leveraging their skills and ideas.

In summary, the responses concerning whether government policies support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship reveal the complexity of the relationship between government policies, refugee integration, and entrepreneurial aspirations. While some interviewees managed to navigate challenges and leverage their skills to pursue success, others encountered barriers that hindered their ability to engage in entrepreneurial ventures. This range of perspectives underscores the need for nuanced, targeted policies that recognize and support the diverse entrepreneurial ambitions of highly skilled refugees.

5.3.2 Improving the Entrepreneurial Landscape for Highly Skilled Refugees: A Pre and Post Asylum Policies Analysis

Highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs face unique challenges both before and after the asylum process, challenges that often hinder their ability to contribute economically. This section will analyze their responses to two key questions concerning recommended policy changes or improvements: one during the asylum phase and the other during the integration phase. These insights provide a valuable perspective on how to support these entrepreneurs at different stages of their journey.

DURING THE ASYLUM PHASE

Based on the responses of the interviewed highly skilled Syrian refugees, the following policy changes or improvements could be recommended to better support highly

skilled refugee entrepreneurs before the recognition of their asylum request. These recommendations, drawn directly from the experiences and insights of those who have navigated the asylum process, aim to address the unique challenges they face and provide a framework for enhanced support and integration.

1. Implementing Entrepreneurial Incubation Programs in Refugee Camps:

- Incubators should be allowed to operate within refugee camps, not requiring a civil service number.
- These incubators could offer courses and mentoring to help refugees develop business ideas and skills such as pitching, understanding the legal system, accounting, and fundraising in their new hosting countries.
- The incubators could work without significant costs and have partnerships with local businesses and investors.
- By focusing on preparation rather than immediate business opening, the refugees could minimize risks after the asylum-seeking period.

2. Introduction to Local Markets:

- A two-line communication process where refugees receive information about business opportunities, and incubators gather refugees' ideas and wishes.
- Incubators should advise refugees on the practical steps to take, such as gaining experience in a specific field before starting a business.
- Support should be given by local entities, like universities, which may provide resources like seed funding, offices, acceleration programs, etc., for specific types of businesses.
- Tailored advice and alignment with market needs can help guide refugees' entrepreneurial endeavors more effectively.

3. Fast-Tracking Highly Skilled Refugees:

- Create a faster processing track for refugees who can prove their skills and experience, such as providing documentation from previous employers.
- This would require the hiring of additional staff or a specialized unit within immigration services to facilitate the processing of applications from highly skilled refugees.

4. Collaboration between Municipalities and Incubators:

- Municipalities should support the incubators and collaborate in identifying promising business ideas.
- Refugees should be assisted in networking with local businesses, potential partnerships, and investors.
- Practical recommendations such as employment for gaining experience in a related field could also be part of this collaboration.

5. Cultural and Legal Education:

- During the time spent in refugee camps, which might be over a year, entrepreneurial refugees should be educated on the cultural norms, legal systems, and business environment of the host country.
- This would help them understand how the country functions and prepare them for the integration phase.

In summary, the recommendations include the introduction of business incubators within refugee camps, better communication between refugees and business support entities, fast-tracking for proven skilled refugees, collaboration between different support systems, and providing education on cultural and legal aspects. These combined efforts could significantly ease the transition for highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs into their host country's business landscape before the recognition of their asylum request.

DURING THE INTEGRATION PHASE

Drawing from the interviews with highly skilled refugees based in the Netherlands and Germany, several key policy changes or improvements are suggested to better support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs after the recognition of their asylum request. The perspectives from HSR-1-NL, HSR-3-NL, HSR-1-DE, and HSR-2-NL provide insights into different aspects of the integration process and potential policy reforms.

1. Providing Adequate Time and Support:

- **A More Flexible Approach:** According to HSR-1-NL, flexibility and understanding are crucial for integration. Refugees, even those highly skilled, may suffer from psychological barriers such as depression, post-traumatic syndromes, or burnout. Allowing refugees to work at their own pace rather than pressing them to quickly exit social welfare could enhance their success.
- **Tailored Support and Networking:** HSR-1-NL also emphasizes the importance of empowering civil servants with tools to connect refugees with appropriate networks. He advocates for municipalities to facilitate networking opportunities that can lead to potential business connections.

2. Strategic Placement and Proximity to Opportunities:

- **Personalized Distribution Based on Skills and Background:** HSR-3-NL's perspective highlights the importance of distributing refugees according to their skills, wishes, and backgrounds. By understanding a refugee's professional and cultural context, authorities could better match them to areas where they can thrive.
- **Proximity to Opportunities:** Particularly for highly skilled refugees, location can be key in accessing large companies and entrepreneurial opportunities. HSR-3-NL suggests placing high-skilled refugees near urban centers with business opportunities tailored to their skills, rather than in remote villages.

3. Balancing Equality with Individual Needs and Preferences:

- **Fair and Equal Integration:** HSR-2-NL's perspective emphasizes equality in the integration process. From this viewpoint, highly skilled refugees should

be treated like anyone else without additional leniency. This approach advocates for a consistent policy that does not differentiate based on skill level.

- **Balancing Needs and Preferences:** While HSR-2-NL's perspective stresses uniformity, HSR-1-NL and HSR-3-NL's insights reveal the complex needs and preferences that may require a more nuanced and individualized approach to integration.

In conclusion, a multi-faceted and flexible approach that aligns with the specific needs and backgrounds of highly skilled refugees, without undermining the principles of fairness and equality, may foster more effective integration and entrepreneurial success in the Netherlands.

Collaboration Between Local Governmental Actors and Business Incubators

This section explores the possible collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators, focusing on the facilitation of entrepreneurship among highly skilled refugees. The synergy of this collaboration is examined through two distinct lenses: first, the perspective of highly skilled Syrian refugees; and second, from the angle of business incubators.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF HIGHLY SKILLED SYRIAN REFUGEES

The prospect of integrating highly skilled refugees into the entrepreneurial ecosystem through the collaboration of local governmental actors and business incubators presents a multifaceted challenge. Interviews with highly skilled refugees shed light on this intricate relationship and outline a cooperative framework involving local governmental actors, business incubators, and the refugees themselves. The insights gathered can be summarized into the following categories:

1. Facilitation and Connection

HSR-1-NL emphasizes the necessity of civil servants acting as facilitators by connecting refugees to appropriate incubators based on their business needs. Facilitators and municipalities can coordinate to provide targeted support. HSR-1-NL's perspective illuminates a synergistic triangle between the local governmental actors, business incubators, and highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs that supports the development of the refugee entrepreneur.

2. Communication and Coordination

HSR-3-NL notes the lack of communication between local municipalities, economic development agencies, and non-governmental incubators. He highlights the legal fragmentation of these entities and underscores the need for an ideal situation where they collectively direct refugees to the right incubation programs. HSR-3-NL's insights stress the importance of bridging communication gaps and improving inter-organizational coordination.

3. Joint Programs and Funding

HSR-2-NL touches on the idea of having joint programs and funding to support business opportunities for refugees. This aspect can be interpreted as a call for integrated efforts from different stakeholders, pooling resources, and creating unified support mechanisms.

Based on the interviews, local governmental actors should play a multifaceted role:

- **Connection and Facilitation:** They should connect refugees to the suitable incubators based on their business idea and developmental phase, as seen in HSR-1-NL's explanation.
- **Communication and Coordination:** Local governmental actors should be at the forefront of establishing communication channels among different bodies, as stressed by HSR-3-NL.
- **Support and Endorsement:** Government bodies should vouch for promising entrepreneurs, providing extended support such as social welfare and time, a concept underlined by HSR-1-NL.
- **Joint Efforts:** As HSR-2-NL mentioned, local governments can help by funding or even organizing joint programs that link various incubators and entrepreneurial support organizations.

In conclusion, creating a more conducive environment for highly skilled refugees to start ventures demands a holistic and interconnected approach where local governmental actors are essential catalysts, connecting facilitators, ensuring communication, and fostering collaboration among all stakeholders. Such an integrated approach can leverage the unique strengths and resources of different entities, forming a robust support network that enhances the entrepreneurial journey of refugees in the Netherlands.

FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF BUSINESS INCUBATORS

Local governmental actors can foster collaboration with business incubators to create a more supportive environment for highly skilled refugees to initiate ventures by adopting several strategic roles. The insights gathered from interviews with mentors in the Netherlands and Germany suggest several avenues for effective collaboration:

In the Netherlands, BI-1-NL has identified several opportunities for collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators to foster an environment that encourages entrepreneurial ventures by highly-skilled refugees:

1. **Policy Modification:** Policies that allow refugees to sustain their social welfare support during the early stages of business development are recommended. Also, the municipalities need to revise its pressing policy of quickly pushing refugees into low-wage jobs.
2. **Educational Support:** BI-1-NL highlights the need for the municipalities to support the refreshing and updating of the skills of highly-skilled refugees, possibly by linking them to startups and incubators in their field.
3. **Breaking Stereotypes:** Collaboration with incubators can help municipalities understand the potential of highly skilled refugees, thereby overcoming stereotypes that may hinder their progress.
4. **Incubators as Intermediaries:** BI-1-NL also sees incubators as facilitators who can articulate the unique needs of highly-skilled refugees and act as sponsors to vouch for them.

BI-1-DE's insights reveal a different scenario in Germany, where the collaboration between government and business incubators for supporting highly-skilled refugees appears to be more challenging:

1. **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** BI-1-DE emphasizes the extensive bureaucracy in the recognition of qualifications and skills. Collaboration to streamline these processes may foster more support for entrepreneurial refugees.
2. **Identification of Highly Skilled Refugees:** The challenge in Germany, according to BI-1-DE, is identifying the highly-skilled individuals among the vast refugee population. Partnership with government could facilitate this identification.
3. **New Migration Law:** BI-1-DE mentions an upcoming migration law aiming to attract highly skilled individuals. This law could open doors for closer collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators.
4. **Funding:** Potential funding from the government to business incubators is hinted at, although not detailed by BI-1-DE.

Based on the interviews, local governmental actors and business incubators roles should be as follows:

- In the Netherlands:
 - Local governmental actors: Should be more lenient with entrepreneurial refugees, provide financial and legal support, adjust policies to not hinder entrepreneurship, and collaborate with incubators as intermediaries.
 - Business Incubators: Can act as intermediaries, sponsors, educators, and facilitators to highly skilled refugees, supporting their integration into the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.
- In Germany:
 - Local governmental actors: Need to work on reducing bureaucratic hurdles, identifying highly skilled refugees, possibly funding incubators, and implementing new laws to support entrepreneurship among refugees.
 - Business Incubators: Need to actively identify potential entrepreneurs, collaborate with government on bureaucratic aspects, and align with new policies targeting highly skilled individuals.

The collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators to create a conducive environment for highly skilled refugees to start ventures varies between the Netherlands and Germany. In the Netherlands, the focus seems to be on early investment, policy modification, and active facilitation by incubators. In Germany, the challenges include bureaucratic hurdles, identification of highly-skilled individuals, and aligning with upcoming migration laws.

Overall, both local governmental actors and business incubators have distinctive yet complementary roles to play in supporting entrepreneurial refugees. Collaboration that tailors to the unique context of each country can lead to more effective support systems for these individuals, ultimately enhancing their integration and contribution to society.

6 | DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the Research Findings that critically discuss the study's discoveries. It then explores Research Recommendations, which include two sub-sections. The first subsection is on "Refactor An Established Policy: Treat Entrepreneurial Highly Skilled Asylum Seekers As Entrepreneurial Immigrants," and the second one is called "Collaborative Support Systems: A Framework for Local Government and Business Incubators to Foster Refugee Entrepreneurship." Finally, the chapter concludes with the Research Implications, summarizing the scientific and practical contributions of the research.

6.1 RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this section, we will address the four sub-research questions that were posed in Section 1.4, using the insights and findings gathered from the previous two chapters. Each sub-research question will be explored in detail, with relevant data and analysis to support the conclusions. Subsequently, the next section will synthesize these answers, integrating the findings from all the sub-research questions to provide a comprehensive response to the main research question. This two-step approach ensures a thorough examination of the subject, allowing for a nuanced understanding of the topic under investigation.

6.1.1 SRQ1: How does the current asylum process function for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands? Additionally, what is the current state of affairs regarding their integration and support?

In the increasing phenomenon of refugees in Europe, understanding the policies and mechanisms that govern the asylum process for highly skilled refugees has become increasingly relevant. The importance of this group has led to an in-depth examination of the current state of affairs and legalities concerning the asylum process and integration policies for highly skilled refugees in two European nations, Germany and the Netherlands. Chapter 4 aims specifically to address this sub-research question through a detailed investigation. The examination encompasses governmental entities, stakeholders, the asylum process, processing times, recent trends related to Syrian refugees, post-asylum recognition, integration mechanisms, and policies specifically aimed at highly skilled refugees. An analysis of highly skilled migrant programs is also provided, offering context for understanding the broader scope of opportunities and challenges faced by this unique group.

The research concluded that highly skilled refugees are not subject to separate laws or regulations solely based on their skill level in either Germany or the Netherlands. The current asylum procedure for highly skilled refugees in both countries focuses on the dangers an individual faces in their country of origin, rather than on their qualifications or experience. Additionally, the emphasis of the current integration process is on access to the labor market and societal integration. There is no special treatment provided for creating ventures or accessing entrepreneurship, even for those refugees who are highly skilled in entrepreneurial areas.

However, in the Netherlands, there are initiatives to recognize refugees' previous work experience and qualifications. This helps facilitate their integration into the labor market and Dutch society. Tailored support from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is also provided. Similarly, in Germany, the Recognition Act (*Anerkennungsgesetz*) facilitates the acknowledgment of foreign qualifications, and integration courses (*Integrationskurse*) offer language lessons and civic education to assist in social integration.

The desk research conducted to answer this sub-research question uncovered various policies and programs in both the Netherlands and Germany that support highly skilled immigrants, including special visas and programs tailored to their needs. In the Netherlands, these include the Startup Visa, Orientation Year for Highly Educated Persons, and the Highly Skilled Migrant Program. In Germany, the provisions include the Skilled Immigration Act, Specialist Worker Program (also known as the *Fachkräftezuwanderungsgesetz*), and the Self-Employment Visa. However, it was found that these programs are aimed at highly skilled immigrants, not specifically at highly skilled refugees.

As a result, a recommendation was given (See Section 6.2.1) to reform the Start-up visa in both countries, making it more inclusive and adaptable to the unique circumstances of highly skilled refugees. This recommendation reflects acknowledgment of the existing gap in provisions specifically tailored to highly skilled refugees and presents an opportunity to enhance support and integration for this particular group.

