

Key to the integration of migrants into the labour market:
strategies for businesses, administration and politics



Focus on *Welcome Culture*

Orkan Kösemen

How immigrants find their way into the labour market

Interview

Welcome to the company

Pros + Cons

***Welcome Culture* – Guiding principle or problem?**

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DEAR READERS

04 ANALYSIS
Welcomed and accepted: How immigrants find their way into the labour market

07 PICTURE ESSAY
Germany: A little history of immigration

10 PROS + CONS
Welcome Culture – Guiding principle or problem?

12 IN PRACTICE
Businesses celebrate their new colleagues

14 IN PRACTICE
The dedication of many

16 IN PRACTICE
Images in perpetual flux

18 INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS CONFERENCE
Searching for ideals and successful projects

20 INTERVIEW
Participation in the labour market – Welcome to the company

22 IN PRACTICE
Film Project – Escape and arrival through a change of perspective

24 A GLANCE AT OUR NEIGHBOURS
Lithuania: “This country will not woo you”

26 OPINION
Learning from the past: Hannah Arendt – *We refugees*

27 IMPRINT

Welcome culture has been the phrase on everybody’s lips in Germany since at least spring 2015, having been cited in almost every article and discussion about the challenges and demands posed by migration; however, the fact that the term is used so inconsistently makes it significantly more difficult to understand correctly. At present, *welcome culture* is used as a catchall solution for every social challenge created by the influx of large numbers of refugees. The vagueness of the term means that it can be interpreted in many different ways, applied universally, and adapted in meaning to suit the focus of any given discussion. As such, the expert opinions set out here diverge considerably, assessing the concept either as a potential “guiding principle” for integration or as a veritable “problem” in public discourse (pages 10/11).

At one time, the term appeared to have a restricted definition, and was used by politicians in the context of the immigration of skilled workers (pages 4/5). One thing is certain: the internationalisation of the world of work – whether through the immigration of qualified workers or the arrival of refugees – poses significant challenges to the labour markets, and a response needs to be found (pages 6/7). Examples of solutions showing how European labour markets (pages 24/25) and individual businesses (pages 12/13) are rising to meet these challenges are generally just as unique and particular as the stories of the individual refugees hoping to make a new start in their host societies (pages 20/21, 22/23). Nonetheless, all these different aspects are often conflated under the generic idea of a *welcome culture*. If we understand *welcome culture* as a universal concept in this way, we see that this single term succinctly summarises an attitude of openness and acceptance towards social diversity – making it the counterpart to the Anglo-Saxon model of cultural pluralism or multiculturalism (pages 4/5). This is especially reflected in the engagement shown by the many people (pages 14/15) who are helping to put social diversity into practice and bring the concept of *welcome culture* to life by launching countless initiatives.

The media provides a link between how the idea of *welcome culture* is understood in political, business and civil society contexts. In their capacity as a communication and information authority, media professionals have the key task of editing and presenting topics relating to migration in a culturally sensitive manner – yet their role in this discussion is growing increasingly complex and politically charged (pages 16/17, page 26).

I hope you find this issue to be an informative and enjoyable read!

Yours sincerely,
Kirsten Sahn



*The clavis editorial team (f.l.t.r.):
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Jürgen Grosche*

Integration

WHAT DOES 'WELCOME AND RECOGNITION CULTURE' MEAN IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LABOUR MARKET?

In their search for skilled labour, businesses are increasingly looking for immigrants. A number of measures ease their way into the labour market showing that new employees are welcome, their achievements are acknowledged and their rights are being observed.

By Dr. Orkan Kösemen

The term *welcome culture* has been linked to various aspects of migration in public discussions within Germany over the last few years. Nowadays, many people associate the idea of welcome culture with the reception of refugees; however, the term was originally coined by politicians in the context of the migration of qualified workers, and was subsequently popularised among the general public. At its core, welcome culture is a universal concept that encompasses all forms of immigration, as well as the resulting societal diversity. It stands for a basic attitude of openness and acceptance towards migrants on both a personal and organisational level, as well as in the context of society as a whole. In this sense, it is the German counterpart to Anglo-Saxon approaches such as *cultural pluralism* or *multiculturalism*. The full academic form of the term is “welcome and recognition culture”, but it is often used in a restricted sense in public discourse. The present analysis is confined to the labour market, and provides a broad outline of the structural and legal elements that are needed to achieve an active welcome culture in this context.

Because the term is so broad in scope, it is necessary to specify each of the different dimensions of welcome and recognition culture so that we can assign individual measures to them. This has been done based on the following key questions:

- ▶ **Welcome culture:** How attractive is Germany to foreign employees who do not yet live in the country, or who have recently arrived and are currently in an orientation phase? (External access to the labour market)
- ▶ **Recognition culture:** Does every person – irrespective of their ethnic background or religion – have the same opportunities to access the education system and the labour market, as well as the same opportunities for progression afterwards? (Successful integration into the labour market)
- ▶ **Universal employee rights:** Are all employees protected from discrimination and exploitation? (Upholding equal standards)

These dimensions relate to different groups of people, and their importance is based on the size of the group(s) in question. Welcome culture primarily relates to recent and potential future immigrants, while recognition culture also includes migrants who have been resident in the country for some time, or even those who were born here and/or possess citizenship. It is not always possible to clearly distinguish between measures relating to welcome culture and those relating to recognition culture as they are applied in practice, but we will treat them as distinct for the purposes of improved systematisation. The third dimension encompasses universal employee rights, which should apply to every person, irrespective of their background. These rights are not an explicitly migration-specific issue, but migrants are more likely to find themselves excluded from them.



The table shows the possible structural and legal measures for creating a welcome culture in the context of the labour market. Simplified access to the labour market is important for migrants from outside the EU, and might include measures such as the straightforward issue of residence permits for the purposes of finding work (the “Job Seeker Visa”, which is limited in Germany to a period of 6 to 18 months depending on the group to which the applicant belongs), as well as a process for recognising/confirming professional qualifications (which would ideally take place abroad, prior to immigration), or language courses and advance information about the country. In addition, sources of guidance such as a welcome centre or a central point of contact for official procedures would increase the migrant’s willingness to remain. The attractiveness of a given labour market is primarily determined by the economic situation; however, family questions will also play a role for foreign employees. Is the individual’s spouse also eligible for a residence and work permit, and what restrictions are placed on the issue of visitor visas to family members?

