INTERPRETING DATA GAPS IN THE STUDY OF THE SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN HUNGARY

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– NIEM Policy Briefs**

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SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF BENEFICIARIES OF INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION IN HUNGARY – NIEM POLICY BRIEFS

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Executive summary

This analysis is intended to outline the main gaps and problems related to the data sets on beneficiaries of international protection. The analysis was based on the NIEM indicator list of 168 items. Overall, in Hungary, no information is available on nearly a quarter of the indicators; this is especially true for implementation and statistics. In particular, little data is available on family reunification and citizenship procedures, as well as on employment, housing and health care. Challenges include the fact that some data types are not registered at all and that there are only a small number of samples (see protection against disclosure), but a specific, quantifiable part of the data gap is likely to cover existing data sets. According to the experts interviewed, these data are captured during the legal procedures, but are thereafter "floating" in the public administration subsystems without being processed. Certain data types are unlikely to ever be compiled, while other indicators could be explored in the framework of specific research projects, provided that local governments are involved. The third category is that of data types that exist, but it is highly unlikely that they can be extracted from the system. Finally, data sets that exist in various public administration subsystems and their disclosure is not prohibited by law, but currently there is no capacity to process or publish them.

1. Issue raised: debates and a common denominator

In recent decades, but especially in the wake of the 2015 refugee crisis, research on international migration, refugees and cultural diversity has attracted ever-growing attention. It is a highly politicised area that gives rise to much emotion across Europe, including Hungary. Factors that influence how a person or a political entity relates to the issue include, among others, moral principles, ideological beliefs, political interests, economic considerations, and perceived or real impacts on society. Still, mention must be made of facts which, by all logical calculations, are equally important for all stakeholders, regardless of their opinion on the matter.

▶ **(1)** Fact-finding and analytical work in the field of social science research is indispensable for tackling properly such a complex social, demographic, economic and political challenge. An objective mechanism to inform decision-making helps greatly those countries (for example, Hungary) which have decided to admit some asylum seekers in the process of the adoption of more efficient, fact-based policy measures.

▶ **(2)** Successful integration is a common interest. Even if refugees fail to extend their refugee status after a certain period of time, the fact that they have acquired language skills and knowledge of the country in question, to cite but

one example, will certainly help mitigate potential ethnic, religious and cultural tensions and maintain, or even strengthen social cohesion. This holds particularly true for those whom Hungary granted the opportunity to settle permanently and even acquire citizenship.

This analysis is intended to outline the main gaps in and problems related to the data sets on beneficiaries of international protection, relying partly on the indicators of the **National Integration Evaluation Mechanism** (here in after: "NIEM") project, on existing databases, secondary sources and expert interviews. The problems include seemingly simple "technical" issues (such as the fact that currently available knowledge on qualifications or employment is highly incomplete). At the same time, information gaps are also detected around some soft issues which are relatively difficult to quantify, such as the assessment of housing conditions or opportunities for foreign language learning.

The analysis is supported by two expert interviews. Two sociologists with a thorough knowledge of international migration statistics also shared their experiences on the data gaps related to beneficiaries of international protection.

What information is available in early 2021 on asylum seekers arriving in Hungary and on admitted beneficiaries of subsidiary protection and refugees? What are the information gaps? Do data gaps pose a serious problem? Is it possible to reduce the number of those data sources where information is missing or incomplete? Understanding the reasons for data gaps and putting experiences in a domestic and international context help with insights that, in the long run, contribute to the social integration of refugees admitted by Hungary.

2. General information on data gaps

When researchers begin to address the issue of international migration, they soon realise that while there are nearly complete statistical databases on the autochthonous population and a relatively large amount of information is available on the immigrant population, data on asylum seekers, refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection is very incomplete. This is a global phenomenon which has several potential technical reasons, including the fact that the population in question is much smaller than that of regular migrants or the high degree of data uncertainty (for example, many asylum seekers, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are unable to present an official document about their identity). Nevertheless, it is to be noted that such data gaps are detected only on public interfaces (e.g. the websites of national statistical offices or ministries).