6.1.2 SRQ2: What are the legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related barriers faced by highly skilled refugees starting a ventures aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds?

In Germany and the Netherlands, highly skilled refugees who seek to establish ventures that are in line with their educational backgrounds and expertise encounter a complex array of challenges. This research has delved into these multifaceted obstacles, specifically addressing the sub-research question: What are the legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related barriers faced by highly skilled refugees starting a ventures aligned with their skills and educational backgrounds? The investigation uncovered barriers encompassing legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related dimensions. Additionally, a unique barrier concerning access to entrepreneurship was identified. Through interviews with highly skilled Syrian refugees and business incubators that support refugees in both Germany and the Netherlands, these barriers were thoroughly examined. This subsection summarizes the detailed analysis found in the first section of Chapter 5, shedding light on the specific obstacles these refugees encounter, which addresses the second sub-research question of this study. Furthermore, this subsection delves deeper into the barriers by:

- Discussing the barriers in a broad context to provide a general understanding.
- Examining the interplay between these barriers, exploring how they reinforce or influence one another.
- Evaluating the validity of some of these barriers to determine if they can be justified.

- Concluding with an assessment to identify which barrier poses the most significant hindrance or is deemed most crucial.

1- Legislative Barriers

- Legal and Regulatory Restrictions
 - Stringent regulations regarding entrepreneurial activities (e.g., eight to ten years of residence in European countries for activities related to airplane parts).
 - Caesar Law and concerns towards dealing with Syrian entities.
 - Security concerns leading to exclusionary policies and regulations reflecting societal fear of refugees.
- Credential Accreditation and Bureaucratic Challenges
 - The slow process of credential recognition (four to 18 months waiting period for certificate recognition).
 - Lack of clear criteria for medical language exams, delays, and inefficiencies.
 - Views on the importance of entrepreneurial skills over certificates, emphasizing opportunities over legislative barriers in certain sectors.
- Complexity of Legislation and Legal Literacy
 - Difficulties in legal navigation due to complex policies and the need to consult multiple legal experts.
 - The potential of education, legal literacy, and mentoring to overcome these challenges.

Legislative barriers faced by highly skilled refugees in the Netherlands and Germany are multifaceted and deeply rooted in broader societal perceptions and legal mechanisms. Their complex nature necessitates a comprehensive understanding and multi-pronged approach to address them.

The barriers in focus range from legal and regulatory restrictions to bureaucratic challenges and the intricate nature of credential recognition, alongside the complexity of navigating legislative landscapes. Fundamentally, each barrier reveals not just a structural challenge but an underlying perception and treatment of refugees. For instance, the strict legal and regulatory limitations often stem from broader security concerns, revealing a societal apprehension towards refugees. These concerns, although based on national security, can inadvertently stereotype and restrict refugees, affecting their integration and ability to participate in economic activities.

While each barrier operates within its own realm, they often overlap and compound the challenges for refugees. Legal and regulatory restrictions may make it difficult for a refugee to set up a business, and the additional bureaucratic hurdles concerning credential recognition might mean they can't even work in their field of expertise while they're trying to navigate these laws. This is without mentioning the overwhelming complexity of understanding multiple legal frameworks.

Certain barriers, such as those associated with national security or specific industry standards, may have valid reasoning. For instance, the restrictions in the airplane supply chain due to security risks have a valid foundation. Similarly, ensuring that

professional credentials meet the host country's standards is crucial for maintaining quality. However, the lengthy processes and lack of transparency often associated with these justifications seem excessive and more exclusionary than precautionary.

While numerous barriers confront refugees, two stand out due to their overarching impacts. Firstly, legal and regulatory restrictions can pose some of the most formidable challenges. These can block opportunities instantaneously, regardless of a refugee's skill set or qualifications. For instance, HSR-1-NL's inability to enter the airplane supply chain in the Netherlands, despite possessing the requisite expertise, emphasizes the dominant nature of this impediment. When one is legally barred from a specific industry, issues like credential recognition become secondary.

However, the bureaucratic hurdle concerning credential recognition is equally daunting. This obstacle not only curbs entrepreneurial ambitions but also hampers the wider professional integration of refugees. With delays that can span up to 18 months, many refugees might be deterred from chasing their dreams. Yet, as underscored by HSR-2-NL, in sectors where experience and skills are prioritized over formal credentials, there's potential for this barrier to be less obstructive. This indicates that while the challenge of credential recognition is prevalent, its effects could vary depending on the industry.

The legislative landscape for highly skilled refugees in the Netherlands and Germany is both intricate and daunting. While certain barriers may have justifiable roots, the extent of these obstacles and the lengthy processes associated with them appear to be more hindering than facilitating. It's imperative for policies to strike a balance between national concerns and the inclusion of refugees, ensuring that the latter are not unduly disadvantaged. Encouragingly, instances like HSR-2-NL's perspective provide a glimmer of hope, suggesting that not all sectors are impenetrable and that skills and experience can sometimes supersede legislative challenges.

2- Administrative Barriers

- Bureaucratic and Administrative Complexity and Language Barriers
 - Challenges in understanding accounting, administration, rules, and regulations.
 - Language barriers contributing to difficulties in understanding tax systems and financial mechanisms.
 - Slow and cumbersome bureaucratic processes.
- Navigating the Complexities of Taxation
 - Multifaceted challenges in understanding and navigating the tax system.
 - The need for tax consultants and the financial burden associated with it.
 - A profound impact on personal income, social support, and the entrepreneurship landscape.
- Lack of Expertise from Local Authorities
 - Limited experience and expertise within local government bodies to assist refugees.

- Lack of customized pathways, guidance, particularly with legal and administrative procedures.
- Absence of institutions providing help with entrepreneurship for refugees.
- Financial Constraints and Socio-Economic Barriers
 - Concerns about the loss of social support and uncertainty regarding social care and unemployment benefits.
 - High cost of hiring professional assistance like tax consultants.
 - The complex tax system leading to additional financial burdens.
- Discrimination and Lack of Support
 - Perceptions and discrimination within administrative bodies.
 - Discouraging comments disregarding prior education and experiences.
 - Absence of specialized support for refugee entrepreneurs.
 - Discrimination and stereotyping as barriers to entrepreneurial success.

Administrative barriers often embedded within bureaucratic processes and systems, stand as significant roadblocks in the path of highly skilled refugees striving to establish themselves entrepreneurially in Germany and the Netherlands. These barriers are not mere procedural hurdles; they encompass a broad spectrum of challenges from language proficiency, financial nuances, to socio-cultural understanding.

Highly skilled refugees aiming for entrepreneurial pursuits in the Netherlands and Germany face an intricate web of administrative barriers. These barriers, ranging from bureaucratic complexities to outright discrimination, can impede their progress and aspirations. The predicament of these refugees is exacerbated by language barriers, which amplify the challenges posed by intricate administrative requirements and procedures.

While individual barriers are formidable in themselves, their interplay magnifies the challenges faced by refugees. For instance, bureaucratic complexity and language barriers are closely entwined: the technical jargon in local languages further complicates bureaucratic processes. Additionally, financial constraints often overlap with a lack of expertise from local authorities. The absence of tailored guidance means that refugees might spend more to hire outside expertise, further straining their limited resources.

While bureaucratic complexities and tax systems can be viewed as inevitable components of any administrative system, the onus is on governments to streamline and simplify these processes. This is especially vital for vulnerable populations, like refugees, who already face significant challenges adapting to a new environment.

In contrast, barriers such as discrimination are neither justifiable nor inevitable. Such barriers reflect deep-seated biases and prejudices within the society or system, necessitating a cultural and structural overhaul.

Of all the administrative barriers, discrimination stands out as the most profound and damaging. While bureaucratic challenges can be navigated with time and resources, discrimination erodes the very foundation of equal opportunity and integration. When refugees feel that their prior education and experiences are devalued or disregarded

based on their refugee status or country of origin, it impacts their morale, self-worth, and motivation to contribute to their host country's economy.

Addressing these administrative barriers is paramount to unlocking the entrepreneurial potential of highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. While some challenges might be inherent to administrative systems, the emphasis should be on providing tailored support and resources to ensure refugees are equipped to navigate these challenges. Creating an environment that recognizes and values the skills and experiences that refugees bring to the table, free from discrimination and bias, is the need of the hour. Only then can these host countries harness the full entrepreneurial potential of this valuable demographic.

3- Financial Barriers

- Hindered Accessibility to Financial Systems and Investors
 - Legal constraints related to refugee status, limiting business activities.
 - Restrictions tied to temporary accommodation permits and nationality.
 - Challenges in opening business bank accounts, limiting formal business operation.
- Risk Perception and Discrimination
 - Perception of refugees as high-risk individuals by financial institutions.
 - Discrimination in the form of higher interest rates.
 - Outright refusals to open accounts based on nationality and risk assessment.
 - Systemic bias connecting nationality to financial risk.
- Lack of Startup Capital, Credit, and Financial History
 - Difficulty securing initial capital to launch a business.
 - Lack of assets or collateral in the home country.
 - Absence of a local entrepreneurial track record and previous business experience.
- Bureaucratic Challenges in Financial Systems
 - Lengthy and complex bureaucratic processes for investments or loans.
 - Cumbersome paperwork adding to the difficulties.
 - Extended timelines in dealing with financial institutions.
 - Additional challenges specific to refugees seeking financial support.
- Lack of Knowledge of Financial Systems and Services
 - Unfamiliarity with host country's legal and financial systems.
 - Lack of understanding of taxes, legal requirements, and general workings.
 - Absence of knowledge about crowdfunding, subsidies, grants, and other investment opportunities.
- Limited Access to Alternative Financing
 - Constraints in seeking alternative financing sources.
 - Unsuitability of some business models for venture capital.
 - Fear or skepticism towards loans limiting growth options.

- Bias among investors categorizing support as charitable donations rather than investments.
- Personal Socioeconomic Factors
 - Variations in financial capacities among refugees based on social and economic background.
 - Distinctions in opportunities and barriers among highly skilled refugees.
 - Personal financial resources acting as a decisive factor in entrepreneurial endeavors.
 - Intersectionality of race, gender, class, and immigrant status creating unique challenges and opportunities.

Financial barriers often overshadow the vast expertise and experience that highly skilled refugees bring with them. Despite their profound skills and knowledge, they face numerous obstacles that impede their entrepreneurial dreams in host countries. Delving into these financial challenges reveals the intricate layers that complicate refugees' journey toward establishing their own ventures.

It is clear from the outset that the financial barriers faced by highly skilled refugees are not merely transactional but are deeply rooted in systemic biases, bureaucratic procedures, and a lack of familiarity with local financial ecosystems. They are not simply hurdles to overcome; they represent entrenched obstacles that challenge the very feasibility of refugee entrepreneurship.

While each barrier might be distinct in its nature, their effects compound, creating a web of challenges. For instance, the risk perception and discrimination faced from financial institutions is closely tied to the hindered accessibility to financial systems. A refugee's lack of understanding of the host country's legal and financial systems leads them to potentially make misinformed decisions or face skepticism from potential investors, further deepening the lack of startup capital, credit, and financial history.

Moreover, bureaucratic complexities not only extend timelines but can exacerbate the lack of knowledge of financial systems and services. As refugees grapple with the intricate procedures of one bank or institution, they might miss out on alternative financing opportunities.

While it's tempting to view all barriers as unjust, one could argue that some of them are in place due to genuine concerns. For example, financial institutions might genuinely worry about the return on investment if a refugee is repatriated. However, this concern is problematic when it translates into broad-stroke biases against all refugees. A more nuanced, case-by-case assessment would be more justifiable than wholesale discrimination.

Similarly, bureaucratic challenges in financial systems might exist to ensure that only genuine and viable business ideas get funded, preventing fraud and financial instability. Yet, the system's failure lies in not differentiating or easing the process for genuine refugee entrepreneurs, making the process disproportionately challenging for them.

Determining the most blocking barrier is subjective and might vary depending on the specific contexts and individual experiences. However, from the given information, the risk perception and discrimination seems to be the most foundational. It's a barrier

that directly and indirectly influences others: from hindering access to the financial system to affecting the availability of startup capital. If this systemic bias is addressed, it could potentially alleviate several other associated challenges.

In dissecting the financial barriers faced by refugees, it's evident that a multipronged approach is needed for a solution. This approach should involve legal reforms, shifts in societal perceptions, and specialized training for refugees. Addressing these barriers holistically can pave the way for unlocking the significant potential contributions of these highly skilled refugees, benefiting both them and the host country's economy.

4- Socio-cultural Barriers

- Language Barriers
 - Difficulty in understanding the way of thinking and communicating in Dutch and German, beyond mere language proficiency.
 - Legal difficulties, such as signing contracts in Dutch without comprehension.
 - Challenges speaking with investors who do not speak English.
 - Necessity of understanding regional variations in language usage, especially in areas that refuse to communicate in English.
- Cultural Barriers
 - Vast cultural differences between the Middle East and the host countries, extending to mentality and deeper beliefs.
 - Need to adapt to local business customs, like business logo color or name pronunciation.
 - Reluctance to ask for help, seen as a sign of weakness in some cultures.
 - More subtle cultural barriers, such as understanding social norms and behaviors.
- Stigma and Discrimination
 - Preconceived notions and biases from investors or others, leading to reluctance to engage or understand.
 - Existence of stigma in requesting materials in one's mother tongue, met with discrimination.
 - Conservativeness in some regions, leading to expectations that newcomers should speak the local language, reflecting cultural pride bordering on exclusion.
- Social Capital
 - Lack of connections, kinship, and networking, contrasting with what native entrepreneurs might have.
 - Lack of support systems affecting various business aspects, from finding partners to understanding the local business environment.
 - Inability to access social capital in the home country due to external factors like sanctions.
 - Challenges navigating unfamiliar systems without social capital, such as legal contracts without knowing lawyers in the country.

Socio-cultural barriers faced by Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and Germany, as illustrated above, present a multi-layered, intricate tapestry of challenges. Some are universally recognized among migrants, while others are unique to the particular experiences of these skilled professionals.

Language and culture are inherently linked. Mastering a language involves more than vocabulary or grammar; it requires an understanding of the cultural nuances, idioms, and the thought processes of native speakers. While language can be a tangible barrier, culture presents subtler challenges, with nuances that are not always immediately evident but can profoundly impact business interactions.

Cultural barriers extend beyond mere customs or rituals. Deep-rooted beliefs, values, and norms shape interactions and influence decision-making. For example, certain cultures might perceive seeking help as a sign of weakness, which can affect collaboration or the seeking of mentorship in business contexts.

