On the Selection of Asylum Seekers in Germany:
Evidence from Individual and Parental Human Capital

Presentation by PD Dr. Friedhelm Pfeiffer

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This study provides evidence on the selection of recently arrived asylum seekers from Middle Eastern and African countries in Germany. We define selection in terms of human capital and use years of schooling as an indicator. We assess selection on human capital of both asylum seekers and their parents relative to same-aged persons in their countries of origin. Our findings suggest that, on average, asylum seekers have 22 percent more human capital than same-aged persons from their home country. Selection in parental human capital is, on average, even higher. However, despite this positive selection, human capital seems to be polarized. Asylum seekers often accumulated rather low or relatively high levels of human capital compared to same-aged persons in their countries of origin. This phenomenon is even more pronounced in the distribution of parental human capital. The paper discusses potential economic as well as non-economic explanations for this finding. In addition, it is demonstrated that individual and parental human capital are correlated with short-run integration outcomes in Germany.

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