In fact, large quantities of information accumulate on refugees arriving in Europe, but recording is performed with different approaches. In every country,

registration is carried out by the competent authorities. Such data are also received, for example, by the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex), the European Asylum Support Office (EASO),[1] and the competent in-stitutions of each Member State (in Hungary, the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing). Given that, in practice, a single European asylum system does not exist (or exists only at a legislative level),[2] the data sets are highly frag-mented and only a fraction is available, for example, on the Eurostat webpage. The expert interviews, which served as a basis for this analysis, shed light on the fact that EU member states, while meeting their minimum obligations on reporting to Brussels, are basically reluctant to share their detailed data-bases. This is because the primary purpose of such registers does not concern informing the public or contributing to research. Most countries consider in-formation on asylum as a security policy issue.

Nevertheless, this practice (preferred by public administrations for possibly understandable reasons and seemingly useful in the short run) may prove to be counterproductive over time, given that the objective, evidence-based planning work of researchers is indispensable for efficient asylum and inte-gration policy measures.

3. Sources of asylum data in Hungary

Let us start with a brief summary of the sources of publicly available informa-tion on asylum seekers and admitted refugees. In general, the development of the organisational system of Hungary's immigration policy is characterised by an ever-increasing centralisation of powers and competences. The first act on immigration procedures dates back to 1903 and was amended by Act XXVIII of 1930. In the era of state socialism, the National Central Office for the Control of Foreigners (Hungarian: Külföldieket Ellenőrző Országos Központi Hivatal,

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1 Frontex is responsible, among others, for the evaluation of risks to the EU's external borders. For that purpose, data provided by member states are used, along with intelligence from external borders. Frontex then shares such data with the competent national authorities, Europol and other European agencies. EASO collects asylum statistical data from all EU member states, Switzerland and Norway on a monthly basis. It also operates an Early Warning and Preparedness System on asylum on the basis of various EPS indicators. Efforts are being made to develop this system into a more flexible reporting system that is capable of predicting events and responding to them immediately, rather than simply monitoring them. For details, see: Ferenc, Urbán: Az európai menekültügyi statisztikai adatgyűjtés összefüggései, *Statisztikai Szemle,* 2016, 94. évf. 5. sz.

2 The legal basis for the obligation to collect asylum (and migration) data in Europe is provided by Article 4 of Regulation (EC) 862/2007/EC. "The regulation allows an opportunity for the regular quality and EU-level comparability of the statistical data collected on asylum. It allows for making reference to relevant legislation in the course of data collection, and serves as a basis for the definition of the variables included in the collection of statistical data on asylum and of the breakdown of such variables." (ibid.)

KEOKH) operated under the State Protection Authority (Államvédelmi Hatóság, ÁVH) and then under the Ministry of the Interior. Act LXXXVI of 1993 and its implementing regulations followed the European model. In the late 1990s, upon the entry into force of the Asylum Act, the processing of the applications was devolved to the public administration offices of the counties and Budapest, while appeals were examined by the Office of Asylum and Migration (Menekültügyi és Migrációs Hivatal). In 2000, the Office of Immigration and Citizenship (Bevándorlási és Állampolgársági Hivatal, BÁH) of the Ministry of the Interior was set up to take over immigration tasks.[3] In 2017, the Immigration and Asylum Office (Bevándorlási és Menekültügyi Hivatal, BMH) was set up as a legal successor of BÁH, and then renamed National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing (Országos Idegenrendészeti Főigazgatóság, OIF) in 2019.

This means that the registration of asylum seekers and refugees was performed first by BÁH and then BMH, and currently falls into the competence of OIF. Data on refugees who are in the official register of persons and addresses are provided by the Deputy State Secretariat for Registers' Management (Nyilvántartások Vezetéséért Felelős Helyettes Államtitkárság) to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (Központi Statisztikai Hivatal, KSH) and Eurostat.