Stigma and discrimination act as force multipliers, exacerbating other barriers. Entrepreneurs might face biases that are rooted not just in their status as foreigners, but also based on stereotypes or preconceptions associated with refugees. Such prejudices can intensify both language and cultural challenges, as individuals may find their efforts thwarted not by their skills, but by perceptions.

The role of social capital is paramount. Building and leveraging networks is a cornerstone of entrepreneurial success. Without established connections, it becomes challenging to find partners, understand local market dynamics, or even secure funding. The lack of social capital means many refugee entrepreneurs are starting several steps behind their native counterparts.

While some barriers, like language requirements in legal or governmental scenarios, might be justified given the context of maintaining a nation's linguistic identity and ensuring clarity in official communications, the challenge lies in the lack of support provided to refugees to overcome these barriers. Offering language training programs that address the administrative and legal frameworks associated with entrepreneurship, or providing translated resources for essential documents, could help bridge this gap. On the other hand, deep-rooted cultural biases, stigmas, and discrimination might be harder to address, given their intangible nature. These barriers are not simply policy-driven but are embedded in societal attitudes. Tackling them would require extensive efforts in fostering understanding, empathy, and integration at the grassroots level.

All barriers contribute to the difficulties faced by highly skilled refugees. However, the lack of social capital seems to be the most pressing. Without the right connections and networks, many doors remain closed. Whether it's accessing funding, understanding local legal systems, or even simply finding a supportive community, social capital plays a pivotal role. Moreover, it is a barrier that indirectly intensifies the effects of other challenges. Without a support system or guidance, navigating language intricacies, cultural nuances, or even facing discrimination can become exponentially harder.

The journey of Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and Germany sheds light on the broader challenges faced by refugees and migrants worldwide. While barriers exist, understanding their nature, interplay, and the ways to mitigate them is

the first step in fostering a more inclusive, supportive environment for these skilled professionals, thus enriching the host countries both economically and culturally.

5- Market-related Barriers

- Market Understanding and Integration
 - Difficulty understanding local culture and market dynamics.
 - Challenges with customer behavior, local values, and investment approaches.
 - Issues with introducing new products or concepts to an unfamiliar market.
- Limited Personal and Professional Networks
 - Lack of network and connections with essential contacts.
 - Struggles with networking and building relationships with lawyers, suppliers, and potential business partners.
- Resource Acquisition and Market Entry
 - Barriers to accessing raw materials.
 - Challenges in understanding the supply chain and local market's familiarity with certain products.
 - Difficulties with suppliers and obtaining essential raw materials.
- Discrimination and Prejudice
 - Perception and bias towards refugees and migrants.
 - Preferences among local customers for businesses of local origin.
 - Instances of customers and employers showing preference for individuals of local origin or those who do not visibly display religious affiliation.
 - Discriminatory tendencies impacting market acceptance and taking refugee entrepreneurs less seriously.
- Language and Communication
 - The barrier of language affecting the ability to comprehend the market and communicate concepts.
 - Challenges related to speaking the local language with an accent, affecting credibility.
 - The hampering of understanding market dynamics, networking, and building trust due to language barriers.
- Legal and Regulatory Obstacles
 - Legal and bureaucratic barriers such as cost and trust issues related to seeking legal advice.
 - Struggles with understanding and complying with rules and legislation related to specific industries, like food and beverage.
 - Lack of streamlined information, making compliance more labor-intensive and complex.
 - Unfamiliarity with local laws, regulations, and administrative processes, creating additional barriers.

Market-related barriers encountered by Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and Germany, as outlined above, provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges these individuals face when attempting to integrate and thrive in their host

countries. The barriers are multifaceted and intertwined, reflecting both the unique challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs.

The combination of these barriers paints a clear picture: Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and Germany face a complex tapestry of challenges that go beyond the usual entrepreneurship hurdles. It's not just about understanding a new market or setting up a new business; it's about doing so in an environment where you might be perceived differently because of your background, where the rules are different, and where you lack the supportive network that many take for granted.

Market-related barriers faced by Syrian refugee entrepreneurs are not isolated, but often interact and compound upon each other. For instance, the challenge of market understanding is invariably connected to language and communication. Without an understanding of the local language, entrepreneurs find it hard to decipher the subtleties of the local market, be it customer preferences or cultural nuances. Moreover, this linguistic barrier further amplifies the limited personal and professional networks problem. Networking often requires effective communication, which can be stunted when language proficiency is lacking. Likewise, the barrier of resources acquisition and market entry aligns closely with the network challenge. The difficulties HSR-3-NL faced with suppliers might have been lessened if there were established connections or referrals in place.

Some barriers, such as language and communication, are inevitable given the nature of migration and the essence of being a refugee. Mastering a new language is time-intensive, and while it's a critical barrier, it is one that refugees would have to face regardless of their entrepreneurial ambitions. Similarly, legal and regulatory obstacles might be seen as necessary, particularly when considering the regulatory landscape of European nations like the Netherlands and Germany. These countries maintain strict regulatory guidelines to ensure business practices align with their socio-economic and environmental standards.

While many barriers may be rooted in unfamiliarity and lack of information, discrimination and prejudice stands out as the most concerning. It's an external force, an extrinsic challenge that Syrian refugee entrepreneurs have little control over. Systemic biases can heavily weigh on entrepreneurial success, regardless of the resilience of the entrepreneur. This barrier, if unaddressed, might discourage potential entrepreneurs from even embarking on their journey.

When determining which barrier is the most 'blocking', it's tempting to assert that discrimination and prejudice have a profound impact, given their emotional and systemic repercussions. However, the intertwined nature of these barriers implies that one cannot isolate their effects. While discrimination might appear to be the most daunting, the combined effects of limited personal and professional networks, as well as language and communication challenges, can be equally paralyzing. These directly impede resource acquisition, market entry, and integration.

For Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in the Netherlands and Germany, the road to establishing a business is fraught with numerous, interlinked barriers. While some of these barriers are common for any outsider entering a new market, others are specifically exacerbated by their refugee status. As societies strive to integrate refugees and tap into their potential, understanding and addressing these barriers becomes paramount. By

creating environments that foster understanding, inclusivity, and collaboration, host countries can not only empower refugee entrepreneurs but also enrich their own markets and societies with diverse and innovative ventures.

6- Access Entrepreneurship Barriers

- Challenges in Finding and Accessing Incubators
 - Difficulty in finding suitable incubation support.
 - Selective nature of incubators and a lack of feedback.
 - Complexity of the onboarding process.
 - General lack of specialization within incubators.
 - Absence of tailored programs exacerbating difficulties for refugees.
- Contractual Barriers and the Lack of Negotiating Power
 - “Take it or leave it” contracts reflecting systemic problems.
 - Imbalanced contract terms that disadvantage those with lesser negotiating power.
 - The urgency of refugees’ situation may lead to the acceptance of unfavorable terms and conditions.
- Lack of Supportive Environment
 - Limited information available, especially for non-native speakers.
 - Lack of networking connections and supportive networks.
 - Difficulties in navigating the entrepreneurial landscape due to language barriers.
 - Complex process and a seemingly bureaucratic and disinterested response.
 - Lack of human-centered approach in the entrepreneurship support system.

Access entrepreneurship barriers underscore the realities many face in their pursuit of self-sufficiency and economic freedom. The barriers listed above provide a glimpse into the intricate maze of obstacles that highly skilled refugees have to work through. Even though these barriers might appear distinct at first glance, they are deeply intertwined, amplifying the challenges these individuals confront on their entrepreneurial paths.

Entrepreneurs are often told to be prepared, but how can one prepare without the right resources? This catch-22 situation is particularly resonant for highly skilled refugees, who not only have to contend with the normal challenges of entrepreneurship but also with issues arising from their unique position. The lack of specificity in support from incubators can deter entrepreneurs from sectors that aren’t the incubator’s main focus.

Standardized contracts might be a product of bureaucratic efficiency, but they overlook the diverse needs and circumstances of different entrepreneurs. Refugees, especially, might be cornered into accepting these “take it or leave it” terms due to their urgent circumstances, exacerbating their vulnerabilities.

While language is a barrier, it’s merely a symptom of a bigger problem: the lack of a genuinely inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystem. The need for a more human-centric approach, especially for non-native speakers and those unfamiliar with the local business environment, is paramount.

It's essential to note that these barriers do not operate in isolation. They are part of a self-reinforcing system of challenges. For instance, the difficulty in finding the right incubator is exacerbated by the lack of a supportive environment, which in turn can make refugees more desperate and hence more susceptible to accepting unfavorable contractual terms. These barriers, therefore, collectively create a steeper ascent for highly skilled refugees.

While it may be tempting to label all these barriers as unnecessary impediments, it's worth noting that some might stem from legitimate concerns. Incubators, for instance, might opt for generalized programs because they lack resources to offer specialized ones. Similarly, standardized contracts might be a product of bureaucratic efficiency. However, while these reasons might explain the existence of certain barriers, they don't justify them. Efforts should be made to optimize for inclusivity and diversity while addressing these concerns.

Although all barriers have significant repercussions, the lack of a supportive environment seems particularly crippling. This is because it's foundational – a supportive environment can facilitate connections, increase access to resources, and even help in navigating contractual challenges. Without it, every other step becomes more challenging. The feeling of isolation and exclusion can deter even the most passionate entrepreneurs.

In a world increasingly marked by mobility and globalization, it's paramount for host countries to foster a conducive environment for all entrepreneurial talents, including highly skilled refugees. Addressing these barriers isn't just a matter of inclusivity; it's a crucial step in harnessing diverse entrepreneurial talents that can drive innovation and economic growth. While some barriers might have underlying reasons, the end goal should always be to create an ecosystem that facilitates, rather than impedes, the entrepreneurial spirit.

6.1.3 SRQ3: What is the ideal business incubator for providing services to address the barriers faced by highly skilled entrepreneurial refugees?

The question of devising the ideal of business incubator to meet the specific challenges and requirements of entrepreneurial highly skilled refugees is complex and multifaceted. Tailoring an incubator that addresses the unique circumstances faced by refugees requires a deep understanding of their individual needs, aspirations, obstacles and their asylum and integration journeys. To explore this question, this study engaged both the beneficiaries and the providers of incubation programs, through comprehensive interviews with 4 highly skilled Syrian refugees and 4 coaches and managers from business incubators who have hands-on experience with refugee entrepreneurs.

The refugee entrepreneurs were invited to shed light on their experiences with existing incubation programs, identifying what was lacking and articulating what, in their view, would constitute an ideal incubator and what are the necessary services. Their insights were matched with the perspectives of business incubators, who were asked to describe their vision for an ideal incubator catering to highly skilled refugees. For a detailed analysis, please refer to Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.5.

The findings from these interviews reveal a nuanced and multifaceted picture of the essential services and characteristics of an ideal business incubator. These aspects include but are not limited to:

Key Attributes of Ideal Business Incubators: Insights from Skilled Refugees And Business Incubators

- **Addressing Administrative Barriers**
 1. High Level of Collaboration Among Relevant Actors: Business incubators, local municipalities, and NGOs should communicate effectively to direct entrepreneurs to suitable programs.
 2. Proactive Support Over Passive Mentorship: Incubators should actively offer solutions and recommendations rather than just connecting entrepreneurs to mentors.
- **Addressing Legal Barriers**
 1. Legal Support with Refugee-specific Considerations: Incubators should offer legal support that considers the unique circumstances refugees face.
 2. Affordable Legal Partnerships: High-quality legal services should be both affordable and tailored for startups.
 3. Provide Legal Support and Knowledge: Incubators need to adequately cover understanding contracts, liabilities, and debts.
- **Addressing Financial Barriers**
 1. Guarantor Role of Business Incubators: Incubators could vouch for the potential of entrepreneurs, aiding in securing loans.
 2. Diversified Access to Funds: Incubators should diversify funding streams, including attracting individual investors.
 3. Offer Transportation Reimbursements: Incubators should support refugees with travel-related expenses.
 4. Providing Active Support: Incubators should actively introduce startups to potential investors.
- **Addressing Socio-cultural Barriers**
 1. Cultural Classes: Entrepreneurs should learn about cultural and business-specific nuances of the host country.
 2. Networking and Collaboration with Peers of the Same Background: Connecting skilled refugees helps in expanding networks and mutual support.
 3. Recognition and Respect for Knowledge and Experience: Value and respect the professional experiences and capabilities of refugee entrepreneurs.
 4. Emphasis on Community Building: Building a community among entrepreneurs is vital.
- **Addressing Market-related Barriers**
 1. Dedicated Client Managers: Consistent touchpoints and mentors aid entrepreneurs in various challenges.
 2. Advisory Board: Incubators benefit from having an advisory board that understands immigrant cultures.

3. Focus on Professional Networking, not just Content: Networking is crucial for a successful entrepreneurial journey.
 4. Specialization in Different Sectors: Incubators should specialize to provide deeper sector-specific support.
 5. Facilitating Networking Opportunities: Entrepreneurs should have access to events to meet potential partners.
- **Addressing Access Entrepreneurship Barriers**
 1. University-oriented Incubators with Understanding of Refugees' Needs: Incubators should provide rigorous support tailored for refugees.
 2. Understanding the Limitations of Certain Sectors: Some business sectors require more attention due to inherent risks.
 3. Shared Background and Experience: Incubators led by individuals with similar backgrounds to entrepreneurs offer more tailored support.
 4. Rigorous Admission to Incubation Programs: Differentiated programs ensure the commitment of participants.
 5. Cultivation of Awareness and Knowledge: Educating startups about the local entrepreneurial system is essential.
 6. Mental and Psychological Health Support: Refugees may need support with conflict resolution and communication.
 7. Emphasis on Tolerance, Empathy, and Flat Leadership: Promote a cooperative, team-focused mindset.
 8. Inclusive Leadership in Business Incubators: Diversity in leadership ensures understanding of language and cultural barriers.
 9. Skill Recognition and Activation: Recognize and update the skills of highly skilled refugees.
 10. Assistance Beyond Incubation Period: Post-incubation support helps entrepreneurs establish themselves in the business world.
 11. Flexible Approach: Avoid a one-size-fits-all approach and tailor support to each entrepreneur.
 12. Provide Specialized Knowledge and Successful Stories: Incubators should offer specialized trainers and showcase success stories.
 13. Provide Entrepreneurial Residencies: Incubators should consider offering entrepreneurial residencies with large companies.

These findings lay the foundation for a comprehensive understanding of what constitutes an ideal business incubator for highly skilled refugees, embracing a multifaceted approach that considers not only professional skills and business acumen but also recognizes the human dignity, resilience, and unique challenges faced by refugees. Sections 5.2.4 and 5.2.5 delved into each of these points in detail, providing a blueprint for an incubator that is not only effective in nurturing business success but also compassionate in recognizing and addressing the unique needs and potentials of refugee entrepreneurs.