[Continued page 6.](#)

Possible legal and structural measures for improving immigrants’ access to and integration into the labour market

Welcome culture	Recognition culture	Universal employee rights
Quick and straightforward recognition process for professional qualifications	Non-selective school and education system	The right to equal pay for equal work (in the same place)
Advance information and language courses provided abroad	Effective anti-discrimination measures	Protection against oppressive contracts or other agreements with comparable effects
(Simplified) residence permits for the purposes of finding work	A more flexible approach to recruitment standards at the start of training	Protection against poor working conditions and inhumane treatment
Welcome centre and central points of contact for official procedures	Careers advisors and other sources of support to help migrants catch up	
(Simplified) opportunities for family reunion and to obtain visitor visas for family members	Prospects for acquiring citizenship, such as clear pathways to naturalisation	



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Recognition culture comes into effect when migrants are integrated into the labour market, and it is intended to help overcome socio-economic and structural barriers to entry and progression. Just like everybody else, the professional success of migrants is dependent on their education, their social capital, and the possible prejudices of their employers. As such, it is essential to have an education system that does not exclude anybody because of their linguistic disadvantages or lack of social capital; rather, it should enable the majority of children to obtain a school-leaving qualification in accordance with their abilities. The next step is then to intro-

duce anti-discrimination processes that identify and prevent any structural inequalities in how people are treated. In order to ensure that the composition of the public-sector workforce reflects that of the wider population, it will also be helpful to adopt a flexible interpretation of recruitment standards, such as by offering the opportunity to catch up on any necessary qualifications during training. Career advisors can also help make up for a lack of social and cultural capital and thus bring migrant applicants and potential employers together. These measures are not intended as an expression of courtesy towards immigrants, but are designed to compensate for structural discrimination and inequality of opportunity. The promise of equal opportunity is a central pillar within liberal democracies, which also includes the services offered to immigrants in order to support them on their path towards citizenship.

The last area – the upholding of universal employee rights and protection against exploitation – may appear to be a matter of course; however, this is not always guaranteed in the low-wage sector, where more and more immigrants find work. Likewise, Germany too is subject to the global phenomenon

of the immigrant wage gap, which is similar to the gender pay gap. Over the long term, an active welcome and recognition culture can mitigate the structural aspects that lead to the wage deficit faced by immigrants.

In a diverse society, welcome and recognition culture must be more than just a vaguely defined buzzword in public debate; instead, it should be anchored in legal and structural measures. This applies especially to the labour market – after all, suitable employment is the key to self-determination in life, and also allows people to access and participate in wider aspects of society.

“Welcome Culture” in transition?

GERMANY: A LITTLE HISTORY OF IMMIGRATION

A historic view on immigration to the Bundesrepublik reveals the impact of international crises on the country. It shows that changes in public opinion of the host society depend on the number of immigrants, the reasons for their displacement and also on the state of the domestic economy at a given time.

By Kirsten Sahn (text) and
Andreas Maxbauer (pictures)



Reception in the 1960s: Being the millionth migrant worker in the Bundesrepublik, Portuguese Armando Rodrigues is presented with a moped. Spanish migrant workers at the overcrowded Frankfurt central station. The first 86 Italian migrant workers on their way to their new employer, Volkswagen works in Wolfsburg.



Recruitment of skilled foreign labourers 1955–1973

In a historical overview of welcome culture in Germany, one has to distinguish between different phases of immigration: up to the ban on recruitment, the call for skilled labourers from the Mediterranean (mainly from Italy, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Morocco, Portugal and Yugoslavia) was intended to be a controlled form of immigration for a limited period of time. In the attempt to integrate the newcomers into society, the Bundesrepublik subsequently had to deal with challenges such as reunifying immigrant families and the international flow of refugees in general.

After World War II, migration policy in the Bundesrepublik passed through different phases: the integration of approximately 13 million refugees displaced by the war; and later, the treaties to recruit skilled foreign labourers. Current debates centre around deportation, the regulation of the flow of asylum seekers as well as measures to improve the integration of immigrants into society. Over time, Germany has been changing from an emigration country to a country of immigration. Apart from the effects of immigration on the German host society, migration is, however, an international affair. This is highlighted by several examples of international cooperation in refugee relief since 1956. Since then, many successful international collaborations can be viewed as milestones in the history of migration.



PICTURE ESSAY

Hungarian refugees and their little belongings at the beginning of November 1956: Mass arrests after the failed Hungarian uprising of 1956 had led to an increase in refugees fleeing to Austria and Germany.



The Hungarian Uprising 1956

As a result of the Soviet suppression of the democratic uprising in Hungary, thousands of people fled westwards at the outset of the Cold War. Perceiving the refugees as victims of communist oppression, the host society felt great empathy with the migrants. Their ready reception was based on the understand-

ing that the refugees would soon move on and also on the economic situation of the Bundesrepublik. Because of the economic boom there was a great need for new labourers. On the whole, the acceptance of the refugees was characterised by international solidarity and a high level of support by everyone involved.

Having been founded in 1950, the arrival of the Hungarian migrants posed the first real challenge for the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR). The distribution and settlement of the newly arrived had to be organised. The same time saw the drafting of the Geneva Refugee Convention, in which refugees were asserted protection for the first time.

Vietnam War: Boat People 1975–1980

In the late 1970s, after the war had ended, communist repressions forced many people to flee Vietnam in small, non-ocean-going vessels. They tried to reach Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore or Hong Kong via international waters, thus becoming known as boat people. The hardship of the boat people in distress was extensively covered by the media and, led by

prominent voices such as Heinrich Böll, Martin Walser, Norbert Blüm and the journalist Rupert Neudeck, it resulted in a great public effort to rescue the refugees. Operating from Cologne, the newly-founded association Ein Boot für Vietnam e.V. financed the ship Cap Anamur, with which 11,000 people were rescued from the Pacific Ocean between

1979 and 1986. In addition to refugees in distress, the crew of volunteers also took onboard people from other ships and, as a consequence, came into conflict with German authorities. The rescue effort of the boat people from international waters thus shows parallels to the problems faced by sea rescue services in the Mediterranean today.