The data are transferred as per OSAP No. 2196[4] and as a cooperation agreement. One possible plausible explanation for the lack or difficult availability of time-series data would be the strong turbulence in public administration, given that legislative amendments were coupled with changes in the immigration and asylum agencies. This hypothesis, however, was refuted during the interview. An expert on data flow mechanism says that during "institutional exchanges", files and data are transferred automatically. Possibly, some minor disruptions may have occurred in data transfers in the 1990s, but, most probably, they were not significant. BÁH and OIF are required to have "all important information retrospectively", which is logical given that when examining the possibility of the extension of a person's refugee status, all previous information is needed on the person in question.

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3 Wetzel, Tamás: A magyar migrációs jog története. *(A history of Hungary's migration law). Iustum Aequum Salutare* V. 2009/2. 205–217.

4 OSAP: National Data Collection Programme sets under registration number 2196: "The demographic characteristics of foreign citizens residing in Hungary (gender, age, marital status, citizenship, country of birth, place of residence, qualifications) and data related to permits (date of entry, type of permit, validity, purpose of stay) based on immigration records".

4. The organisation of missing data

How is it possible to determine which issues are relevant with regard to promoting the integration of asylum seekers, refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection? A highly useful starting point is offered by a 168-item indicator list compiled by the Migration Policy Group. The NIEM indicators are classified into 13 modules, each covering one area of integration. Table 1 offers an overview of the nature of the indicators in each category. It is to be highlighted that a significant part of these indicators pertain to the existence of some legislation and most of them are available in Hungary as well. By contrast, data on implementation and statistics on beneficiaries of international protection are extremely incomplete. It is revealing that no information whatsoever is available on one-fourth of the indicators (42 indicators, see **Figure 1**), and the value 0 was recorded in the table for almost the same number of indicators. The value 0 indicates that it is not possible to interpret the issue in the Hungarian context. For example, a total of 15 indicators pertain to the parameters of state-funded foreign language and integration courses, but in Hungary, no such courses offered free of charge. At this point, let us discuss the areas where we are completely in the dark and let us identify distinctive features (if any) of data gaps.

Figure 1. The extent of data gaps related to asylum seekers and refugees in Hungary (as per known and unknown NIEM indicators)
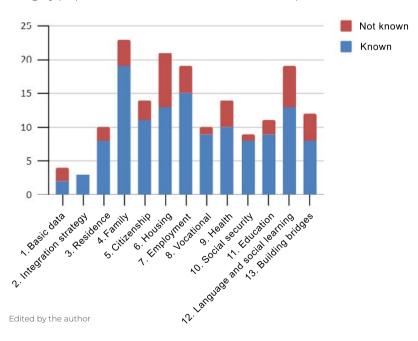

Edited by the author

Table 1. The classification of key NIEM indicators based on the integration areas identified.

Baseline	Basic data by age, sex, vulnerability (single parent, disabled, unaccompanied minor, victim of torture, etc.); duration of asylum procedure; duration of the identification of vulnerability.
Mainstreaming	Integration strategy for beneficiaries of international protection.
Stay	Residence permit types; options for residence permit renewal; conditions for issuing residence permits; facilitated conditions for individuals belonging to vulnerable groups; administrative barriers and costs; the rate of favourable decisions; main grounds for refusal, etc.
Families and family reunification	Range and status of family members; the preconditions for family reunification applications; the time frame of preferential applications; providing evidence on family affiliation; duration and cost of the family reunification procedure; rate of favourable decisions; main grounds for refusal, etc.
Nationality	Potential facilitated conditions for refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection status; determination of length of stay; conditions for the acquisition of citizenship; documents from the country of origin; the duration and cost of the naturalisation process; rate of favourable decisions; main grounds for refusal, etc.
Housing	Free movement within the country; access to housing; acquisition of real estate property; consultation and representation; availability, duration and amount of targeted housing benefits (e.g. for vulnerable groups); assessment of the quality of housing: how many persons stay with friends, in rented accommodation, in their own property, etc.
Employment	Statistics: qualification; overqualification; number of unemployed persons, employed persons and self-employed persons; access to the labour market and administrative barriers to such access; the recognition of diplomas and qualifications; state support for job search; coordination with regional/local authorities, etc.
Vocational training	Statistics: how many persons (and in what status) participate in vocational training; access to vocational training and the administrative barriers to such access; targeted state support to facilitate access; coordination with regional local authorities, etc.
Healthcare	Identification of vulnerable groups (minors, pregnant women, disabled persons, elderly persons); their access to healthcare and the administrative barriers to such access; inclusion in health insurance; informing health care providers and raising their social awareness; targeted state aid to facilitate access; coordination with regional/local authorities, etc.