Refugees, especially highly skilled ones, have unique challenges and advantages when it comes to entrepreneurship. Their challenges often span from cultural and language barriers, legal complexities related to their refugee status, and the emotional and psy-

chological toll of displacement. At the same time, they bring a wealth of diverse experiences, resilience, and unique perspectives that can lead to innovative solutions and businesses.

Given these unique circumstances, there are two main ways to support refugee entrepreneurs through business incubators:

1. Specialized Business Incubators for Refugees:

- Pros: These incubators can offer tailor-made programs that directly address the unique challenges faced by refugees. They can provide specialized legal, psychological, and business support with a deep understanding of the refugee journey. Such dedicated spaces can also foster a sense of community among refugee entrepreneurs, helping them network, share experiences, and collaborate.
- Cons: Isolating refugee entrepreneurs in separate incubators might limit their exposure to the broader business community. They might miss out on some networking opportunities and the chance to integrate more seamlessly into the host country's business ecosystem.

2. Traditional Incubators with Special Programs for Refugees:

- Pros: These incubators offer the advantage of integration. While they provide specialized support for refugees, they also allow them to interact with a broader spectrum of entrepreneurs. This can lead to diversified networking, partnership opportunities, and a smoother integration process into the host country's business scene.
- Cons: The risk here is that the specialized needs of refugees might be overlooked or not addressed as effectively as in a dedicated refugee incubator.

Specialized Business Incubators for Refugees are uniquely positioned to deeply address the distinct challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs. One of the foundational pillars in these incubators would undoubtedly be to facilitate networking opportunities tailored for refugees. This means organizing events where they can meet peers from similar backgrounds, swap stories, and forge partnerships.

Legal support is another aspect that cannot be overstated in importance. Given the often-complex legal statuses refugees might have in host countries, having legal experts who are not just proficient in business law, but are also well-versed in refugee rights and legal challenges, can be a game-changer. Alongside this, it's essential to provide specialized training. For instance, if a significant number of refugee entrepreneurs are interested in the software development sector, having dedicated programs to address the intricacies of that sector would be invaluable.

We also cannot ignore the power of storytelling and representation. By emphasizing and celebrating success stories from within the refugee community, these incubators can inspire newcomers, making them feel that success is attainable. Tied closely to this is the importance of psychological support. Given the traumas many refugees endure, having accessible mental health resources is essential.

The management style and background also play a crucial role in shaping the ethos of the incubator. When those at the helm share the refugee journey and experiences, it

creates a supportive, empathetic environment. Equally, recognizing and valuating the skills refugees bring and assisting them to adapt these to new markets is imperative. Ultimately, a successful refugee-specific incubator should be a space where entrepreneurs feel valued, respected, and equipped to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape of their new home.

On the other hand, *Traditional Incubators with Special Programs for Refugees* play a critical role in fostering integration. While they cater to a broader entrepreneurial audience, it's crucial to have tailored programs for refugees. A one-size-fits-all approach can be counterproductive, so these incubators should strive to understand and address the unique needs of refugee entrepreneurs while also ensuring their integration into the wider business community.

One of the major advantages of traditional incubators is the potential for a diversified access to funds. Since they cater to a broader audience, there's a richer tapestry of funding opportunities available. Soft skills, such as presentation and communication, are universally beneficial, and while refugees might benefit from specialized sessions, general sessions will help them integrate better.

Financial constraints, often a reality for refugees, mean that gestures like supporting commute expenses can be a significant relief. Collaboration is another strength of traditional incubators. Their broader reach means they can effectively liaise with local municipalities, NGOs, and other stakeholders, ensuring a more holistic support system. Additionally, having a diverse leadership, which includes refugees, can bring a fresh, rounded perspective, benefiting not just the refugee participants but the entire incubator community.

Lastly, university partnerships can be a boon. Universities are often hubs of innovation, research, and resources. While these partnerships are beneficial for all participants, having special programs or scholarships for refugees can make their entrepreneurial journey smoother.

In conclusion, whether an incubator chooses to be refugee-specific or opts for a traditional model with specialized programs, it's the depth, relevance, and accessibility of support that will determine its success in assisting refugee entrepreneurs.

Whether to opt for a specialized business incubator for refugees or an traditional incubator with a special program for them depends on the primary objective.

If the main goal is to ensure that refugees get all the specialized support they need to address their unique challenges, a dedicated incubator might be more suitable. However, if the aim is to ensure both support and seamless integration into the broader business ecosystem of the host country, a traditional incubator with specialized programs might be more effective.

In an ideal scenario, having a mix of both types of incubators available would give refugee entrepreneurs the flexibility to choose the environment they feel most comfortable and effective in.

6.1.4 SRQ4: How can business incubators collaborate with local governmental actors to develop and implement long-term solutions for highly skilled refugees and host countries?

The integration of highly skilled refugees into the entrepreneurial scene of their new host countries presents both unique challenges and untapped opportunities. The collaboration between business incubators and local governmental actors can play a vital role in harnessing the potential of these individuals. The sub-research question uncovers a critical aspect of the broader refugee support discourse.

In exploring this question, two distinct perspectives were considered: that of the highly skilled refugees themselves, who have firsthand experience dealing with local governmental actors and business incubators, and navigated the integration process, and that of the business incubators targeting refugee entrepreneurs. Through semi-structured interviews, analyzed in Section 5.3.2, invaluable insights were gained from both of these viewpoints.

These interviews provided not only a comprehensive understanding of the needs, challenges, and possibilities but also allowed for the formulation of a concrete recommendation. This recommendation, synthesized from the diverse perspectives, outlines actionable steps that can be taken to foster collaboration and create sustainable solutions for both highly skilled refugees and host countries. Section 6.2.2 provides a detailed explanation of this recommendation.

The following sections summarize the perspectives of highly skilled refugees and business incubators on how business incubators can collaborate with local governmental actors.

Highly Skilled Refugees' Perspective

- **Role of Civil Servants as Facilitators**
Local governmental actors must act as facilitators to connect highly skilled refugees to the right business incubators. By understanding the specific needs of refugees and their business ideas, civil servants and municipalities can align them with suitable incubators.
- **Bridging Communication Gaps and Coordination**
There's a noted lack of communication between local governmental bodies, economic agencies, and incubators. Creating channels for clear and effective communication, reducing legal fragmentation, and coordinating between various bodies are vital for directing refugees to appropriate incubation programs.
- **Creating Integrated Support Mechanisms**
Joint programs and funding, would facilitate collaboration between incubators and local governmental actors. Pooling resources and creating unified support systems can ensure the steady growth of business opportunities for refugees.

Developing long-term solutions for highly skilled refugees and host countries requires a holistic approach where local governmental actors serve as essential catalysts. This approach integrates facilitation, communication, and collaboration between all stakeholders, forming a robust support network to boost the entrepreneurial journey of refugees. Such a concerted effort leverages the strengths and resources of various

entities, including business incubators and local governments, to create a conducive environment for entrepreneurship among refugees in the Netherlands.

Business Incubators' Perspective

- **Policy Modification:** Business incubators can work closely with local government to recommend policy changes, specifically in allowing refugees to sustain social welfare support during the early stages of business development and revising policies that force refugees into low-wage jobs.
- **Educational Support:** Business incubators can highlight the need for municipalities to refresh and update the skills of highly-skilled refugees. Collaboration can include linking them to startups and incubators relevant to their field.
- **Breaking Stereotypes:** By working together, business incubators and local governmental actors can help dispel stereotypes that might hinder the progress of highly skilled refugees.
- **Incubators as Intermediaries:** Business incubators can serve as facilitators, articulating the unique needs of highly-skilled refugees and acting as sponsors.
- **Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Collaboration with governmental actors to reduce bureaucracy, particularly in the recognition of qualifications and skills, can create a more supportive environment for entrepreneurial refugees.
- **Identification of Highly Skilled Refugees:** The challenge of identifying highly-skilled refugees can be addressed through partnerships with the government.
- **Funding:** Although not detailed, potential funding from the government to business incubators can further bolster support for highly-skilled refugees.

In conclusion, collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators can be achieved through policy modification, educational support, reducing bureaucratic barriers, identifying opportunities, and creating alignment with new laws. Such collaborative efforts can help build a more conducive environment for highly skilled refugees to thrive and contribute to their host countries.

6.2 RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

6.2.1 Refactor An Established Policy: Treat Entrepreneurial Highly Skilled Asylum Seekers As Entrepreneurial Immigrants

In response to the evolving dynamics of migration, this section introduces a compelling reconsideration within the Dutch context. Specifically, it examines the prospect of refining the Startup Visa to effectively cater to the situation of highly skilled asylum seekers, thereby better accommodating their difficult circumstances.

By merging the imperatives of humanitarian support and economic growth, this inquiry aims to propose a nuanced approach that addresses the unique needs of this demographic while harnessing their potential contributions to the Dutch innovation and economic landscape.

This recommendation builds upon the findings presented in Section 4.1.5 for the Dutch context. While Chapter 4 provides a brief description to the Startup Visa procedures in the Netherlands and Germany for highly skilled entrepreneurial immigrants, this section diverges by providing a comprehensive explanation of the Dutch process. Unlike Chapter 4, this section won't discuss the specificities of the German context due to its similarity to the Dutch context, with very minor differences such as distinct actors and minor operational nuances.

This recommendation provides a roadmap that can be refined through in-depth analysis and consultations with stakeholders. It offers a balanced approach to an issue intersecting economic policies, immigration policies, and social integration. Additionally, the recommendation requires a deep legal review and alignment with the broader national immigration and integration policy framework.

By pursuing this course of action, the proposed recommendation aims to provide entrepreneurial highly skilled asylum seekers the chance to use the benefits of the Startup Visa process. Furthermore, this approach aims to avoid the long waiting times associated with applying for asylum, so these individuals can start their ventures without being slowed down by the discouraging and overwhelming nature of the asylum process. In doing so, the intention is to reduce, to some extent, the challenges and obstacles that arise from the asylum process, as demonstrated in this research study.

This exploration navigates the challenges, opportunities, and potential impacts of recalibrating the Startup Visa framework to provide a meaningful path for those who bring both expertise and hope for a new beginning.

The Startup Visa in the Netherlands

The Netherlands has long been recognized as a hub for innovation and entrepreneurship. The startup visa, officially known as the "Residence Permit for Startups," offers an opportunity for aspiring entrepreneurs from non-EU countries to establish new businesses in the Netherlands. The startup visa is part of a broader initiative by the Dutch government to foster innovation and attract international talent. Launched in 2015, it aims to create a nurturing ecosystem for new businesses by capitalizing on the country's strong infrastructure, strategic location, and business-friendly environment.

- **Eligibility Criteria**

To be eligible for the startup visa, the applicant must meet the following criteria:

1. **Innovative Business Idea:** The proposed business must involve a new product or service and contribute to the innovation of the Dutch market.
2. **Collaboration with a Facilitator:** The entrepreneur must have an agreement with a recognized facilitating organization in the Netherlands. The facilitator provides mentoring and support throughout the startup process.
3. **Sufficient Funds:** The applicant must demonstrate sufficient financial resources to reside and start a business in the Netherlands.
4. **Step-by-Step Plan:** A solid business plan outlining how the startup will progress from concept to realization.

- **Application Process**

1. **Finding a Facilitator:** Before applying for the visa, the entrepreneur must find a recognized facilitator to support the business venture.
2. **Preparing the Necessary Documents:** This includes the business plan, proof of sufficient funds, a signed agreement with a facilitator, and other required paperwork.
3. **Submit Application:** Applications must be submitted to the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND).
4. **Assessment:** Applications are assessed by both the IND and the Netherlands Enterprise Agency (RVO) to evaluate the business's innovative nature.
5. **Visa Issuance:** If approved, the startup visa is issued for one year, during which the business must be launched.

- **Extensions and Pathways to Permanent Residency**

The startup visa can lead to a longer-term residence permit if the business shows progress after the first year. Entrepreneurs can then apply for the "self-employment" residence permit, valid for up to five years and renewable.

- **Challenges and Criticisms**

Some challenges include the relatively short duration of the visa, strict criteria for business innovation, and dependence on recognized facilitators. The complexity of the application process has also been cited as a barrier.

The startup visa in the Netherlands represents an exciting opportunity for international entrepreneurs to tap into a vibrant ecosystem. By understanding the criteria, aligning with a facilitator, and navigating the application process successfully, non-EU entrepreneurs can make the most of this unique pathway to launching innovative businesses in the Netherlands.

Refactoring the Startup Visa in the Netherlands to Accommodate Highly Skilled Asylum Seekers: A Comprehensive Recommendation

The existing startup visa regulations overlook a potentially significant demographic – highly skilled asylum seekers. The inclusion of these talented individuals can not only

serve the principles of humanitarianism but also contribute to the economic vitality and growth of the Netherlands. Therefore, this section puts forth a comprehensive recommendation to refactor the startup visa process specifically tailored to this group.

- **Current Startup Visa Framework**

As shown in the previous section, The Netherlands' startup visa scheme focuses on attracting international entrepreneurs who can bring innovation and contribute to the Dutch economy. While the existing framework has been successful in luring global talents, it does not necessarily accommodate the unique circumstances faced by highly skilled asylum seekers.

- **Challenges and Opportunities**

1. Challenges:

- **Lack of Accessibility:** The current startup visa process excludes highly skilled asylum seekers due to stringent financial, legal, and language requirements.
- **Documentation:** Asylum seekers may lack the required documents to satisfy the current visa requirements.
- **Alignment with International Principles:** The existing framework may need better alignment with global human rights standards, especially in terms of non-discrimination and the right to work.

2. Opportunities:

- **Entrepreneurial Acceleration:** Fast-tracking the entrepreneurial journey of highly skilled asylum seekers to foster innovation and economic development.
- **Talent Utilization:** Leveraging the skills and expertise of asylum seekers.
- **Maintaining Motivation and Aspirations:** By preventing prolonged uncertainty that might affect the entrepreneurial aspirations of newcomers.
- **Economic Growth:** Contribution to sectors that require highly skilled professionals.
- **Social Integration:** Enhancing societal cohesion and integration.

- **Recommendations**

1. Legal Alignment:

- Create a separate category within the startup visa framework specifically designed for highly skilled asylum seekers.
- Align national laws with international human rights and asylum laws.

2. Flexible Financial and Documentation Requirements:

- Lower financial barriers by introducing grants, subsidies, or affordable loans specifically designed for highly skilled asylum seekers.
- Consider alternative methods for verifying qualifications and experience.