Arrival after a long and exhausting escape: After the return of Cap Anamur from its last journey in 1982, a young mother and child are standing at the pier. Red Cross workers are welcoming refugees at Hanover airport.

At home, the arrival of the boat people brought on voices that, by pointing out the big cultural differences between the migrants and the western host societies, demanded the closing of the German borders. The quick integration of the boat people and their part in the economic upswing led to a temporary silencing of the critics, however.

The Yugoslav Wars cause refugees to flee all former constituent republics: a family from Kosovo arrives at temporary housing in Bremen. At Berlin-Schönefeld airport, a medic carries a child whose family has arrived on a special flight.



Yugoslav Wars 1991-1999

Since the 1980s, public debate concerning asylum policy and immigration has increasingly been dominated by terms such as *Scheinasylanten* (“pretend asylum seekers”) and *Wirtschaftsflüchtlinge* (“economic refugee”), thus delegitimising refugees and their motives. The dwindling of the economy after the post-war boom with all its consequences for the labour markets is often cited as a reason for this trend.

The Balkan Wars sparked a wave of migration that caught Europe by surprise. Approximately 1.2 million people fled the region; almost 350,000 of them took refuge in Germany. Only 20,000 of them stayed on permanently.

In the meantime, German cities like Hoyerswerda, Rostock, Mölln and Solingen acquired questionable fame for being the setting of rightwing atrocities. As a consequence of migration in the 1990s – approximately 177,000 people arrived in Germany each year – there was an upsurge in the votes for far-right parties at elections.



In 1995, refugees who have fled the Balkans via Budapest are being welcomed at Munich central station. A refugee who has just arrived forms the shape of a heart with his hands.

Syrian Civil War, especially 2015

In 2015, the immigration of asylum seekers grew from a minor issue to a central topic with great attention by the media and in public discussion. The quick rise in the number of refugees in Germany and the European Union posed an immense challenge for public services. Terms such as *Flüchtlingskrise* (“refugee crisis”) as well as posters and welcome messages at train stations were omnipresent. 2015 stands as a milestone in a new migration movement after the Yugoslav Wars.

In the aftermath, the debate about the phenomenon of migration is taking place openly and it is characterised by a great awareness for the importance of integrating the newcomers into society.

The term *Willkommenskultur* (“welcome culture”) has come to represent the many initiatives led by the public and by civil society in the attempt to alleviate the arrival of the refugees. Nevertheless, far-right parties have been celebrating electoral successes on state and on federal

levels. Social networks have seen the rise of fear-mongering movements that have contributed to the success of rightwing groups. Their heterogeneity and the lack of a common enemy is often stated as a reason for the split in the attitudes towards migrants.

What the term really means

WELCOME CULTURE – GUIDING PRINCIPLE OR PROBLEM?

What do we really mean by welcome culture? And is it useful when it comes to defining the objectives of social action? Three voices shed light on the different aspects of the concept and its impact, and also point out some of its flaws.

Collected by Jürgen Grosche

Germany needs an active welcome culture

In the next few years, increasing numbers of baby boomers – a generational cohort characterised by its high birth rate – will be reaching the age of retirement, leaving significant gaps in the German labour market. When that happens, Germany will become even more dependent on foreign skilled workers to safeguard the productivity of the economy and stabilise public budgets with their taxes and social contributions. In order to attract the necessary people and retain them within the country over the long term, we need to make it as easy as possible for them to become part of German society. To do this, we need an active welcome culture that offers targeted support to immigrants as they integrate.

A crucial aspect of this is to organise small-scale offerings in people's places of residence. Linguistic mentors or tandem programmes can be just as important for language learning as formal language courses. In this context, it is also possible to encourage exchanges between immigrants and indigenes in a targeted fashion. This is important, as inter-ethnic social networks not only promote social integration, but also increase immigrants' sense of commitment to Germany.

A welcome culture alone will not help our country

There are several dimensions to any evaluation of the mass immigration to Germany of people from the Islamic cultural sphere. The one incontrovertible aspect for civilised people is the humanitarian angle: we have a duty to help all those who are persecuted, whose lives are in danger, who are suffering from war. Our nation and many of its citizens have done just that, with considerable dedication. I count myself among their number. Yet we must be clear that those people who obtain protection and new prospects for the future in this country must also respect our laws and accept our traditions. If they do not, they cannot remain here. Anybody who is admitted to Germany and goes on to commit a violent crime, such as a rape or a knife attack, must be punished and deported. The fact that over 200,000 asylum seekers in Germany have had their applications rejected and yet have still not yet been expelled from the country, is a scandal.

Wido Geis is a Senior Economist at the German Economic Institute. His research focuses on the areas of migration, integration and family policy.



Photo: German Economic Institute, Cologne

Klaus Kelle (59) has been a journalist for 35 years, working for newspapers such as Berliner Tagesspiegel, Badische Zeitung and Bild. He has worked as a media entrepreneur and publicist since 2007. Last year, he published the book "Bürgerlich, christlich sucht ..." ("Respectable Christian seeks ..."), in which he sharply criticised Angela Merkel's approach to refugee policy and to the 'modernisation' of her party, the CDU.

WHEN WE TALK ABOUT WELCOME CULTURE, IT IS IMPORTANT TO DEFINE EXACTLY WHAT WE MEAN BY IT IN ADVANCE. HERE, THREE EXPERTS APPROACH THE CONCEPT FROM DIFFERENT ANGLES, AND COME TO DIFFERENT CONCLUSIONS AS A RESULT. THEY SHOW THAT WE NEED TO DO MORE THAN SIMPLY ELEVATE A TERM INTO A GUIDING PRINCIPLE. THERE ARE ALL MANNER OF CONSEQUENCES TO CONSIDER, PRECONDITIONS TO IDENTIFY AND APPROPRIATE MEASURES TO IMPLEMENT – ALL OF WHICH THEN TRIGGER NEW DISCUSSIONS IN TURN. THE WIDER SOCIAL DEBATE AROUND THIS KEY INTEGRATION-RELATED THEME CONTINUES.