Social insurance and social security[5]	Conditions for access; rights; information; administrative barriers; informing the social care system and service providers, raising their social awareness; coordination with regional/local authorities; rate of refugees living below the poverty line, etc.
Education	Statistics on individuals under 25 who have accessed education (by level of institution); conditions of and administrative barriers to such access; the assessment of former studies; the availability language learning support and targeted educational support; the number of beneficiaries; informing professionals, raising their social awareness; coordination with regional/local authorities, etc.
Language teaching, integration programmes	Statistics: the number of individuals participating in Hungarian as a foreign language courses and integration courses; access to services and administrative barriers to such access; the availability and amount of state support; the quality and duration of courses; language proficiency level of participants (A1-C2), etc.
Bridging	Existence of state-funded awareness raising measures; coordination with regional/local authorities; supporting voluntary initiatives; number of refugees receiving individual mentoring; the number of guardians assigned to unaccompanied minors; participation of refugees in political/social/voluntary activities; number of NGOs led by refugees, etc.

Edited by the author

4.1. Data gaps by integration areas

A possible method of the characterisation of missing data is to break them down by integration area. As shown by **Figure 1**, the problem of data gaps affects each topic to some extent, although the differences are relatively big.

Studying *general data* immediately sheds light on an anomaly. The number of asylum seekers and of beneficiaries granted international protection by Hungary is known (stock and flow data being both available), but the same data broken down by age, gender, place of residence or vulnerable groups are not available. Formerly, BMH used to publish its statistical brochures every two or three months. Since 2018, the publicly accessible OIF database has not been updated.[5] The online interface of Eurostat contains some of the data in

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5 www.bmbah.hu/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=177&Itemid=1232&lang=hu

question, such as detailed data broken down by gender and age.[6] A potential reason for this fact is that according to the provisions of Regulation (EC) 862/2007, EU member states are obligated to provide data to the European Commission and Eurostat, but no obligations are specified as to the frequency or details of publishing the same data in the Hungarian language.

No information gaps have been identified with regard to the *integration strategy* given the well-known fact that as of yet no specific integration strategy has been introduced for immigrants or beneficiaries of international protection, and no ministry or other public administration entity has been appointed for its development. Although the Migration Strategy and the seven-year strategic planning document related to the Asylum and Migration Fund (to be established by the EU in the period from 2014 to 2020) do mention an integration strategy, no progress has been made in this field.

Residence. It is not known how many refugees have applied for residence or how many applications have been accepted or rejected, and on what grounds. (Since January 2019, refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection have not been granted residence permits because the authority only recognises one "reason for housing". If refugees or beneficiaries decide to apply for a residence permit, they must renounce their status). The expert interview shed light on the problem that the number of beneficiaries of international protection who habitually reside in Hungary is not known. According to the data provided by the Operational Services Unit of the Department of Personal Data and Address Registration and Administration (Személyi Nyilvántartási és Igazgatási Főosztály Operatív Szolgáltatási Osztály) within the Ministry of the Interior, as of 31 December 2018, 1,658 persons had ID cards as refugees and 1,932 as beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, but it is possible that a significant majority of them are currently residing somewhere in Western Europe. Although officially they are not allowed to stay in another EU Member State for a longer period of time, their movement within the Schengen area is difficult to monitor, because the identity of persons crossing borders or the date of crossing is not known.