- Engage with international agencies to facilitate document verification.
3. Tailored Support Mechanisms:
 - Provide tailored integration courses including language training, cultural orientation, and social integration.
 - Facilitate access to necessary resources like office spaces, funding, and networking opportunities.
 - Establish mentorship programs connecting refugees with established entrepreneurs and industry experts.
 4. Integration and Entrepreneurial Community Engagement:
 - Encourage recognized facilitators¹ to seek out and support entrepreneurial asylum seekers who have valid and scalable business ideas in refugee camps.
 - Promote entrepreneurial community engagement by establishing partnerships with organizations targeting asylum seekers.
 5. Enhance Collaboration with Relevant Stakeholders:
 - Collaborate with non-governmental organizations specializing in refugee assistance to leverage existing support networks.
 - Develop partnerships with universities to facilitate knowledge transfer and recognize foreign qualifications.
 6. Institute a Robust Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanism:
 - Implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system to assess the program's impact and ensure that the program's benefits are not being exploited through corruption.
 - Create mechanisms for ongoing feedback from refugees and other stakeholders to continually refine the program.

The refactoring of the Netherlands' startup visa to include highly skilled asylum seekers is not merely a matter of economic pragmatism but also a reflection of social responsibility. By leveraging the unique abilities of this demographic, the Netherlands can foster a more diverse, innovative, and resilient economy. Collaboration among governmental agencies, non-profits, and the private sector will be instrumental in making these recommended changes a reality.

By adopting this multifaceted approach, the Netherlands can position itself as a leading example of how to harmoniously align economic ambitions with humanitarian principles.

6.2.2 Collaborative Support System: A Framework for Local Government and Business Incubators to Foster Refugee Entrepreneurship

As this research has demonstrated, the introduction and integration of highly skilled refugees into the entrepreneurial scene in the Netherlands and Germany stand as both a challenge and an opportunity. These individuals often bring a wealth of experience,

¹ <https://english.rvo.nl/information/startup-information/find-facilitator>

innovation, and determination but face barriers in accessing the tools and networks they need to launch entrepreneurial ventures. Leveraging their skills for economic growth requires a nuanced and cooperative approach involving various stakeholders. Local governmental actors, in collaboration with business incubators, can play a critical role in fostering an environment where refugee entrepreneurs can thrive. By weaving together policy, resources, mentorship, and tailored support, these collaborations can break down barriers and pave the way for success. This partnership framework is not just theoretical; it encompasses tangible steps and roles that each participant can undertake to facilitate entrepreneurial growth among refugees.

The collaboration can be segmented into four main phases: initial facilitation, incubation and skill development, ongoing support and integration, and policy evaluation. Together, these phases create a triangular collaboration between the local government, business incubators, and refugee entrepreneurs. The Cross-functional Flowchart, as shown in Figure 6.1, offers a detailed visualization of this collaborative mechanism, encapsulating the essence of the recommended triangular collaboration. This chart clearly delineates the responsibilities and interactions among the local government, business incubators, and refugee entrepreneurs. Within these phases are specific roles and actions designed to synergistically guide, support, and nurture the entrepreneurial endeavors of refugees. For a broader perspective of this framework, Figure 6.2 vividly displays the relationships and interactions among the three pivotal agents: the local government actor (government), the business incubators (facilitator), and the entrepreneurial highly skilled refugees (beneficiary).

Below is a breakdown of how these collaborations can be structured and the roles that different stakeholders can play:

1. Initial Facilitation:

- Role of the Local Government: The local government, through its civil servants, can act as coordinators to connect the refugee entrepreneurs with the right business incubators based on the nature of their venture (e.g., medical, tech, engineering, etc.).

2. Incubation and Skill Development:

- Role of Business Incubators: Once connected, business incubators can play a critical role in nurturing the entrepreneur's idea. This would involve:
 - Assess the entrepreneur's idea and skills.
 - Onboard them onto a fitting incubation track.
 - Guiding them on building business relationships.

3. Ongoing Support and Integration:

- Role of Local Government and Incubators: These entities can collectively ensure that the refugee entrepreneur gets integrated into the community and has all the necessary resources to start and grow their venture.
 - Assigning a "Client Manager" to understand the needs of the entrepreneur, gauge the phase of their business, and guide them further on their journey.

- As facilitators, they can evaluate the entrepreneur's progress. If the entrepreneur is doing exceptionally well, they can recommend that the local governmental actor give more time for integration or/and maintain the social welfare benefits, without pushing them to find a job.

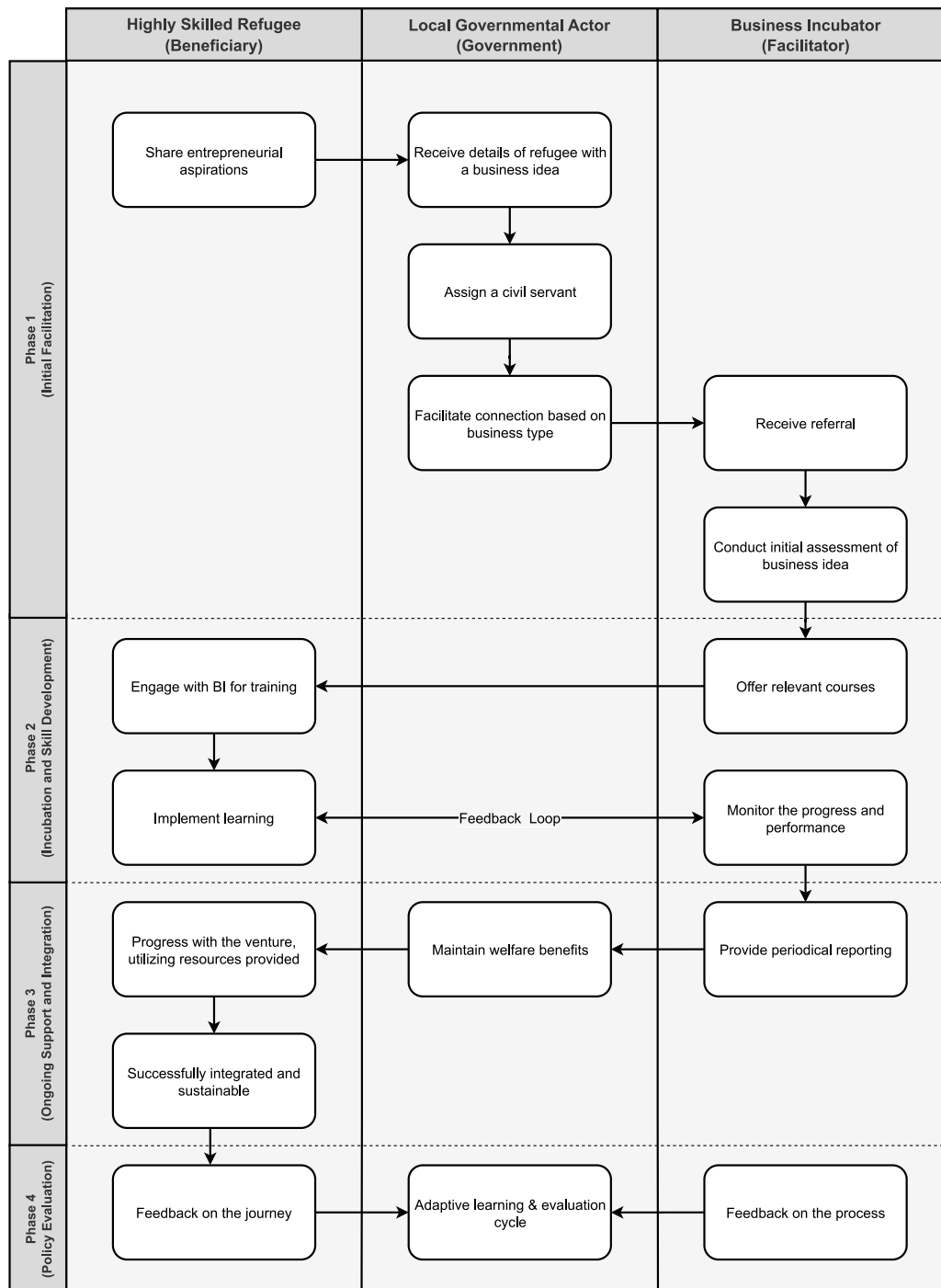


Figure 6.1: Detailed Cross-functional Flowchart of the Recommended Triangular Collaboration

4. Triangular Collaboration:

- The partnership can be visualized as a triangle where:

- The local government or municipality provides regulatory support, social welfare, policy interventions, and monitors the progression of the refugee.
- The business incubator acts as a facilitator, providing mentorship, resources, training, and reporting to the local government on the progress of the incubatee.
- The refugee entrepreneur brings in their unique skill set, business idea, and motivation to establish and grow their venture, without being pushed into a job where their skills might be underutilized.

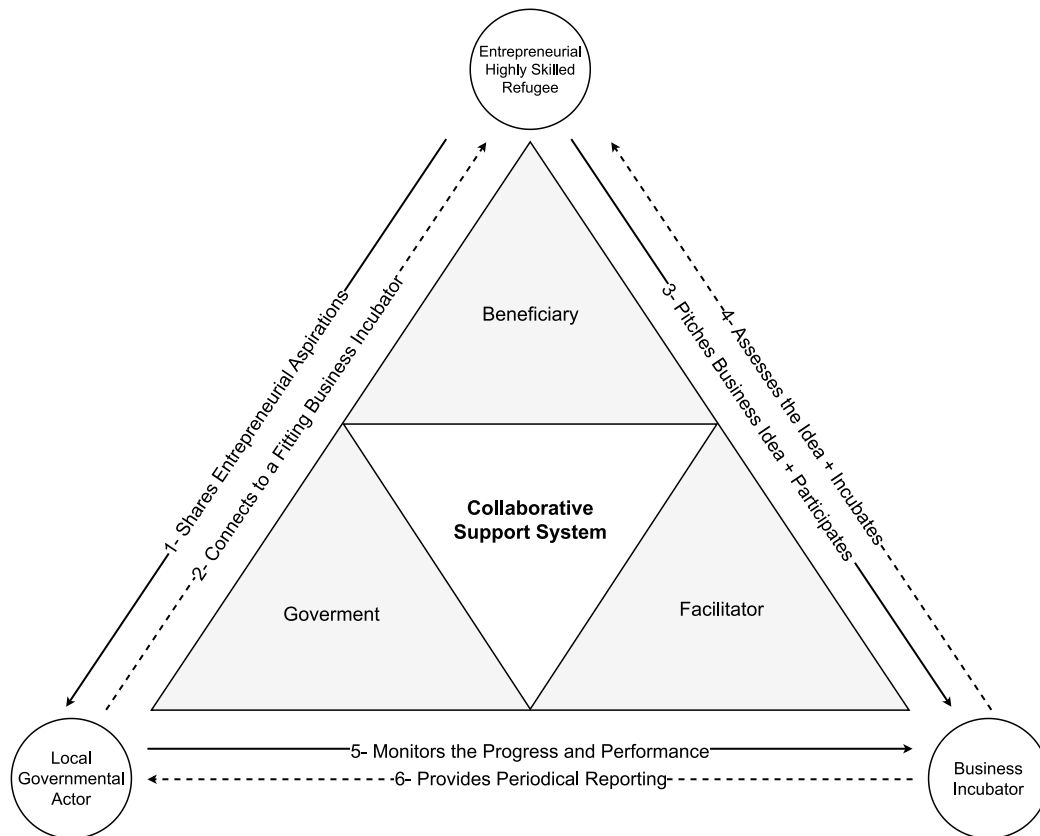


Figure 6.2: Triangular Collaboration Framework to Facilitate a Holistic Support System

5. Outcomes and Advantages:

- By having these three entities working synergistically, the environment becomes more conducive for refugee entrepreneurs to thrive.
- This approach supports the gradual development of the entrepreneur, giving them a steady pace to grow, instead of hurrying or pressuring them.
- The shared vouching system instills trust and allows for more tailored support based on the individual needs of each entrepreneur.

6. Process Evaluations and Adaptation: In fostering collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators to support entrepreneurial refugees, it is essential to have a robust evaluation mechanism and feedback loop.

- A dynamic system where feedback is continually received, analyzed, and acted upon ensures that the support mechanisms remain relevant and effective.

tive. This iterative process allows stakeholders to identify gaps, challenges, and opportunities in real-time, leading to more effective interventions.

- Periodic evaluations can be set up to review the progress and challenges faced by refugee entrepreneurs. These evaluations should involve all stakeholders – the government, incubators, and the refugee entrepreneurs themselves. The insights gathered can then be used to refine and enhance the collaboration.

7. Risk Assessment:

- Misallocation of Resources: There's always a risk that resources (like funds, training, or mentorship) are diverted to individuals who might not be genuine entrepreneurs but have learned to 'game' the system.
 - Mitigation: Implement strict vetting processes for entrepreneurs to ensure genuine candidates are benefitting from the resources. This can include in-depth interviews, documentation verification, and periodic check-ins to monitor progress.
- Corruption: There might be instances where civil servants, due to vested interests, could favor certain individuals or incubators, leading to an unfair allocation of resources.
 - Mitigation: Create transparent criteria for the allocation of resources and the selection of incubators. Furthermore, an independent audit system should be established to monitor the program and ensure fairness and transparency.
- Misrepresentation: Refugees might present misleading information to gain access to the benefits of the program.
 - Mitigation: Ensure rigorous cross-checking of the data provided by the refugees. This could be through third-party verification or partnering with other organizations that work closely with the refugee community to ascertain the accuracy of information.

8. Moral Considerations:

- While it's understandable that highly skilled refugees might receive specific attention due to their potential to quickly integrate into the economic framework, it raises moral questions about the equitable distribution of resources and opportunities. There's an inherent danger in creating a two-tier system that favors the highly skilled over those with fewer formal qualifications but who also have much to offer.
- Efforts should be made to ensure that support mechanisms are inclusive. While programs might be tailored to cater to different skill levels, it's crucial that refugees with lower skill levels also receive the guidance, resources, and opportunities they need. This allows them to venture into sectors where they can achieve economic integration for themselves and provide economic benefits to the host countries.

In conclusion, the collaboration between local governmental actors and business incubators in supporting entrepreneurial refugees presents a promising and holistic solution to one of society's most pressing challenges. This partnership goes beyond merely connecting refugees with resources; it fosters an ecosystem where tailored support, mentorship, and development can flourish.