Like any moral principle,
welcome culture cannot
be legislated

The second aspect is the hope that young immigrants and refugees will solve our demographic problems and help pay for our pensions. In order to do so, these people need to be able to function in our ultra-modern labour market. An October 2017 study by the German Institute for Employment Research (IEB) established that inadequate knowledge of German and a lack of professional qualifications on the part of refugees pose a considerable barrier to any such hopes. Success will only come after many years of work providing people with qualifications – if it comes at all ...

The term welcome culture was originally used in political and business contexts to encourage people to accept the immigration of foreign skilled workers in response to economic needs. Since 2015/16, however, it has been used almost exclusively in connection with the willingness of civil society to offer help with the influx of refugees. Both these definitions fall short, however, as they miss the opportunity to develop a broader concept based on participation.

The SVR understands welcome culture to mean an openness towards cultural diversity on the part of both immigrants and the majority population. An active welcome culture can send a signal – both domestically and internationally – that Germany views itself as a country of immigration. On the one hand, this can promote social participation and a sense of belonging within our nation; and on the other, it can make it easier to attract skilled workers from abroad. Like any moral principle, welcome culture cannot be legislated; however, the SVR is in favour of promoting openness on the part of both immigrants and the majority population through the implementation of targeted measures. One way to call welcome culture into being would be for the state and the public administration to open up interculturally.



Photo: @pukall fotografie

Prof. Dr Thomas K. Bauer is the Chairman of the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). He is also Professor of Empirical Economic Research at the Ruhr University Bochum and Vice-President of the RWI – Leibniz Institute for Economic Research. The key focus of his work is on economic research into migration, as well as empirical population and labour market economics.



Photo: SVR/Borrs

Welcome Culture in the economy

BUSINESSES CELEBRATE THEIR NEW COLLEAGUES

Companies are anxiously seeking skilled workers. That's one reason that business is making the case for a culture of welcome – although by no means the only one. As these selected examples show, many people are convinced that diversity encourages economic development as well.

Original German by Jürgen Grosche

A full quarter of people who have fled to Germany from crisis and conflict zones have already found a job, according to surveys conducted by the Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung (Institute for Employment Research, IAB).

The Institute estimates that a further 8,500 to 10,000 people a month might take up work before the year ends, and a large number of businesses have involved themselves with initiatives to make that possible. Their number includes small and medium-sized enterprises and craft workshops but also large companies such as Deutsche Post DHL Group, the Deutsche Telekom and Henkel.

At the start of 2017 these three companies, in cooperation with the Bundesagentur für Arbeit (Federal Employment Agency), set up the pilot project Praktikum PLUS Direkteinstieg (Internship PLUS Direct Entry) to encourage the integration of refugees into the labour market. The programme has given around 100 refugees the opportunity to move into a two-year job via multi-level work experience and has been rated consistently positively by all three companies. “The participants have shown dedication from the beginning and their colleagues have really taken to them,” is the word from Henkel. “I’m happy to say that we’re taking the programme together with Henkel and Telekom further in 2018 and can keep filling roles as required,” said Thomas Ogilvie, Deutsche Post’s Board Member for Human Resources at the mid-term review in January, and the Telekom chairman Christian P. Illek, agrees: “The outcome of the pilot has been unambiguously positive.”

Personal contacts are a factor of success

When it comes to creating a welcoming culture in these companies, the project has achieved a lot. Illek adds: “I’m particularly pleased with the positive pull effect: the more people with refugee backgrounds we hire, the more enquiries we get from teams who want to integrate one or more refugees themselves.”

What every participant stresses is that networking with colleagues is essential to successful language acquisition and integration. In all three companies employees’ voluntary work with refugees plays a vital role, and as such is supported by their employers.

Even outside the project the companies offer a lot. “For over two years we’ve been involved in the integration of people with refugee backgrounds into the job market; so far we have been able to provide over 1250 contracts for work experience, training or employment at Deutsche Post DHL Group,” says Thomas Ogilvie.

Since 2016 Henkel’s training centre in Düsseldorf has been running a comprehensive integration programme with the goal of qualifying people for professional life in Germany. The business provides job shadowing and internships alongside months-long language programmes and coaching, with a three-month language training course especially for refugees called Deutsch im Beruf (German at Work). Around 130 people have taken part in the various integration activities at the training centre; some have already found apprenticeships and permanent employment, not just at Henkel but with other enterprises as well.

Specialist businesses such as this optical firm are gladly providing prospects for people with refugee backgrounds.

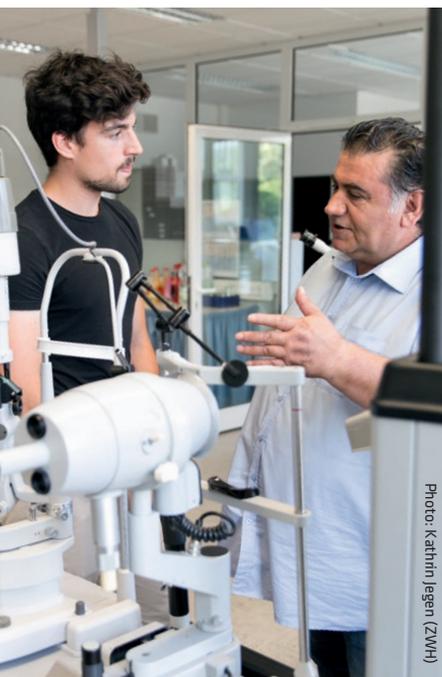


Photo: Kathrin Jegen (ZWH)

Participants in “Placement PLUS Direct Entry” work as industrial mechanics in Henkel’s workshop.