As far as *family reunification* is concerned, the average length of the procedure is not known, and no information is available as to the existence of any experience in family tracing. Formerly, the number of family reunification applications accepted or rejected was a publicly available piece of information. For example, in 2016 130 applications were received, out of which 79 were accepted. For 2019, such data are no longer available. During the interview, it was confirmed that such data (similarly to former data sets) are certainly available in the OIF files.

Available knowledge of the circumstances of the acquisition of *citizenship* is relatively extensive. Given that the relevant legislation does not specify a

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6 www.ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database

maximum processing time for naturalisation, it is hardly surprising that the average duration is not known. Experience shows that, in practice, it takes 6 to 12 months for applicants to receive a response. The procedure itself is free of charge, but it entails several additional costs such as those of the naturalisation exam or translation. Again, no specific information is available on the number of refugees who acquired Hungarian citizenship,[7] on the rate of failed naturalisation procedures or on the reasons for rejection. During the interview, mention was made of the Citizenship and Registry Department of the Government Office of Budapest (Budapest Főváros Kormányhivatalának Állampolgársági és Anyakönyvi Főosztálya) as a potential data source, given that the vast majority (according to estimations, three quarters) of refugees in Hungary reside in Budapest.

Most of the missing points pertain to *housing* conditions. At this point, it is to be highlighted that in the area of housing (similarly to all areas of integration) state support was withdrawn after 2016. Accordingly, any indicator that pertains to this issue is non-applicable to the Hungarian context. Given that in Hungary only less than 2% of the housing stock serves the purpose of public accommodation[8], the lack of data on refugees living in this type of accommodation is not surprising. Unlike in Austria or Germany, in Hungary public accommodation is far from being a typical solution. Moreover, no data are available on the number of homeless refugees or of those living with friends or family, or in own or leased properties. As far as the housing conditions are concerned, the scope of available information is limited to accounts given during focus group interviews, where respondents usually reported poorly equipped and overcrowded living environments. A favourable development that has occurred since 2016 in the acquisition of real estate property is that the same rules apply to Hungarian citizens, refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection.

Another particularly striking example is the data gaps related to the *employment* of beneficiaries of international protection. In the facilitation of the integration process, the availability of data on the highest completed level of education and training would be essential, along with information on the number of refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection who are present in the labour market either part-time or full-time, or who have launched a private business. However, even the basic data are missing. Although no concrete figures are available, the experience of recent years has shown a fundamentally favourable change, which is a consequence of the serious shortage of specialists in Budapest and large towns. But the Covid-19 crisis has probably

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7 Citizenship statistics of asylum seekers are available in the database of Hungary's Central Statistical Office.

8 www.gki.hu/wp-content/uploads/gki/Szocialis_berlakas.pdf

reversed this positive trend.[9] In that regard, it is to be mentioned that no data are available on the rate of acceptance/rejection of qualification documents or on overqualification. A possible explanation of the latter is that, in general, the phenomenon of "brain waste" is under-researched in migration research literature.[10] However, focus group interviews suggest that as many as half of the refugees residing in Hungary may be overqualified for their current jobs.

Presumably, a reason for the incompleteness of such data is that asylum seekers typically arrive without documents (the documents are either destroyed or, in some cases, those concerned keep them secret to ensure a more favourable decision during the procedure). (Many examples are known across Europe, e.g. Egyptian citizens making attempts to obtain refugee status as Syrian citizens). In terms of labour market participation, the expert cited the example of Germany. As shown by the data of the Institute for Employment Research (IAB), by 2019 about 40% of refugees aged 15–64 took up employment, half of them in jobs that require special qualification.[11] This indicator exceeds expectations. Still, another five or six years may be needed until all refugees who arrived in Germany in 2015–2016 enter the German labour market. In Hungary, the number of refugees is orders of magnitude lower, but the difficult acquisition of the Hungarian language may hinder the process.

