



## Summary of the Kick-off-Event for the project “Longitudinal Study on Refugees from Ukraine in Germany (SUARE)”

On May 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, the official Kick-off-Event of the DFG-funded SUARE project was held at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) in Berlin. The SUARE cooperation project, initiated in 2022 after the Russian invasion and carried out by DIW’s Socio-economic Panel (SOEP), the Federal Institute for Demographic Research (BiB), the Institute for Employment Research (IAB) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), is the first study to develop a representative, longitudinal data infrastructure on the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Germany. Research is divided into two pillars, “Migrant Health, Social Distance and Discrimination” and “Forced Migration and Labour Market Integration”, each comprising several projects. The joint event enabled the discussion of current project activities in light of current political and demographic developments and exploration of further ideas and opportunities for cooperation.

### **Keynote: the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Europe – current developments, challenges and implications for research**

Speaker: Franck Düvell (Osnabrück University)

Franck Düvell’s keynote provided a comprehensive overview of the unprecedented forced migration following the 2022 invasion. This migration, one of the fastest and largest in post-war history, reveals complex patterns and significant challenges for European countries and researchers. Importantly, Düvell emphasized that Russian aggression already led to the displacement of 2 million Ukrainians in 2014. However, as this displacement was largely internal, it did not receive much attention from the EU. Accordingly, there now is a lack of data on how many Ukrainian refugees in Europe have pre-war migration experience. Existing numbers on pre-war migration suggest that 2 million Ukrainians have already migrated to the EU before 2022 and that 26% have had pre-war migration aspirations.

The 2022 forced migration displayed a significant network effect, concentrating 50% of the refugees in Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic. At the war’s onset, about 1.1 million Ukrainians in Poland wanted to return to Ukraine, highlighting the fluid and dynamic nature of this migration. Rather than causing a one-way movement of people leaving Ukraine in response to the invasion, unrestricted travel and high mobility of Ukrainians contributed to the increased intensity of a two-wave movement. Ukraine’s refugee situation is unique due to such unrestricted travel but also, among other things, due to the record level of displacement, its root cause being an inter-state war in Europe, and refugees being primarily highly educated women and children.

Challenges since the crisis began include outdated census data, biased reporting, false statistics, and a volatile security situation, complicating data collection and analysis. Franck Düvell identified critical research gaps, such

as the linkage between pre-war voluntary migration and current forced displacement. The interplay between security concerns and economic motivations needs deeper exploration, and there is a significant lack of theoretical frameworks to explain the complex migration dynamics adequately.

In conclusion, the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Europe is multifaceted and dynamic, requiring more nuanced and comprehensive research to address the interplay of various factors influencing this migration. Addressing these knowledge gaps and refining data collection methods are crucial for fully capturing and understanding these migration patterns.

## Session I: Social Distance/ Contacts

Speaker: Manuel Siegert (BAMF)

### Current Challenges

Accurately assessing social networks in the SOEP, as well as the associated social capital of refugees and the general population, is a key challenge for migration research using the SOEP.

### Proposed Solutions

To capture social contacts and social capital for the years to come, information on strong ties, weak ties and time spent with Germans/ other refugees should be continued and strengthened. The Burt-Generator, which collects data on personal thoughts and feelings shared with up to five specified individuals, has previously been used but is insufficient for capturing weak ties, which can be valuable for understanding broader social integration. Siegert proposed introducing a position generator, which asks respondents if they know individuals in specific professions or positions. The item takes less than two minutes and typically results in low non-response rates. An extension of this method could include information on gender and the respondent's relationship to these contacts. Since the social networks of refugees can change rapidly, the frequency of data collection might need to be higher than every four years. Incorporating these generators into the core survey and refugee questionnaires could help in understanding social distances, bonding, and bridging ties more effectively.

### Way Forward

The Burt Generator will be continued in 2025 for refugees. The position generator is envisaged for 2026 for refugee and general population samples. This is in line with a special focus on social networks, social distances, and both bonding and bridging ties in the 2026 core survey which could provide a deeper insight into social integration processes.

## Session II: Capturing Antisemitism & Antimuslim Racism

Speaker: Elena Sommer (DIW/SOEP)

### Current Challenges

Currently, few representative, longitudinal studies are available to study of antisemitic and anti-Muslim attitudes. In addition, the items related to antisemitism and anti-Muslim attitudes are distinct and sensitive, requiring careful handling to avoid item non-response and social desirability bias.

### Proposed Solutions

Elena Sommer presented established measurement instruments such as ALLBUS, RAM2015, and SVR\_IB 2020 which have already been tested, including among migrant groups. One solution to tackle non-response issues could be self-administered surveys. Another discussed approach is using religious affiliation as a filter to refine the analysis. Employing analogous questions for antisemitic and anti-Muslim attitudes has been suggested to allow for a direct comparison between the two. This would provide clearer insights into the similarities and differences in these prejudices. To ensure comparability on a global scale, the Feeling Thermometer from psychology has been proposed. This tool measures respondents' feelings towards different groups on a scale, facilitating the comparison of attitudes across different contexts. Another proposal is the Implicit Association Test (IAT), which can reveal underlying biases that might not be explicitly acknowledged by respondents.

### Way Forward

The participants agreed that the topic is highly relevant in light of current political developments. It was agreed that additional experts should be brought in to refine and select the most appropriate questions.