The local government's role as a coordinator and policy influencer ensures that refugees have access to the right incubators, social welfare, and an environment conducive to integration. The business incubators, on the other hand, provide the necessary training, resources, and connections that entrepreneurs need to transform their ideas into successful ventures.

Together, this triangular collaboration creates a synergy that accelerates the growth of refugee-led businesses, recognizing their potential as agents of economic innovation and growth. By building trust and adapting support based on individual needs, this model respects the unique challenges and strengths of each entrepreneur.

Moreover, the collaboration emphasizes the gradual development and validation of refugee entrepreneurs, highlighting the importance of patience, understanding, and tailored intervention. The approach recognizes that entrepreneurship is a journey, not a sprint, and that nurturing talent requires a careful balance of support and autonomy.

Integral to the effectiveness of this collaboration is the continuous process evaluation and adaptation. By regularly assessing the mechanisms in place and adjusting them as needed, this approach guarantees that it remains relevant and impactful in changing circumstances. Moreover, with risk assessment as a cornerstone, the collaboration seeks to foresee and mitigate potential challenges, ensuring the sustainability and resilience of the support offered.

Moral considerations also stand at the forefront of this collaboration. It isn't just about economic prosperity; it's about providing a framework that respects the human rights, dignity, and aspirations of every refugee entrepreneur. These ethical reflections ensure that the collaboration does not lose sight of its primary objective: to champion the cause of those displaced and to view them as partners in societal growth.

Ultimately, this collaborative model signifies a forward-thinking approach to integrating highly skilled refugees into the local economy. It leverages the strengths of different stakeholders, aligning them in a common goal to harness the untapped potential of refugee entrepreneurs. By doing so, it not only promotes economic development but also builds a more inclusive, diverse, and resilient community.

In a world where the refugee crisis continues to pose significant challenges, such models of collaboration and support offer a glimpse of hope and a path towards a more compassionate and prosperous future.

6.3 RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

The research has several notable implications. Theoretically, it contributes to the understanding of entrepreneurship among highly skilled refugees by offering new perspectives on how migration, policy, and business intersect. Practically, the research could lead to significant policy changes that encourage a more efficient integration of highly skilled refugees into the German and Dutch entrepreneurial landscapes. Additionally, the recommendations for the ideal design of business incubators, as well as strategies for effective collaboration between incubators and governmental actors, provide actionable insights for both the public and private sectors.

1. Theoretical Implications

- **Understanding the Intersection of Migration, Entrepreneurship, and Policy:** The research may contribute to theories about the complex interplay between migration policies, entrepreneurial activity, and societal integration, specifically in the context of highly skilled refugees. By focusing on the asylum process for highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands, the research may offer a detailed understanding that helps identifying potential gaps or barriers to integration, particularly concerning education and skills alignment.
- **Refining Entrepreneurship Models:** Findings may enhance current models of entrepreneurship to include considerations specific to the refugee context, like the unique barriers they face. By examining legislative, administrative, financial, socio-cultural, and market-related challenges and needs, the research could lead to targeted interventions to support entrepreneurial refugees, uncover untapped potential, foster greater economic contributions, and enhance social integration.

2. Practical Implications

- **Policy Recommendations and Legislative Considerations:** By analyzing legislative, administrative, financial, and other challenges, the research may offer concrete recommendations for policy changes to better support highly skilled refugees in starting ventures. These might lead to specific policy recommendations and legislative considerations for both Germany and the Netherlands, thereby shaping public policies and regulations that encourage the integration and entrepreneurial development of highly skilled refugees.
- **Designing Tailored Support Programs or Specialized Business Incubators:** Insights into the ideal type of business incubator for highly skilled refugees can inform the design of more effective support programs. The research may lead to the creation or adaptation of specialized incubation programs tailored to the unique needs of this demographic, thereby having implications for the development of innovative and inclusive entrepreneurial ecosystems.
- **Fostering Collaboration Between Different Actors:** Findings related to collaboration between business incubators and local governmental actors may offer a roadmap for enhancing public-private partnerships in support of refugees. Exploring these ways has implications for long-term strategy development and may lead to the creation of joint initiatives, multi-stakeholder

coalitions, or further collaboration to address the challenges and support the entrepreneurial pursuits of highly skilled refugees.

- **Economic and Social Impact:** The research might highlight ways to capitalize on the skills and education of refugees, thus aiding their economic integration and contributing positively to the host countries. By understanding and fostering entrepreneurship among highly skilled refugees, this could lead to positive economic impacts such as job creation and innovation. Moreover, aligning refugees' skills and educational backgrounds with their entrepreneurial pursuits may enhance social cohesion and mutual understanding within local communities.

In summary, the research have far-reaching implications for governmental policy, entrepreneurial ecosystems, economic development, social integration, and ethical practice. They represent an important exploration of an area that blends social responsibility with economic opportunity and innovation. Simultaneously, this research underscores the importance of leveraging the talents and skills of refugees, not only as a means of economic empowerment but as a vital strategy for social cohesion and growth within host countries. Together, the approach highlights a comprehensive view of social and economic development that includes an emphasis on both innovation and inclusivity.

7 | CONCLUSIONS

This closing chapter reflects on the entirety of the research journey, drawing together key limitations, unresolved questions, and paths forward. The chapter is organized into three main sections: Research Limitations, Future Research, and Reflections.

7.1 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

The research's scope is specifically focused on highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. This specialization means that the findings might not be applicable to other countries or refugees with varying skill levels, thus limiting the generalizability of the results.

There are also methodological limitations, such as the limited number of samples from each category. This sampling limitation might not accurately represent the wider population, affecting insights into barriers and the ideal types of business incubators.

Obtaining interviews from local governmental actors in the Netherlands and Germany proved challenging, potentially leading to a lack of diverse perspectives. This issue particularly impacts the understanding of legislative and administrative barriers, insights into the current state of integration and support, and the ways in which local governmental actors can collaborate with business incubators.

The researcher's biases or preconceptions might influence the interpretation, possibly skewing insights related to barriers and collaboration strategies.

The complex nature of collaboration among various stakeholders might exceed the scope of the study, limiting the understanding of long-term solutions and the best ways for business incubators to collaborate with governmental actors.

Ethical considerations in working with vulnerable subjects, such as refugees, may have restricted the depth of the interview questions and data collection methods, potentially affecting the research outcome.

A scarcity of prior research on highly skilled refugees created challenges in forming a comprehensive understanding of the subject, particularly in contrasting the challenges and needs of highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands.

Conducting the entire research as a solo researcher may have narrowed the perspective on coding, categorizing, transcription, etc., thereby impacting the validity of the results. Additionally, the recommendations necessitate in-depth legal analysis and alignment with broader national policies, factors that limit the immediate applicability of the findings.

By directly linking these limitations to the research and sub-research questions, the constraints offer a clear view of potential biases, challenges, and areas for further exploration. This approach presents an honest and transparent outline of the research's boundaries and the thoughtful considerations embedded in its design and execution.

7.2 FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has laid the groundwork for understanding how business incubators can support highly skilled refugees in overcoming barriers to starting ventures aligned with their educational backgrounds in German and Dutch urban settings. It has opened new avenues for exploration and raised several intriguing possibilities for future research.

Implementation and Evaluation Studies

Future research should focus on designing and piloting new types of business incubators or collaboration models with local governments, based on the insights gathered in this study. This includes identifying specific tools, resources, and strategies tailored to the unique challenges and needs of highly skilled refugees in Germany and the Netherlands. Critical evaluation of these newly implemented initiatives is vital. Studies must assess the success and challenges, identify what works and what doesn't, and make evidence-based recommendations for future endeavors.

Comparative Studies

Extending the research to other countries with varying political, socio-cultural, and economic contexts could enrich our understanding of the universality or specificity of the findings, leading to more robust and adaptable solutions. Investigating how other marginalized highly skilled entrepreneurial groups are supported might unearth parallel or contrasting insights, contributing to a comprehensive view of how highly skilled refugees can be best aided.

Longitudinal Studies

Tracking the journey of highly skilled refugees over time will reveal the enduring impact and effectiveness of support from business incubators and governmental collaboration, illuminating both the successes and potential shortcomings of current approaches. Analyzing how shifts in policy or economic conditions affect highly skilled refugees' ability to initiate and sustain ventures will aid in developing more resilient support structures.

Sustainability and Global Goals Alignment

Research into how supporting highly skilled refugees aligns with global sustainability commitments and societal responsibilities can create a broader perspective on the importance of this issue. Investigating how the entrepreneurial ventures of highly skilled refugees can contribute to local and global sustainable development will highlight the potential societal impact and underscore the urgency of supportive actions.

In sum, future research endeavors in this field can plunge into deeper, targeted facets of this multifaceted issue, apply findings to broader contexts, and formulate long-term solutions. The possibilities for extension are vast, with potential connections between this specific subject and overarching societal themes like innovation, sustainability, equality, and global collaboration. Such endeavors will surely add valuable dimensions to our understanding and practice in supporting highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial pursuits.

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APPENDICES



SUMMARIES OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

A.1 HSR-NL-1

A.1.1 On Barriers

- **Administrative Barriers:**

- Struggles in comprehending the local accounting system even with the help of a bookkeeper.
- Challenges faced even with support from incubators, especially in terms of potential penalties and fines without considerations of his refugee status.
- Pressure from municipalities to exit the social support system.

- **Legal Barriers:**

- Initial business idea to develop a supply chain for airplane parts was halted due to regulations against refugees working in sectors deemed security hazards.
- To engage in such sectors, one must reside in European countries for a minimum of 8 years.
- Despite possessing relevant skills, restrictions against refugees working at airports existed due to security concerns.
- A connection within KLM vouched for him and his friend, allowing them to work, but broader legal restrictions prevented engagement with specific tools and equipment.
- Mention of a friend who couldn't secure a project in security systems because of his background.

- **Financial Barriers:**

- Raising funds is challenging as refugees are perceived as a financial risk, given potential deportation which could result in investment loss.
- Encountered belief in his business concept, but no financial backing.
- Faced doubts from potential investors due to unfamiliarity with the local legal and tax system.

- **Socio-Cultural Barriers:**

- While the language barrier was minimal given Dutch proficiency in English, understanding Dutch communication nuances and cultural mindsets was challenging.

- **Market-related Barriers:**

- Difficulties in understanding the local market, which applies to most foreigners, not just refugees.
- Challenges in understanding communication and functioning within larger Dutch organizations.
- **Access to Entrepreneurship Barriers:**
 - Finding the right business incubator was tough.
 - Despite pitching to multiple incubators, received little feedback or encouragement.
 - Felt that incubators were not well-specialized and treated diverse business types with a one-size-fits-all approach.
 - Once integrated into the incubator ecosystem, acceptance becomes easier, but business development remains challenging.

A.1.2 On Business Incubators

Experience with Business Incubators:

1. University Incubator:

- Tailored for highly skilled individuals.
- Appreciated it immensely due to its alignment with his academic background.

2. Refugee-specific Incubator:

- Less intensive compared to the university program.
- Loved the sense of community as everyone faced similar challenges as refugees.

3. International Connection Incubator:

- Focused on fostering global connections while working in the Netherlands.

Lacking in Incubators:

1. Programming:

- Covered foundational aspects such as transitioning from idea to business, marketing, sales, and investment readiness.
- Valued mentorship for addressing specific challenges.

2. Networking:

- Emphasized the importance of access to networking events.
- Mentioned a gap in providing ample networking opportunities, especially crucial for newcomers to expand their business.

Ideal Business Incubator:

1. A combination of the first two incubators:

- High skillset orientation with an understanding of the challenges faced by refugees.
- A collaboration of such incubators would cater to both his academic proficiency and refugee background.

2. University-Refugee Collaboration:

- Advocated for a networking platform across universities for refugees.
- Such a network would pool together a significant number of skilled refugees and facilitate inter-university collaborations.

3. Specialization:

- Called for incubators to start focusing on specific sectors, like food and beverage or FinTech, to offer tailored and effective support.

4. Sector Challenge:

- Illustrated his transition from aerospace engineering to the food sector due to lower associated risks in the latter.
- Highlighted the need for more specialized support for complex industries like aerospace.

A.1.3 On Policies

Integration policies' impact on entrepreneurial ambitions

- Overwhelmed by challenges like learning the language, integration exams, and lacking both personal and business networks.
- The integration process added more delays to the entrepreneur's journey.

Asylum process' impact on entrepreneurial ambitions

- Entrepreneurship wasn't a priority during asylum.
- Some start businesses in refugee camps but face challenges like registration.
- Lack of support for entrepreneurs in asylum.
- Decided to understand the market and culture first, delaying entrepreneurial aspirations for three years.

Influence of asylum and integration policies on business sector choice

- Chose the restaurant sector with a social goal: to give access to employment, training, and networking for asylum seekers and refugees.
- This approach indirectly helps refugees.

Government's support for highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship

- Feels there isn't enough support due to political issues and resistance from some local groups.

Recommended policy changes for support (after asylum process)

- Provide more time and less pressure to get off social welfare.
- Enhance networking opportunities and provide relevant resources.
- Ensure mental and emotional well-being, considering potential traumas.

Recommended policy changes for support (before the asylum process)

- Encourage business incubators to offer courses in refugee camps.
- Let incubators operate without strict regulations.
- Use the asylum phase for skill development, like pitching, cultural understanding, legal systems, etc.
- During the integration phase, focus on execution and local government support.

Collaboration between local governments and business incubators

- Connect refugees with suitable incubators based on their business ideas.
- Facilitators can help with understanding business needs and guiding through the process.
- A collaborative approach between the government, incubators, and entrepreneurs would be ideal.

A.2 HSR-NL-2

A.2.1 On Barriers

Legal Barriers:

- Entrepreneurship doesn't necessarily require certification or educational degrees, especially in fields where one is not practicing a profession, such as medicine or engineering.
- A degree can, however, help in convincing investors of one's capabilities.
- Despite language challenges, contracts in the Netherlands are mostly written in Dutch, which poses a challenge for refugees unfamiliar with the language.
- Signing contracts with incubators or business accelerators is crucial for refugees as it aids their settlement and growth in the Netherlands.

Financial Barriers:

- Funding is a significant challenge, especially the initial startup capital.
- The refugee needs adequate capital to launch the business and sometimes struggles to secure the necessary funds.

Socio-Cultural Barriers:

- Language barriers play a significant role, especially when dealing with contracts written in Dutch and when communicating with potential investors.
- While the entrepreneur interviewed speaks fluent English, many refugees from Syria don't, necessitating a translator.
- Occasionally, there's a potential for discrimination against refugee entrepreneurs, although the interviewee personally hasn't experienced it.