No information is available on the official procedure of the identification of asylum seekers who belong to a vulnerable group due to their *health status* (e.g. unaccompanied minors, pregnant women, disabled or elderly persons) or on the duration of such procedures. Similarly, there are no specific data on central budget allocations for the health care of asylum seekers and refugees. Another sensitive issue is the problem of unmet needs. As relevant legislation ensures that recognised refugees are entitled to the same benefits as Hungarian citizens (albeit, some practical problems were identified during the focus group interview), this problem affected, above all, asylum seekers who were staying in transit zones indefinitely.[12]

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9 For details, see the analysis by Boglárka Buda in the same series.

10 The term refers to the fact that, due to the lack of language skills or the incompatibility of qualification certificates, some immigrants take jobs of a lower status than they are qualified for. From an economic point of view, this is a particularly harmful phenomenon. It is harmful to the host country (human resources are wasted), to the country of origin (brain drain, whereby skilled young people leave the country) and to the individual concerned (who perceives a deterioration of subjective well-being).

11 www.dw.com/en/germany-refugees-integrated-into-labor-market-quicker-than-expected/a-49908960

12 The relevant NIEM indicator reflects the approximate rate (percentage) of asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection who reported that while accessing healthcare they had encountered or had been unable to overcome an obstacle. Almost all asylum seekers who stayed in the transit zone, and the majority (an estimated 60–80%) of refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection fall into this category. As for the latter, most people report delays in healthcare: healthcare institutions often refer them to other institutions several times.

Exact data are available on the conditions under which they are entitled to *social support*, unemployment benefits, benefits related to health status, disability benefits, family and child benefits or old-age benefits, and on the related administrative procedures and obstacles. By contrast, numerical indicators on social security (e.g. the percentage of beneficiaries of international protection living below the poverty line) are not known. Based on the focus group interviews, it is assumed that their rate is likely to exceed 50–60%.

The available statistical data on *education* is incomplete, and the accessibility of data charts varies: for example, such data sets are available for 2019 (when 30, 52, 84 and 34 asylum seekers or recognised refugees attended kindergarten, primary school, secondary school and university, respectively), but not for 2016. (In theory, the Public Education Information System [köznevelés információs rendszere, KIR] of the Education Authority [Oktatási Hivatal] contains public information.) The number of children receiving targeted state education support and of educators working with them is zero, given that language and integration support is unavailable in this field as well.

As discussed above, currently there are no state-funded free language courses or *integration programmes*; therefore, no information is available on the number of participants or those who pass a language exam, their satisfaction with the quality of the course or the usefulness of the knowledge acquired etc. Experts also mention that until 2015 courses were funded by the Asylum Welfare Department (Menekültügyi Ellátási Osztály) of BÁH (among others, Hungarian language school Katedra offered Hungarian language courses to recognised refugees), but afterwards that source of funding dried up.

Negative answers are given to questions on the availability of publicly funded social awareness measures, the existence of coordination between the government and regional/local authorities, the support of voluntary initiatives, the participation of refugees in national or local political consultations etc. In the chapter on *Building Bridges,* most data gaps are observed in the context of the number of guardians assigned to unaccompanied minors, refugees engaged in political or social activities or in volunteering, or NGOs led by refugees.

4.2. Data gaps broken down by probable reasons

Characterisation may also be performed based on the probable causes of data gaps. It must be emphasised again that, in most cases, data gaps appear in the fields of implementation and of the numerical data on asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection. Based on the experience gained during the NIEM project and on the expert interviews, four factors are outlined that, in part or in full, explain the lack or the difficult availability of a given data type.

4.2.1. Non-existence of data

Obviously, it can be presumed that a part of the listed indicators are missing because no such data have been generated in Hungary. For instance, it is difficult to imagine a database that would register the political, social or volunteering activities of refugees or a set of objective criteria that would measure the effectiveness of language and integration programmes. At the same time, it is likely that data gaps mostly derive from the fact that some data are generated but not published. The following section discusses the potential underlying factors.