Workshops offer thousands of places

Medium-sized businesses, especially within the German skilled craft sector, are showing great dedication promoting an open business culture. The advertising slogan, “We don’t care where you come from. What matters is where you want to go.” is well-known “The skilled craft sector is taking on this challenge with great dedication,” says ZDH President Hans Peter Wollseifer. “They’re ready to help motivated refugees get qualified and trained, and in doing so they’re making an important contribution to ensuring that refugees successfully integrate into our country.”

And they’re clearly successful: these kinds of businesses are recruiting more and more immigrants as trainees. In 2017 about 11,000 young refugees from crisis zones like Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq found apprenticeships within the skilled craft sector; in 2016 that number was just 4,600. Furthermore, they are hoping that these varied initiatives will ease newcomers’ entry into the workplace – initiatives such as the app MyVocabulary (MeinVokabular), developed through a partnership between the Handwerkskammer (Chamber of Crafts) of Mittelfranken and Bavaria, which helps people with refugee and migratory backgrounds to pick up jargon and specialist language.

Preparing for the job market

Not only businesses but also various initiatives and action groups want to foster a welcome culture and the integration of people with migrant backgrounds. Take for example the project WelKMU – Hochqualifizierte Migrantinnen und Migranten für kleine und mittlere Unternehmen (Highly Qualified Migrants for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises). The project is aimed at early preparing students and university graduates with migratory backgrounds for the German job market, so that they can integrate into businesses and make lasting connections. Supported by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs as part of the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (Initiative New Quality of Work), the project involves employees giving young people tips for career planning, support in job hunting and advice for making applications – as well as showing them how to successfully apply their international skills.

Internet: www.welkmu.de

Businesses interested in the integration of people from refugee backgrounds can find more information in the brochure “Willkommenskultur – Ein Leitfaden für Unternehmen”, (welcome culture – a guideline for businesses) published by the Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände BDA (Confederation of German Employers’ Associations).

Internet: www.arbeitgeber.de

EU promotes funds consultation services

In the Lower Rhine region Caritas and its various initiatives are helping refugees to integrate.

In August 2017 they started the new so-called Leader Project to strengthen immigrants’ integration into rural areas. “We’re making provision for close co-operation with agricultural business in our region,” says Gerrit Hermans, from the Integration and Migration Service at the Caritas Centre in Geldern. “One of our aims with that is to bring a potential skilled workforce into the region and get them to stay here long-term.”

Since the beginning of 2015 several Caritas units in the Lower Rhine region have been working with a European Union-funded project to create structures for better conditions for admission for refugees. With around 800,000 euros of EU funding for their work on the left bank of the Lower Rhine region, Caritas has been able to set up full-time posts providing linguistic and cultural assistance as well as advice on the asylum process and the right of residence. The service extends to everyday topics too, such as how to find schools and nurseries, improve one’s German and get a job – practical help for everyday life.

Welcome culture in society

THE DEDICATION OF MANY

Language teaching, support for children and young people, contact between generations... there's an immense spectrum of campaigns and projects that people are getting involved in, from amateur volunteers to professionals from various walks of life – all to establish and nurture a culture of welcome, a cultural environment where newcomers are wanted and welcomed.

Original German by Jürgen Grosche

Within the social sector many initiatives were founded dedicated to assisting immigrants integrating into everyday life. Even before 2015, and especially in the years since as the number of refugees markedly increased, thousands of volunteers have gotten involved in many diverse projects. To choose between projects is difficult, and always a matter of chance. Nevertheless, this is an attempt to present exemplary initiatives and projects which demonstrate this fact: there are people who recognize, above all scepticism, doubt, and fear, the opportunities that a growing solidarity can provide for everyone, immigrants as well as long-term residents.

“Das macht Schule”

A great way for learning and growing solidarity is at school. The initiative “Das macht Schule” (“It’s catching on”) from Hamburg developed several concepts, for example to support teachers. Manager Dörte Gebert says they want to “get pupils ready for the future”. In the last ten years schools have documented almost 1800 practical projects on the website of “Das macht Schule”, based on the initiative’s free templates and advice and with a wide variety of subjects including integration and welcome culture.

Three project plans are currently available, each with tutorials, lesson materials, tips for practical work and more. The projects “Integration im Klassenzimmer” (Integration in the Classroom) and “Integration in der Schule” (Integration in School) deal with the task of quickly integrating refugee children with groups and whole school communities. How to organise a sponsored run and use it to aid integration? That is the theme of the third concept, “Integrationslauf” (Integration Run). “Getting people to participate is really important – not just the refugee pupils, but the native ones as well,” says Dörte Gebert.

Since 2016 the initiative has also commended schools for their Welcome Projects or general focus. The Gotthard-Kühl Primary and Secondary School in Lübeck received an award for its success in getting students involved and motivating them to grow mutual understanding and solidarity.

Link: <https://das-macht-schule.net/hol-dir-unterstuetzung>

Leading to conditions in Germany

The idea of school as a key location for integration has also been recognised by the society Deutsche Gesellschaft e. V. One of their projects “Deutschland Navi – Deutschland Diary” (“Germany Navigator – Germany Diary”) uses workshops to introduce refugee children and teenagers to German societal rules and practices, as well as to

the political framework and historical experiences of Germany as a host country. To that end, the project’s team in North Rhine-Westphalia works with schools in and around the city of Mettmann, with financial support from the Federal Agency for Civic Education (bpb) and the Sebastian Cobler Foundation for Civil Rights.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony and Brandenburg young people work together in the Jugendreporter-Projekt (Young Reporters’ Project), tackling the topical issues of migration, integration, xenophobia and extremism and presenting their work in specially created online publications (such as www.offeneshausnrw.de in North Rhine-Westphalia). The project is funded in part through the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth (BMFSFJ).

The project “Meine neue Heimat – Deine neue Heimat” (“My new home – your new home”) speaks to a completely different target group yet the same question applies: How welcome are people who had to leave their homes and have to start over somewhere new? This project connects today’s refugees with the elderly who underwent similar experiences after the Second World War, and has yielded many enthralling discussions and new insights for both sides.