Market-related Barriers:

- Being new to the Netherlands means lacking a familiar network. Unlike in Syria or Lebanon where legal advice might be easier to access through personal networks, in the Netherlands, one often needs to seek specialized legal counsel, which can be costly.
- Trusting this advice or interpreting legal contracts also becomes a challenge.
- Broader challenges include understanding the local market, securing investors, networking, and marketing in an unfamiliar environment.

Access to Entrepreneurship Barriers:

- Some refugees have faced unfavorable terms and conditions in contracts with business incubators.
- While these challenges are not exclusive to refugees, they might disproportionately affect them due to their vulnerable position.

- Refugees often feel compelled to accept these terms because establishing a business is seen as a significant step towards integration and self-reliance in the Netherlands.

A.2.2 On Business Incubators

Experience with Business Incubators:

Positive Aspects:

- Provided guidance through the startup ecosystem in the Netherlands.
- Assisted with understanding the local entrepreneurial environment.
- Offered connections, especially considering the refugee background.
- Displayed patience compared to other incubators targeting the local Dutch populace.

Negative Aspects:

- Encountered unfavorable terms and conditions.
- The non-negotiable nature of contracts was a concern, though this wasn't exclusive to refugees.

Benefits Received:

- Office space, mentoring, and access to essential networks.
- Opportunity to pitch ideas to investors.
- Continued support even after graduating from the incubation program.
- Access to an alumni network.

Areas of Improvement:

- There's a need for more robust legal support, especially for understanding and negotiating contracts.
- An emphasis on understanding potential liabilities and the implications of business failure.

Ideal Support:

- A well-versed legal team that can communicate fluently in both Arabic and English and has a deep understanding of the Dutch legal system.
- Emphasis on improving presentation and communication skills, which are not often nurtured in Syria and Lebanon.
- Enhanced focus on mental and psychological health, conflict resolution, and communication.
- Training to adapt to the Dutch leadership style, which is non-hierarchical and encourages collective decision-making.

- Addressing cultural gaps: Dutch education instills values of empathy, tolerance, and collective care from a young age, contrasting with values focused on loyalty to a ruling family or figure commonly found in the Syrian system.

A.2.3 On Policies

Integration policies and Entrepreneurial Ambitions:

- The refugee entrepreneur does not perceive direct interference of integration policies with entrepreneurial ambitions.
- They see entrepreneurship as a solution-oriented mindset; if challenges arise, entrepreneurs seek solutions.
- The integration process was deemed helpful for learning the language, going to school, networking, and validating business ideas.
- The entrepreneur feels supported, especially with basic needs covered such as rent, electricity, and monthly allowances. This provides them with a safety net not often available to local Dutch entrepreneurs.
- Municipalities vary in their approach; for instance, the municipality of the Hague offers business loans and mentorship.
- It's essential to communicate one's entrepreneurial intent clearly to the municipality, and being a part of business incubators aids in this validation.
- The support, however, isn't consistent across municipalities or even among different officials within the same municipality. There's a lack of a clear, universal framework.

Asylum Process and Entrepreneurial Ambitions:

- The asylum phase is challenging as one doesn't have an ID, bank account, or insurance.
- However, it provides a window to work on entrepreneurial ideas, validate them, and get them ready for execution.
- Many refugees have business ideas when they arrive or develop them during their stay in asylum camps.
- Entrepreneurs find ways to tackle challenges and make progress regardless of their legal status.

Government Policies Towards Highly Skilled Refugee Entrepreneurship:

- The entrepreneur does not observe specific government policies that directly support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship.
- They feel supported as refugees, but not explicitly as highly skilled entrepreneurs.
- The support received depends largely on the employee handling the case and the communication skills of the refugee.

Policy Recommendations (Post-Asylum):

- Integration should be uniform irrespective of the skill level of the refugee.
- There shouldn't be any preferential treatment based on the skills or credentials of the individual.

Policy Recommendations (Pre-Asylum):

- Accelerate the asylum process by hiring more personnel.
- Consider a fast-track system for refugees who can prove their high skill set, for instance, through professional credentials and prior work experience.
- This fast-tracking could be achieved by having a specialized unit in immigration for handling such cases.

Collaboration Between Local Governmental Actors and Business Incubators:

- Joint programs can be initiated to foster entrepreneurial growth.
- Financial funding or business opportunities should be provided to support highly skilled refugees in their entrepreneurial journey.

A.3 HSR-NL-3

A.3.1 On Barriers

Administrative Barriers:

- The entrepreneur faced difficulties with local authorities due to their lack of experience dealing with refugees wanting to start businesses.
- The regular path for refugees involved getting a house, meeting a contact person for integration, and getting job placement. However, this pathway wasn't tailored for entrepreneurs.
- The entrepreneur struggled to find support to shift from standard assistance to self-employment assistance.
- This process took 18 months, during which he received a letter allowing him to start his business while still on standard assistance until his situation could be reviewed.
- The municipality's staff was not technically proficient in assisting him in business, offering only general guidance.

Financial Barriers:

- Starting from scratch, he had no initial capital.
- While initially seeking €80,000, a lender provided him with €8,000 after he presented a plan on how he'd spend on assets.
- Due to his legal status as a refugee with a five-year residency, it was hard to secure investors or loans. The lack of an asset guarantee system in Syria further complicated this.

Socio-Cultural Barriers:

- The entrepreneur faced challenges adjusting to the Dutch culture, which was vastly different from what he was accustomed to in the Middle East.
- Although language wasn't a significant barrier due to his proficiency and the English-speaking community around Amsterdam, the municipal contacts only spoke Dutch, posing some communication challenges.
- Overall, given their high skills and capabilities, language and cultural adjustments were manageable.

Market-related Barriers:

- The primary challenge was introducing their product (dates) to a market unfamiliar with it. While there's a growing health trend that incorporates dates, many still didn't recognize or understand the fruit.
- Access to raw materials, specifically date seeds, was a significant barrier. Local date producers were more interested in the fruit, not the seeds, making sourcing difficult.

- Eventually, they managed to source date seeds from two factories in the Netherlands that import dates and process them into syrups and pastes, buying the discarded seeds.

A.3.2 On Business Incubators

Experience with Business Incubators:

Overall Feeling: Positive experiences with all the incubator programs.

Benefits Received:

- **Networking:** The programs provided crucial access to networks.
- **Investor Mindset Awareness:** Gained insights into the European investor mindset, which is different from the U.S., Canada, Gulf countries' emphasis on venture capital and angel investors. In Europe, there's a stronger focus on traction and revenue than just the idea.
- **Access to Funding:** He was given opportunities to present ideas to banks. Some incubators provided not just funds, but "knowledge funds". These included mentorship vouchers funded by the government and VCs, known as "knowledge vouchers". This would cover fees for mentorship programs, with payments made directly to the consultancy firm hired.

Areas Lacking:

- **Specialized Knowledge:** He desired more trainers specializing in the food and beverage sector.
- **Success Stories:** Wanted to hear from other refugees with success stories to relate to and be inspired by.
- **Entrepreneurship Residency:** Hoped for programs where startups could work with big companies for insights, citing Nestle as an example of a company already doing this.

Ideal Improvements:

- **Financial Support:** Reimbursements for transportation costs since travel can be expensive, especially for a refugee.
- **Differentiated Programs:** Suggested there should be a pre-incubator program separate from the main one to filter out non-serious participants, ensuring those who join are committed.
- **Different Actors Communication:** Noted a lack of communication between incubator programs and local governmental actors. Wanted better coordination between different actors (governmental, local, and business incubators) so they can guide entrepreneurs to the most suitable programs.
- **Legal Considerations:** Emphasized the importance of understanding the different legal treatments refugees might receive compared to locals. Incubators should be aware of these distinctions and address them accordingly.

A.3.3 On Policies

Impact of Asylum and Integration Policies on Entrepreneurial Ambitions:

- Policies had limited direct impact on the entrepreneur.
- The COVID-19 pandemic led to an extension in integration deadlines, allowing a year extra for exams.

Effect of Policies on Chosen Sector:

- The policies didn't influence the choice of sector. The entrepreneur followed their vision and saw opportunities in the Dutch market.

Government Support for Highly Skilled Refugee Entrepreneurs:

- The entrepreneur believes policies are too generalized and do not differentiate based on skill level.
- Regardless of being a skilled entrepreneur or a regular refugee on welfare, the treatment and support received is the same.
- There's no tailored support for highly skilled entrepreneurs.

Recommended Policy Improvements (After Asylum Process):

- The current system treats refugees as numbers and distributes them without consideration of their skills or background.
- It's important to assess refugees' backgrounds and skills to place them where they might flourish best.
- For instance, farmers should be placed in areas conducive to farming, not cities like Amsterdam.
- Highly skilled refugees should be placed closer to large corporations and opportunities, while entrepreneurs should be near cities with bustling activities but not necessarily in major cities.

Recommended Policy Improvements (Before Asylum Process) & Collaboration with Business Incubators:

- Communication should be a two-way street: Business incubators should provide necessary information and, in turn, gather aspirations and ideas from the refugees.
- Not all business ideas may be suitable for the European market; hence, guidance is essential.
- Being closer to areas like Delft would benefit the entrepreneur due to the supporting infrastructure and available programs.
- Before starting their businesses, potential entrepreneurs should gain experience in relevant industries. For instance, those looking to start a logistics application should work in a company with a robust logistic chain.

- The municipality should guide and push based on well-researched case studies and not just on aspirations.

A.4 HSR-DE-1

A.4.1 On Barriers

Legal Barriers:

- Complexities and legal implications arise when trying to hire someone online from Syria.
- The Caesar Law from the U.S. makes many German institutions wary of dealing with anything Syrian-related. This impacts decisions when applying for investments with German banks.
- A lengthy process (4-18 months) to get Syrian educational and professional certificates recognized in Germany during which time the individual cannot work.
- Medical language exams are very subjective, without clear criteria. Failing the exam means waiting six more months before a reattempt, during which time the individual can't work.

Administrative Barriers:

- Legal and financial application processes are complex, requiring specialized knowledge of technical German language. This often results in the need to hire costly experts like tax consultants.
- The taxation system is unclear, necessitating expertise for proper understanding.

Financial Barriers:

- Syrian refugees are often deemed "high risk" by banks leading to unfavorable loan interest rates.
- Some banks, like Commerce Bank, refuse to open accounts for Syrians due to affiliations with the U.S.
- There's a lengthy and bureaucratic process when dealing with German banks for investment purposes.

Socio-cultural Barriers:

- Most official communications and applications are in German, posing a language barrier.
- Transferring money to Syrian employees is complex.
- Discrimination exists with employers showing a bias against hiring women in hijab due to perceived customer preferences.
- A stigma exists against those requesting information in their native languages.

Market-related Barriers:

- A portion of German customers prefers German service providers, impacting the market potential for international entrepreneurs.

- The entrepreneur acknowledges a market bias but feels he has a niche that he understands well and hasn't faced this issue.
- The entrepreneur faces challenges in building a network and understanding the local service providers due to not growing up in Germany.

Access to Entrepreneurship Barriers:

- The environment isn't inherently supportive of growing an idea into a business for internationals.
- There are some initiatives to support entrepreneurs, but they are mostly in German and lack comprehensive details.
- Finding incubators or support in Germany is challenging and discouraging. The entrepreneur mentioned a more straightforward process with Forward Inc. in the Netherlands.
- There's a lack of a welcoming attitude towards international professionals, making the process demotivating. The experience often feels like dealing with a bureaucratic government office rather than a supportive entrepreneurship environment.

A.4.2 On Business Incubators

Experience:

- The entrepreneur had a largely positive experience with the business incubator.
- Prior to this, he approached problems with the mentality of a researcher. The incubator reshaped his mindset to think as an entrepreneur.
- As an entrepreneur, he learned to evaluate business ideas based on customer needs and not just the potential impact.
- He emphasized the change in his thinking as the most valuable aspect and encourages others with business ideas to seek out incubator experiences.

Benefits Received:

- The incubator provided a support team specifically for his business idea, consisting of a business coach, a coordinator, and student volunteers.
- He was given access to essential business resources like knowledge templates and legal consultation. Though the legal advice was Netherlands-focused, it was beneficial.
- Networking was a significant part of the experience.

Shortcomings:

- The entrepreneur felt thoroughly satisfied with the program, unable to pinpoint any missing elements.

- The one aspect that could be improved was that the legal and tax consultation was based on the Netherlands system, which wasn't directly applicable to his situation in Germany. However, he understood the reason for this approach.

Ideal Business Incubator Experience:

- An ideal incubator would have a welcoming attitude towards international professionals, providing them with genuine support in implementing their business ideas.
- In contrast, his experience sometimes felt bureaucratic, akin to dealing with a typical German government office. This felt demotivating at times. He suggests improvements such as:
 - Adopting English as the primary mode of communication.
 - Simplifying the legal and financial aspects, possibly through user-friendly courses, online materials, or videos tailored for international professionals looking to start businesses in Germany. This is in contrast to the overwhelming amount of legal material available online that isn't easily digestible.

A.4.3 On Policies

Impact of Asylum and Integration Policies on Entrepreneurial Ambitions:

- While there was financial support and courses available to the entrepreneur due to asylum and integration policies, he felt his options were limited and controlled.
- Institutions like the "job center" and "work agency" were often pushing refugees into specific courses or jobs, irrespective of their past qualifications or skills.
- The policies seemed to be pushing refugees into immediate labor integration rather than encouraging or allowing for higher education or entrepreneurial pursuits.
- There were instances where highly-skilled professionals, like doctors, were pushed into unrelated job fields or were not given opportunities that align with their expertise.
- The entrepreneur expressed that there's a noticeable lack of support for those looking to become entrepreneurs or start their businesses.

Government Policies Towards Highly Skilled Refugee Entrepreneurship:

- The entrepreneur felt that government policies are not supportive of highly skilled refugee entrepreneurship, mainly due to bureaucratic hurdles.
- There is an extended waiting period for certificate recognition, especially in professions like medicine. A refugee might have to wait from 4 up to 18 months just to get their certifications recognized.
- The process of taking medical language exams is subjective, and failing it means waiting another six months for a re-examination.

- From completing the general German language course to beginning work and earning could take anywhere from 18 months to two years.
- This process only starts after one is recognized as a refugee, and even then, a "job center" approval is needed before applying for recognition of qualifications. There are instances where an experienced professional might be suggested to take up roles far below their qualification level, like a doctor being asked to work in a restaurant.

A.5 BI-NL-1

A.5.1 On Barriers

Administrative Barriers:

- Difficulty in understanding policies and systems in the Netherlands.
- Language barrier poses significant challenges, especially during registration and legal processes.
- Lack of understanding of the tax system.
- Absence of a comprehensive institution to guide them on entrepreneurship, financial support, and the borrowing system.
- Existing systems treat them as Dutch entrepreneurs, without considering their unique challenges.