4.2.2. Low number of samples

Apart from the refugee crisis of 2015–2016, the number of asylum seekers and recognised refugees arriving in Hungary is typically much lower than that of those arriving in Western European EU member states. Before that, the publication of available data in detail would have been of relevance, but at that time no special attention had been attributed to the subject. Since 2017, the number of individuals has been so low that, in theory, data would allow for identification at the personal level (for example, if in a given quarter only three Pakistani women over 65 years of age are granted refugee status). (To ensure protection against such disclosure, statistical offices often use symbols in statistical tables to represent numbers of persons lower than a specified number, such as 5 or 10.) This is a common practice in Hungary, where the Central Statistical Office does not provide exact data for less than three people.) Before 2015, most opinion polls analysed attitudes towards immigrants, and rarely contained questions about refugees. In addition, many respondents did not distinguish the two categories, as previously refugees had been mostly of European origin, typically arriving from the Western Balkan region. This means that the issue of samples that are too small is a real "problem", but – given that the Central Statistical Office publishes all incoming data – the fragmentation of the data sets can be attributed only partially to data protection considerations.

4.2.3. Disappearance of data

Mention must be made of the fact that most of the information in question (including sensitive data) does not even reach the Central Statistical Office. The publicly available CSO data tables contain only the basic data of those persons who were granted refugee status, were entered in the address register and received an identity card. Other data, the nature of which is unknown (e.g. whether they contain information on the highest completed level of education), are preserved by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing.

Most probably, the specific, quantifiable parts of data gaps suggest existing data sets that were recorded during legal procedures but then started to "float" in the subsystems of public administration without being processed and/or

published. The expert opines that missing demographic data (including the number of individuals in vulnerable groups), the acceptance rate of applications for family reunification, for citizenship or for residence, and data on employment and education certainly fall into the category of "disappeared data". Moreover, data come from multiple locations, but the process itself is uncoordinated. Most probably, partly due to the small number of samples, there is no interest in investing time and energy in the harmonisation and publication of data recorded by various authorities. There is a high number of data managers involved in the process. Data on admitted refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection are registered mainly by the National Directorate-General for Aliens Policing, the Education Authority (see: Public Education Information System), the National Tax and Customs Administration (Nemzeti Adóhivatal) and the National Health Insurance Fund (Országos Egészségbiztosítási Pénztár).

4.2.4. Current political environment

It has been mentioned above but must be reiterated that governments seem to regard asylum primarily as a security policy issue. This is not a specific Hungarian approach. For example, Regulation (EC) No 862/2007[13] has recently been amended to increase the frequency of reporting on asylum seekers, refugees and persons subjected to coercive measures, in particular individuals belonging to a vulnerable group (e.g. unaccompanied minors). Some countries protested against such an increase of frequency, including Denmark or Belgium, which are two countries perceived by laypeople as having open attitudes towards data provision.

The background of party politics is a sensitive issue, but cannot be neglected. This paper does not include it in the list as a tangible reason for data gaps, rather, discusses it as a general attitude of asylum authorities. Sometimes there is a reluctance to provide answers even in completely value-neutral situations, for example, in the case of a simple request for basic demographic data. A possible example of this is the data on beneficiaries of international protection broken down by age and gender, which are available on the Eurostat website but missing from Hungarian databases. This means that the minimum obligation of reporting to Eurostat is met, but, unless regulated otherwise by a specific decree, there is a reluctance to respond to data requests. In theory, data of public interest or data public on grounds of public interest can be requested on an individual basis, but the definition of "public interest" is quite fluid.

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13 Regulation (EC) No 862/2007 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 July 2007 regulates Community statistics on migration and international protection and on repealing Council Regulation (EEC) No 311/76 on the compilation of statistics on foreign workers. "It specifies EU rules on migration, international protection, legal or illegal migration, and returns by EU and EFTA countries." For details.

5. Summary and policy recommendations

The vast majority of studies and policy guidelines interpret the processes in question from the perspective of host societies, while the immigrants themselves, and what is more, asylum seekers, refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection receive much less attention. Yet more information on the phenomenon would assist countries that have decided to admit and integrate such individuals in adopting more effective, fact-based policies. However, current experience suggests that available knowledge on asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection, and on the circumstances and results of submitting and assessing asylum applications is not sufficient.