Link: www.deutschlanddiary.de; www.heimatfindung.de; www.deutsche-gesellschaft-ev.de/veranstaltungen/bildungsangebote/361-2016-19-medienprojekt-jugendreporter.html



Photos: Das macht Schule (pictures 1-3), Deutsche Gesellschaft (pictures 3, 5)

Playing and crafting together – that’s what 1000 pupils at Stellingen comprehensive school in Hamburg offered 130 refugee girls and boys at a welcome day. Other schools offer such projects as well. The society Deutsche Gesellschaft e. V. helps connecting refugees of different generations; the project „Deutschland Navi“ teaches young refugees about their host country.

Youths’ active contributions to projects

Welcome culture usually centres on questions of an understanding of democracy, experiences of discrimination, and solidarity. The Youth Association of Düsseldorf is trying to actively integrate young people through a variety of activities. The new project “Stark für Demokratie” (Strong for Democracy) only launched recently. Young people with and without an experience of migration can spend four weekends dealing with topics around tackling discrimination and promoting democracy as well as developing workshops to get more children and young people interested in these themes. The first workshop in September, for example, was especially for people of colour. Clara Petersen, the youth education advisor, explains that on

the one hand “the idea is for people to have an opportunity to share their experiences of racism in a safe space.” On the other hand, young people whose “whiteness” has shielded them from experiences of racism have a chance to consider the privileges they often unwittingly enjoy.

It’s not the first project that the Youth Association has had a good experience with; they have previously brought young people from Düsseldorf youth clubs and refugee backgrounds together and trained them to be “intercultural coaches”. The coaches then went on to work in small, mixed teams to develop intercultural projects with different youth clubs, initiatives, and groups. “The participants’ creative ideas and the way they’ve independently planned and seen through their projects were very exciting,” says Clara Petersen.

Internet: www.jugendring-duesseldorf.de

NRW.Bank encourages volunteering

Many volunteers dedicate themselves to welcoming immigrants, and some campaigns have been particularly commended on their behalf. The NRW.Bank, a development bank under public law, funds businesses and initiatives such as “Willkommen im Fußball” (Welcome to Football). This project in the Benrath neighbourhood of Düsseldorf is maintained by the clubs SG Benrath-Hassels 1910/12 and Fortuna Düsseldorf, working in partnership with the refugee initiative “Stay”. The bank has made 4,000 euros available so that “children and young people are given the chance to enjoy not only physical activity but also cultural content as well as promoting a permanent stay for refugee families in Düsseldorf,” says Wolfgang Monski, the first chair of the Benrath/Hassels-based club. That includes club members giving German lessons to those in refugee accommodation, which are aimed at mothers in particular.

As it happened, the impetus for the funding came from one of the bank’s employees, who volunteers with the group. What’s more, the NRW.Bank underwrites its employees’ voluntary work to the tune of 20,000 euros a year.

Welcome culture in the media

IMAGES IN PERPETUAL FLUX

Not only politics but also the media have had a huge influence on the form of what we call welcome culture. The media landscape paints a nuanced, ever-changing picture.

Original German by Jürgen Grosche

Welcome culture in the media – a very broad topic leaving room for possible interpretation. This question, for example: How are people with a migratory background integrating into media organisations? It's improvable, to put it mildly, as has been set out by several experts including here in *clavis*. The Bertelsmann Foundation's Frank Zotta, for example, writes in issue 2/2016 that editors must ask themselves "why the new creators of German media still aren't adequately represented in the engine rooms of journalism."

But the question of welcome culture also touches on the portrayal and contextualisation of themes around integration and migration, which are foreground issues of this article. And that poses the question: Does the media reflect the mood of the population and/or the opinions of particular interest groups? Or does their reportage and commentary itself directly influence the welcome culture – and if so, how?

The usage of certain terminology is often discussed by those who work in the media such as the highly criticised term "asylum tourism", which turns refugees into holidaymakers. But also formulations used uncritically by many writers, can conceal threatening realities and trigger fears, and so achieve the opposite of welcome culture.

Journalists from the network of *Neue Deutsche Medienmacher* (new German media creators) have compiled a glossary of such terms and elucidated their connoted contexts. Take the word "refugee wave," which is to suggest "that politics is powerless before a force of nature." It assigns "the responsibility for political or structural problems around their admission into Germany." to the very people who seek protection. As an alternative the authors suggest "giving a concrete number, for example ... or speaking simply of an inward movement ('Zuzug')."

Journalists are reacting increasingly anxiously

Does the media uncritically absorb patterns of opinion? The accusation comes from all sides. Populists like to speak of the government-commanded media which omits or hushes up certain facts. As the polemics heat up, the media is given the old label "lying press" ("Lügenpresse"). In some sections of the audience such accusations fall on fertile ground, and the media loses its trustworthiness.

Journalists are unsettled in the face of these external influences. Only a few years ago editors would say, when discussing the reporting of criminal offences, "we don't write the nationality of the perpetrators; it isn't relevant." That has changed recognisably. The worry that naming nationalities will stoke resentment has given way to an effort to maintain professional equidistance, an independence from all sides.

In the last two years the discourse has called the *Deutscher Presserat* (German Press Council) to action, whose press code acts as journalists' moral authority. In their current guidelines the Council recommends that, when reporting on criminal offences, journalists "take care that mentioning suspects or perpetrators belonging to an ethnic, religious or other minority group does not lead to discriminatory generalisation about individual wrongdoing." Group affiliation "should not, as a rule, be mentioned, unless it is a matter of substantiated public interest." Mentioning it "can incite prejudices against minorities," the media watchdogs warn in accordance with conventional interpretation.



Photo: Tirno Stammberger

Interviewing immigrants in Berlin: the way in which journalists report creates images with influence welcome culture all over the country.

Dark side of migration come into focus

Journalists' uneasiness was also brought on, of course, by the events of New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne. This key event wasn't the first time that the journalistic world had held a nuanced discussion about how to appropriately approach the themes of integration and welcome culture. But a change could be observed. Initially the foreground was taken by photos like that of a drowned refugee boy lying on a Turkish beach, Angela Merkel's selfie with a refugee, or the people who had welcomed newcomers with placards all along Munich's main train station – but journalists were increasingly grappling with topics that shone a light on the dark side of migration.