### Session III: Potential for analyses - Health Literacy

Speaker: Louise Biddle (DIW/SOEP)

#### Current Challenges

This year, the health literacy survey was implemented in the SOEO as part of the SUARE project. Health literacy refers to the ability of individuals to find, understand, assess and apply health-related information in relation to disease management, prevention and health promotion. However, there is controversy as to whether health literacy is an individual ability of a person or rather a characteristic of the healthcare system. Furthermore, health literacy is context-specific and may differ fundamentally before and after migration for language reasons alone.

#### Proposed Solutions

Possible approaches to analysing the data include methodological and descriptive evaluations, as well as analyses of sociodemographic inequalities. Linking health literacy data with health infrastructure data, such as information on the languages spoken in hospitals, should be explored. Additionally, a comparison between Ukrainian refugees and other refugee groups was suggested.

#### Way Forward

The framing of health literacy is very important. This determines whether health literacy is seen more as a deficit of the individual or as a result of structural barriers. Consequently, the focus should be on the diversity competence of the healthcare system rather than the health literacy of individual groups.

### Session IV: Linking sensitive datasets of BAMF and IAB

#### Current Challenges

Existing data on integration and language courses from the BAMF and data from the IAB on employment could provide valuable contributions to research in the field of labour market integration. However, these datasets are not linkable despite the respondents' consent due to respective institutions' data protection, as the respondents have not signed a joint linkage permission. Consent was given to link the participants' information to different data sets but not to each other. Even if consent for linkage was available, data protection regulations prevent the use of sensitive data outside of the respective institutions. Moreover, the existing consent covers only data for integration courses but not for occupational language classes.

#### Proposed Solutions

It was concluded that the respective Data Protection Officers should be consulted. Additionally, respondents should specifically be asked for permission for joint linkage in the future. Nevertheless, there might be legal challenges pertaining to privacy preventing or severely restricting further action. In light of this, a potential solution could involve anonymising the data by describing it in a distribution. To explore this option, it was suggested to consult experts in the research field of anonymising data. Jörg Drechsler was coined as one such expert, working at the IAB.

## Session V: Uncertainty and Human Capital investments

### Current Challenges

In a work-in-progress vignettes study on how uncertainty affects the decision to invest in vocational training, uncertainty is not yet conceptualised and thus not yet included in the vignettes. Accordingly, the aim is to get a better understanding of the concept of “uncertainty”.

### Proposed solutions

One proposed solution was to break down the concept of uncertainty in various facets first. Such facets could include legal status, opinions about the ongoing war in Ukraine, family safety, and Ukraine’s economic situation (e.g. is there going to be something like a Marshall plan?). Moreover, it was pointed out that one should take the aspect of individual perception into account when measuring uncertainty. This might be particularly relevant, considering that many of the facets of uncertainty are difficult to assess objectively and since individuals make their own investment decisions into human capital based on their individual perception.



## Input: Third Mission: Dissemination and policy advice

Speaker: Herbert Brücker (IAB)

### Current Challenges

Ensuring policy relevance is crucial for project success. This involves making sure that the research findings are relevant and valuable to possible target groups like policy actors, non-governmental organisations, and social actors, all of whom are vital in addressing the issues faced by Ukrainian refugees. Though not directly covered by the SUARE project, its data could be relevant for research on cross-country drivers of Ukrainian refugee migration, international comparisons (e.g. of labour market integration), and policy evaluations. However, integrating complementary data from other countries is complicated by the fact that data is not very standardised at the international level. An additional problem is timing, as data reception, analysis, and dispersion are often too slow to address relevant policy issues in time. In addition, there are problems with coverage in SUARE data, as there is limited high-frequency and geo-referenced data and limited information on return migration and transnational ways of living, all of which are relevant for policy evaluation.

### Possible Solutions

To overcome these challenges, the dissemination of research findings should be more systematic and immediate. An important step is the targeted consultation and involvement of other relevant stakeholders, such as the BMI and the BGM. Implementing a website documenting regular media appearances could also make a valuable contribution. Concerning the international component, collaborating with partners in Poland or Ukraine in the next project could help standardise the data collected while ensuring that new data can be compared with existing data. A key component of the project’s dissemination activities should be to make the SUARE data more available to external researchers.

## Closing Remarks

Speaker: Stefan Liebig (FU Berlin)

Prof Dr Liebig concluded the event by highlighting the importance of extending the project's network, particularly by involving researchers currently not working in the project's core and younger scholars. He also formulated the goal of expanding the network by reaching out to graduate schools and by encouraging external and international partners to utilise the available data. Finally, documentation of data usage and international collaboration is crucial for extending the funding period of the SUARE project.



## Overarching Key Messages

- **Enhancing Data Collection:** Improving data collection methods and harmonising them with international and current partners is crucial for obtaining accurate and reliable information on refugee populations.
- **Clarifying how sensitive data should be handled:** Both in the processing of personal data with regard to data protection and in the collection of data on controversial issues of opinion and political or social attitudes.
- **Analysing Mobility Patterns and building theoretical framework:** Studying high mobility and network effects among refugees is substantial to understand the impact on host countries and the refugee population itself.
- **Acknowledging Diversity:** Recognizing and capturing the ethnic diversity within refugee populations is vital for accurate and inclusive research.
- **Understanding the Impact of Uncertainty:** Investigating how uncertainties, such as conflict outcomes and legal status issues, affect refugees' decisions.

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