The list of indicators compiled by NIEM provides a useful reference point for assessing which data would, theoretically, be a prerequisite of rapid and efficient policy work. Yet, as evidenced by the research, at least one-fourth of such data (especially quantitative data) are missing. This analysis intended to explore the issue of data gaps related to beneficiaries of international protection in Hungary from different perspectives, with the objective of identifying patterns and briefly discussing the possibilities and chances of the elimination of such data gaps.

There are data types which will most likely, never be systematically gathered and recorded. These include, above all, "soft" indicators such as the engagement of refugees in civic life, the number of non-profit organisations they run, or the way they perceive their own housing conditions. Although such indicators would be of interest to researchers, data collection in practice is performed on the basis of a different (administrative) system of criteria.

The second category consists of indicators that could be explored in the framework of specific research projects, provided that local government are involved. For example, each local government of Budapest (for instance, District 8, where relatively many beneficiaries of international protection reside) should individually be contacted by researchers who seek information on the number of admitted refugees who are homeless, live with friends or family, or in own or leased properties. Recommendation: the local governments concerned should monitor the housing and labour market conditions of beneficiaries of international protection and, when required, participate in relevant research activities.

The third category is that of data types which, in all probability, already exist, but it is highly unlikely that they can be extracted from the system. Most of them are information which, from the perspective of the public administration, qualify as "not of public interest". Examples include the grounds for the rejection of applications for asylum or citizenship. A sociologist who partici-

pated in the interview opines that even if such information existed, the justification of rejection would, in all probability, be limited to a single sentence stating that the individuals in question failed to comply with the relevant legal requirements. Still, a summary of such statements would contribute greatly to the elimination of data gaps. Obviously, such a summary would not contain specific justifications that include the names of the persons concerned (the disclosure of which would infringe personality rights), but still would offer an insight into the number and proportion of rejections within broader categories.

The fourth category consists of data sets that exist in various public administration subsystems and their disclosure is not prohibited by law, but currently there is no capacity to "process the documents". Basic demographic data, the acceptance/rejection rates of applications submitted, the average duration of the procedure and most of the missing data on employment, vocational training and education are likely to fall into this category. With regard to integration, it is of particular importance to know more about individuals belonging to vulnerable groups. Given that the registration of such data is required by law, such data certainly exist, albeit most probably only in a paper-based form. Recommendations (1) It is recommended to return to the pre-2018 practice of the regular publication of BMH statistical brochures. (2) An apparatus should be set up with the explicit objective of collecting and harmonising fragments of data on beneficiaries of international protection and promoting social research and boosting the effectiveness of policy measures through ensuring data availability. Given the relatively small size of the database, this would hardly require significant workforce capacity. The optimum level of the granularity and availability of data would include a breakdown by gender, age, citizenship, marital status, the highest completed level of education, place of residence (at least reflecting if it is the capital, a county seat, a town or a village).

A population register can offer a partial solution to all of the issues above. In that regard, the expert interview outlined an encouraging vision for the future: similarly to almost all national statistical offices, Hungary's National Statistical Office is considering the option of setting up a population register for statistical purposes. In an optimistic scenario, such a system may become operational in 5 to 6 years. In some countries in Western Europe and, above all, in Northern Europe such registers are already in operation with much success, allowing for the simpler and faster processing of census data. The system links the data of various registers, such as housing and business registers, social security, education or tax registers, etc. Given that in such a population register the data of each person who has an official address are interlinked (obviously, anonymously and in strict compliance with relevant data protection policies, based on temporarily generated codes), it may become theoretically possible to get more information on, for example, the qualification or employment indicators of refugees or beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. For the time

being, this is only a plan, but marks a robust development direction envisaged by the Central Statistical Office. Recommendation: in the course of setting up a population register, account should be taken of aspects of future research. It would be absolutely necessary to include a filter mechanism that allows for the sorting of certain social groups (including beneficiaries of international protection) and then for the aggregation of data. The preparation of a technical description would be indispensable to ensure that migration researchers can start working independently.