That summer the focus was on the reportage on refugees who had come to Europe across the Mediterranean Sea. The contradictions of journalists' reappraisal of the issue culminated in an impassioned debate about a piece in the weekly newspaper *Die Zeit* which had posed, the question of whether it was legitimate for private individuals to save migrants and refugees from drowning at sea as a for-and-against discussion.

This has sparked countless opinions and investigations. Among the most often-quoted works is the study "The refugee crisis in the media: daily journalism between opinion and information,"

which was published in July 2017 by the Otto Brenner Foundation. The study's author, media scholar Michael Haller, investigated the coverage of the refugee migration between February 2015 and March 2016. Haller and his team analysed a broad range of online news media such as *tagesschau.de*, *spiegel.de*, *welt.de* and *focus.de* as well as three so-called papers of record – the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung (SZ)* and *Die Welt*. In total, the team collected more than 30,000 newspaper reports.

Positive coverage – only an exception?

The study's evaluation of media coverage was somewhat critical. Large parts of the journalistic world had "misjudged their professional role and neglected that function of the media to enlighten and educate." According to a release from the foundation instead of "accompanying and questioning politics and their executive organs as neutral observers, information journalism has absorbed the perspective and the solutions of the political elite". The findings demonstrated the "great estrangement" which, according to the foundation, has "arisen between established journalism and parts of the population."

The study itself came under criticism in turn. "To be precise, the somewhat positive 'refugee' coverage is the 'outlier' in an otherwise largely negative media landscape." That's according to Dr Christine Horz who is the scientific contributor at the Institute for Media Studies at the Ruhr University of Bochum. In her work "On trial: the media scientist Michael Haller's study of 'refugee coverage' in the German 'establishment media'", she speaks of the problem that "these minorities are mostly reported on, rather than being given a chance to speak for themselves." The causes of this, according to Dr Horz, are to be found on multiple levels; in the number of journalists with migratory backgrounds, for example, which has sat around 2-3% for decades. This means that the initial analysis becomes closely linked with the representation of these topics and of welcome culture in the media.

International Metropolis Conference

SEARCHING FOR IDEALS AND SUCCESSFUL PROJECTS

At the beginning there was a German-Canadian partnership agreement. Since then the Metropolis conference has become the biggest network in the area of migration and diversity. The Bavarian IQ-Landesnetzwerk MigraNet participates and takes the chance to learn about successful projects – especially in Canada, where experiences are considered exemplary.

By Anne Güller-Frey

The fact that migration is not a national issue lies within the very nature of the concept. The reasons are varied. Beyond a thirst for adventure and looking for work, motivating factors for migration include escaping war, poverty and discrimination. In order for the fresh start and the integration into a new country to be successful, there needs to be a welcoming culture. New arrivals need to feel at ease, become members of the community, and be accepted by society to enable equal participation.

Germany is regarded as the second favourite country to emigrate to. The annual expert report by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR) concluded the following: Germany has joined the ranks of progressive countries of immigration. This conclusion was drawn following a comparison between the migration and integration policy of Germany and the policies of selected EU states, as well as classic countries of immigration like Canada and the US. Many say it has clearly caught up politically and conceptually in many areas of migration management, and in encouraging integration – currently in the area of labour market policy. It should be made clear however, that there is definitely a need for subsequent improvement in a number of areas. Nevertheless, the debates about integration and migration should not only be held nationally, but also internationally.

Network IQ on an international exchange

For years Network IQ has engaged not only on a national level but also on an international level. Stimuli from other countries can optimise the local strategy. Since the German-Canadian partnership agreement was signed in 2009, an intensive exchange with Canada has followed as part of the metropolis conference. www.metropolis.net

The national Metropolis conference

Since then, the Bavarian IQ state network MigraNet takes part in the annual metropolis conferences in Canada. Alongside the normal conference programme, institutions are visited on site, in order to learn about successful projects.

INFORMATION

Metropolis is the largest network of scientists, government representatives, and international and public sector organisations in the field of migration and diversity in the world. The aim of the Metropolis conferences is to connect all the important players in the fields of migration, development and integration, and in each case to discuss the most recent developments in research, the current political strategies as well as the wishes and needs of the party concerned on one platform. The international Metropolis project in Canada forms the framework for the single Metropolis conference.

Meeting of the supervision team of the international Metropolis conference 2015 in China (f.l.t.r.: Jürgen Schröder, Bernd Geiss, Anne Güller-Frey, Paulo Teves, Christel Baltes).



“IN ADDITION, MIGRANET TAKES PART IN THE INTERNATIONAL METROPOLIS CONFERENCE WITH WORKSHOPS, IN ORDER TO, AMONGST OTHER THINGS, PRESENT THE WORK OF IQ. EXPERIENCES FROM THE NETWORK CAN BE PRESENTED, TOGETHER WITH PLAYERS OF OTHER COUNTRIES TO AN INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE.”

Canada as a country of immigration

Canada, through its long history as a country of immigration both in immigration policy and integration policy, has a huge wealth of knowledge at its disposal. Whilst in Germany, and in most European states, integration is seen as an adjustment process in a historically conservative society, the approach of the Canadians is completely different. A different take on the topic of immigration is implied with the slogan “Integration is a nation building process”, which describes a more active role of migrants in integration. Immigrants in Canada are part of a developing society and help to shape it.

Profiting from Canadian experience

We can learn a lot from Canada, which is well versed and experienced in integration issues, not only for our immigration and integration policy, but also for the implementation of projects. Not everything runs smoothly: as far as the Recognition Law is concerned, we have learned from the Canadians, but also from their mistakes. Amongst other things at one of our project visits in Vancouver to the Immigrant Employment Council British Columbia (IEC-BC), the mentoring programme was introduced to us. Since then it has been transferred to Germany, and very successfully implemented in several towns and cities.

How does Canada integrate successfully?