Financial Barriers:

- Refugees often come from countries where they cannot bring significant cash or understand the concept of investors.
- They're unfamiliar with concepts like crowdfunding, investments, subsidies, and grants.
- Lack of financial history in the Netherlands limits their chances to secure investments.
- Investors often demand evidence of prior successful businesses, which refugees cannot provide.

Socio-cultural Barriers:

- Navigating through Dutch culture and language is a challenge.
- While many might speak English, there's a need for a high professional level of Dutch to communicate with governmental institutions.
- There's a cultural gap in understanding the values and needs of the Dutch market versus the entrepreneur's home country.

Market-related Barriers:

- Lack of understanding of the Dutch market and absence of a robust network in the Netherlands.
- Language and cultural understanding are critical to understand the market and communicate concepts.
- Entrepreneurs from different cultural backgrounds might have products or ideas that don't resonate with Dutch values or current concerns.
- A deep understanding of customer behavior is essential, which is often hard due to cultural differences.

- There's a need for mentors to bridge the gap and explain customer behavior.
- Differences in investment mentalities between the Dutch and other countries; Dutch investors are more risk-averse and prefer conservative strategies.

A.5.2 On Business Incubators

The Lacking in Current Incubators:

- Current incubators try to fit refugee entrepreneurs into a predefined mold rather than understanding their unique needs and challenges.
- There's a noticeable sameness among incubators, with many offering generic solutions like the business canvas model, business plan creation, and market training.
- This approach emphasizes courses more than the actual process of nurturing businesses.

Ideal Incubator for Refugee Entrepreneurs:

- Representation: At least half of the incubator's board should consist of refugees or newcomers. This ensures a deep understanding of the barriers, language, and culture these entrepreneurs face.
- Community Creation: The focus should be on fostering a community. In today's information age, a sense of belonging and community is paramount.
- Knowledge and Awareness: Educate these startups about the entrepreneurial system in the Netherlands. This includes understanding cultural norms, the market, and how business is done locally.
- Support: Beyond imparting knowledge, incubators should actively support these entrepreneurs. This involves organizing events to enhance their network, making warm introductions to investors, and offering bespoke help, which stands out from generic incubator approaches.

Addressing Confidence Issues:

- Many highly-skilled refugees lose confidence in the applicability of their skills in a new setting.
- It's essential to sit with them, understand their skills and background, and re-activate their skills. This might involve updating them on current practices and linking them back to their expertise, so they don't shift to unrelated ventures out of insecurity.
- Many shift to ventures like restaurants or supermarkets due to lost confidence or outdated knowledge. To genuinely assist, incubators should help refresh their skills and education.

Effective Strategies:

- Reconnect them to their Skills: Instead of merely trying to link them to the Dutch market, incubators should first reconnect entrepreneurs to their strengths and their intrinsic knowledge.

- **Foster Horizontal Connections:** By connecting an entrepreneur with peers from similar backgrounds who have found success in the Netherlands, it can boost their confidence. For instance, connecting a Syrian IT entrepreneur with other successful Syrian engineers in the country can be affirming and motivational.

A.5.3 On Policies

Impact of government policies on business incubators:

- The government's treatment of refugees varies based on their Citizen Service Number (BSN) status.
- Before obtaining the BSN, the government is less inclined to invest in refugees due to the potential for rejection.
- Refugees in this phase have ample time and energy that is untapped.
- Upon obtaining the BSN, refugees face pressures related to paperwork, registration, schooling, and language learning.
- The business incubator suggests that the government should provide grants and subsidies for incubators to support these potential entrepreneurs before they receive their BSN.
- The current system pushes refugees into low-paying jobs quickly instead of fostering their entrepreneurial potential.
- The government should provide more financial and legal support to business incubators and make exceptions in policies for refugees.

Role of business incubators in facilitating asylum seekers/refugees:

- There's a prevalent stereotype that refugees are uneducated, which hinders their entrepreneurial pursuits.
- The lack of understanding of entrepreneurship within municipal systems means skilled refugees need intermediaries to explain their skills and potential.
- Incubators can act as liaisons, educating municipalities about the value these skilled refugees bring, and advocating for their support.
- Incubators can also ensure that high-skilled refugees receive extensions if they don't finish their integration process on time.

Treatment of highly skilled refugees by policies:

- The current system applies a "one-size-fits-all" policy, which is inefficient.
- Highly skilled refugees have the potential to contribute significantly more than they are currently allowed to, both in terms of economic value and in assisting other refugees.

Role of business incubators before refugees get their BSN:

- Incubators should work on refreshing and updating the skills of refugees to align them with the needs of their host country.

- The focus should be on understanding societal problems rather than jumping directly to solutions.
- Skilled refugees could be offered volunteering opportunities in startups to get acquainted with the local market and update their knowledge.
- There are existing barriers, such as needing a BSN to join a business incubator, that need to be addressed.

Support from business incubators during the asylum process (before BSN):

- Incubators should identify potential entrepreneurs amongst refugees.
- Once identified, they can advocate for these refugees to the IND (Immigration and Naturalisation Service) to expedite their BSN process.
- Business incubators can act as sponsors, vouching for the potential and capability of these skilled refugees, ensuring they are given a fair chance to contribute.

A.6 BI-NL-2

A.6.1 On Barriers

Administrative Barriers:

- Bureaucracy in the Netherlands can be slow but is manageable.
- Understanding the complex tax system is challenging, particularly for those in the food and beverage industry.
- Scalability of businesses, especially restaurants, is challenging due to high taxes and unexpected fines.

Legal Barriers:

- High-skilled refugees sometimes struggle to understand various policies and often need to consult multiple lawyers.
- Their level of literacy, however, typically allows them to overcome such legal challenges.

Financial Barriers:

- The financial capability of the refugee plays a significant role; coming from a wealthy family can be advantageous.
- Investors may have biases against refugees, limiting their willingness to invest significant capital. Refugees might be perceived as a charitable cause rather than a viable business opportunity.

Socio-cultural Barriers:

- Networking is crucial. Unlike locals who might have familial and longstanding community ties, refugees often lack this foundational support.
- Having a strong network from one's homeland can be advantageous, but this might not always translate seamlessly to the Dutch market.

Market-related Barriers:

- The most significant challenge is networking. Entrepreneurship is highly dependent on networks, and while there's interest in refugee ventures, establishing trust and connections is vital for success.

A.6.2 On Business Incubators

Lacking in Existing Incubators:

- Many business incubators create a positive atmosphere with highly motivated participants, yet often lack a genuine impact due to limited access to influential networks and power.
- While the content quality might be high, success in entrepreneurship is more about networking than content.

- Working with refugees can put incubators in a tricky position in accessing funds. Instead of getting funded by individual investors, they often rely on donation-based financing from foundations.
- Incubators are helpful for legal aspects and concept development, but when it comes to establishing a robust network or securing substantial investments, they often fall short.

Ideal Characteristics for Business Incubators:

- Incubators should have direct connections to genuine investors open to investing in newcomers.
- Rather than relying on volunteers, incubators should hire high-quality, well-connected coaches who can offer expert advice.
- The ideal incubator would cater to everyone but would have specialized programs tailored to the unique needs of refugees. Instead of creating separate programs just for refugees, integrate them into the main system while ensuring there's an understanding of their distinct challenges.
- Ultimately, the goal is not to sideline refugees but to immerse them fully into the primary network, thus giving them equal opportunities.

Strategies and Outcomes:

- Winning small prizes can boost confidence, reinforcing belief in entrepreneurs' ideas.
- True success is measured by tangible outcomes, particularly financial transactions. There's skepticism about how many refugee-focused incubators have achieved such transactions, indicating that many might not be delivering on their intended purpose.

A.6.3 On Policies

Recommendation on Policy Adjustments:

- A desirable policy change would enable refugees who want to transition from refugee status to the Dutch "Highly Skilled Migrant" status to do so under certain conditions.
- Once they make this transition, they should no longer carry the "refugee" label. This would decrease the need for intense government interventions.
- The rationale behind this recommendation is the belief that refugees receive certain special rights, but these come with their own set of restrictions and additional interventions.
- Thus, a more straightforward policy would be to let high-skilled refugees, ready to undertake entrepreneurial risks, make a switch from their refugee status, potentially foregoing certain benefits in return for more freedom and autonomy.

A.7 BI-NL-3

A.7.1 On Barriers

- **Networking and Connections:** The entrepreneur found it hard to create useful connections and get the right support, which is essential for pushing her business forward.
- **Capital and Financing:** Although her business did not require significant initial investment, she was self-reliant and averse to getting into debt. There was a suggestion that a non-repayable boost, like a stipend, would have benefited her, but she preferred organic growth and self-financing.
- **Legislation and Rules:** She spent considerable time researching rules and regulations related to the food and beverage sector. Fortunately, she found that the information was easily accessible on government websites, available in both Dutch and English.
- **Language and Cultural Barriers:** Language was not an issue as she speaks both Dutch and English fluently, having been in the Netherlands for around seven to eight years. However, there were some cultural challenges. Specifically, she found it hard to ask for help, perhaps seeing it as a sign of weakness or not wanting to owe anyone. This cultural barrier posed a challenge to her openness to assistance.
- **Partnerships:** She faced difficulties in forming necessary partnerships for her business. Her approach was either too narrow, focusing on close circles, or too broad, skipping crucial intermediary steps in business growth.

A.7.2 On Business Incubators

The interviewee didn't have insights regarding this topic.

A.7.3 On Policies

The interviewee didn't have insights regarding this topic.

A.8 BI-DE-1

A.8.1 On Barriers

Administrative Barriers:

1. **Bureaucracy:** The primary challenge is the slow and bureaucratic system in Germany. Entrepreneurs often wait for weeks, sometimes months, just to secure an initial appointment with the job center.
2. **Complex Paperwork:** Entrepreneurs are required to fill out numerous detailed forms when starting a business, which is especially cumbersome for those aiming to start small.
3. **Taxation System:** The taxation system in Germany is intricate. It's often necessary for entrepreneurs to hire a tax advisor, costing up to 300 Euros/month.
4. **Validation of Qualifications:** Refugees often face discouragement. Their qualifications from their home countries are often not recognized or downplayed.

Financial Barriers:

1. **Bank Account Restrictions:** Opening a business bank account is often not permitted for refugees, especially those from Syria and Iraq.
2. **Difficulty in Accessing Loans:** Getting bank loans is challenging for refugees due to their temporary residency status.

Socio-Cultural Barriers:

1. **Language Barrier:** Although many skilled refugees speak English, the dominant language in Germany is German, and not all Germans are willing to converse in English.
2. **Regional Differences:** Certain regions, like the south of Germany, are more conservative and may be less welcoming to non-German speakers compared to cities like Berlin.
3. **Cultural Adaptation:** Adapting to the local culture, from business practices to other nuances, is essential for entrepreneurial success.

Market-Related Barriers:

1. **Perception:** Local German companies are often perceived as more credible than startups from other countries.
2. **Discrimination:** Discrimination exists, with some segments of the community possibly favoring local startups over non-German ones. However, another segment of the community actively supports migrant startups.

A.8.2 On Business Incubators

Barriers to Joining Business Incubators (BIs):

1. **Language:** Programs are primarily in German. Knowing the German language is essential as entrepreneurs aren't taken seriously otherwise.

The Ideal Business Incubator:

1. **Personal Journey:** The incubator is considered ideal since it's designed by someone who has gone through the same journey – being a highly skilled Syrian and also German.
2. **Understanding the Process:** The designer understands each step in the entrepreneurial process because of personal experience.
3. **Respect for Knowledge:** The key to winning trust is respecting the knowledge of the refugee entrepreneurs. Recognizing and valuing their past achievements, such as their roles in professional banks or consulting companies in Syria, is crucial. By respecting and acknowledging their competence, they feel appreciated, especially in an environment where they might have previously felt undervalued.

Strategies for Inclusion:

1. **Workshops:** The main offering is workshops. There are both large (two-day, seven-hour workshops) and smaller ones. Workshops involve notable trainers from prominent companies like Mercedes Benz and Porsche.
2. **Interactive & Fun Approach:** Given the length of the workshops and the language barrier, the approach is to make them engaging and fun. Participants receive a short input followed by a session with their mentor in a private room.
3. **Task-Oriented Learning:** Instead of traditional lectures, the approach is to provide a 15-minute input followed by two specific tasks. Participants then work on these tasks with their mentors, get feedback, and then move on to the next session. The focus is on the lean startup method, emphasizing starting small, learning, and applying on-the-go.

A.8.3 On Policies*Government Policies & Business Incubators:*

- The respondent acknowledges that government policies can affect the ability of business incubators to support highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs.
- The respondent's organization has not received any financial support from the government, though some funding programs do exist.
- While Germany has a supportive ecosystem for startups, it's not tailored specifically for highly skilled refugees.
- The organization is a primary destination for highly skilled refugee entrepreneurs in Germany.

Policy Changes or Improvements:

- The respondent believes that government funding would be beneficial.
- A new migration law in the works, similar to Canada's model, aims to attract highly skilled individuals from around the world, including countries that produce refugees.

- This new system would assign points for various achievements, such as speaking German or having a degree.
- The respondent anticipates that once this system is in place, there will be more support and policies geared towards starting businesses.

Business Incubators & Barriers in Asylum Process:

- The organization doesn't support asylum seekers, but other organizations do, especially those aiming to help refugees start businesses upon returning to their home countries.
- Asylum seekers face significant barriers, such as legal restrictions against starting businesses in Germany.
- Determining which asylum seekers are highly skilled is a difficult process.
- A bureaucratic process makes it difficult to verify skills, especially when documents are lost.
- The respondent suggests that to better support asylum seekers, there is a need to overhaul the bureaucratic system and better analyze situations.
- An anecdote about a highly skilled Syrian consultant highlights the challenges faced due to bureaucratic hurdles.

Business Incubators & Barriers in Integration Process:

- The organization provides certificates to refugees upon successful completion of their program, which can aid in building trust.
- Having a German local as a mentor can be beneficial in facilitating meetings, establishing trust, and navigating rights.
- The respondent emphasizes that starting a business is a right, but many challenges exist, especially when dealing with job centers.
- There are many reasons for the high rejection rates, including language barriers and unfamiliarity with German laws and taxation.
- The respondent suggests being adequately prepared, either through the organization's courses or independently, before starting a business.
- The incubator can act as a facilitator in this process, either through certification or by having someone accompany the refugee during processes to ease the integration.