The successful integration measures in Canada include the so-called “bridging programmes”, which try to close any theoretical and practical gaps in the migrants’ knowledge as soon as possible in order to build a bridge into the world of work. One success factor for Canadians is the close involvement of industry and businesses. Experience shows that, particularly for the “bridging measures”, cooperation with employers is absolutely essential. In this part of the world, problem areas are similar to those of Canada: the demand for skilled workers is increasing, but the reservations on the side of the employers continue to exist.

International Metropolis conference

In addition, MigraNet takes part in the international Metropolis conference with workshops, in order to, amongst other things, present the work of IQ. Experiences from the network can be presented, together with players of other countries to an international audience. Previous event locations were Copenhagen, The Hague, Sao Miguel (Azores), Tampere, Milan, Mexico City and Nagoya. MigraNet regularly took part in these conferences, and had the opportunity to develop international contacts.

Network IQ is also represented in the steering group for the International Metropolis. Since 2015 Jürgen Schröder, from the federal ministry of labour and social affairs, and Anne Güler-Frey, from the Bavarian IQ State Network MigraNet, belong to this important body. The steering group is the decision making body for Metropolis. This is where the strategic direction of Metropolis is set. Political decisions are discussed, and the venues for the international conferences are decided upon. The headquarters of the steering group is Canada. Howard Duncan, founder and chairman of Metropolis, convenes a meeting of the body twice a year. On the agenda is a discussion about global developments regarding migration, and determining the work programme.

At the upcoming international Metropolis conference 2018 in Australia, Network IQ will be represented by a delegation once again, and will present its work in several workshops.

The promotion programme IQ at the International Metropolis Conference in Sydney

Once again the IQ Network is represented at the annual international Metropolis Conference, which takes place from the 29th of October until the 02nd of November in Sydney this year. In collaboration with international partners the network offers practical oriented workshops to present their activities in different focal points. This way the network gets an opportunity to learn about other successful international projects while simultaneously present the programme’s own successful work abroad.

www.netzwerk-iq.de
www.netzwerk-iq.de/metropolis

What Participation in the Labour Market means for Integration

WELCOME TO THE COMPANY

How is welcome culture connected to the labour market? Prof. Dr. Jutta Rump, ambassador for the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (Initiative New Quality of Work, INQA) and leader of the Institut für Beschäftigung und Employability (Institute for Employment and Employability) in Ludwigshafen, explains in the following interview the role businesses play in the integration of immigrants, and how successful good cooperation can be.

By Nina Hoppmann/Christina Knorr

Professor Rump, what does the term 'welcome culture' mean?

Essentially, welcome culture means that those who enter our society are met openly and appreciatively, and also that the reasons for their emigration are acknowledged. At the same time, it means being aware of the values in our society that establish identity and ensuring that these values are made clear. This provides a framework for the welcome culture.

Where do we encounter welcome culture in our work environment?

A labour market is in principle always open. We currently have an environment within our labour market, which should be a welcome culture par excellence, as there is an acute need for skilled workers in many areas. Moreover, our labour market is increasingly becoming an education market. You need to have completed vocational training, and must continually work on your qualifications. When people come to us, who are in a minority, low skilled group due to a lack of qualifications, they find it difficult. Welcome culture thus also entails that people who have emigrated are able to work on their qualifications to have prospects in the labour market and our society. It is perfectly clear that to be part of the labour market means to be part of society.

What role do businesses play in this?

Without businesses, in particular small and medium sized businesses, integration is unsuccessful. Based on the experience of recent years, there is still potential in this area; many businesses were and are still very much open to the employment of refugees and immigrants. However, they also note that integration into a company is not exactly easy; people come from different cultural environments, socialisations, education, and school systems, and different languages.

Prof. Dr. Jutta Rump is the ambassador for the field of equal opportunities and diversity for the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit.



Photo: Prof. Dr. Jutta Rump

“FOR BUSINESSES, THE INTEGRATION OF A PERSON WITH EXPERIENCES OF DISPLACEMENT IS AN INVESTMENT. THEY ARE INVESTING IN AN EMPLOYEE OF THE FUTURE, AND AT THE SAME TIME ASSUMING THEIR CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES.”

Which requirements must be met for good cooperation within a company?

The first important thing is the language. The second is cultural training. Companies should invest in this, and explain the company culture. For example, how do we work as a team? Cultural training is, at the very least, as important as the language. It is also worth providing new employees with a contact person and working in mixed teams. Just by working together a lot can develop on a personal level, and some prejudices or stereotypes – which we all have – disappear. But it is also clear that for businesses, integration of a person with experiences of displacement is an investment. They are investing in an employee of the future, and at the same time are assuming their Corporate Social Responsibilities. However, integration not only concerns people with experiences of displacement. Employees, who have been specifically recruited from abroad, also benefit from the aforementioned tools for successful integration.

What potential lies in an intercultural workforce?

Our colourful society is reflected in the customer structure, and should therefore also be incorporated into the workforce structure. In doing so, the company has a much better insight into the customer base. Moreover, we live in a rapidly changing world, in which new competitors are constantly entering the market – not least as a result of digitalisation. To stay successful, you must permanently think about the future, and use the diverse perspectives and potential of the workforce.

What support programmes are there for businesses?

There are a lot, for example the programme that the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit (New Quality of Work), INQA for short, offers. It helps small and medium sized businesses, to remain competitive and to set up good personnel work, by offering low threshold services. In the INQA magazine ‘In Arbeit’ (In Work), businesses can find lots of good examples from other businesses of how cooperation in intercultural teams can succeed.

INFORMATION

‘In Arbeit’ is a consulting service of the Initiative Neue Qualität der Arbeit, and is aimed at businesses that have intercultural workforces. It offers solution-orientated proposals for good cooperation between different cultures in small and medium sized businesses. At the same time, ‘In Arbeit’ relies on expert knowledge and field-tested experience of other companies. The magazine is available to businesses free of charge.
www.inarbeit.inqa.de

Film Project “#MyEscape”

ESCAPE AND ARRIVAL THROUGH A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

How do refugees experience their Odyssey, their arrival and their assimilation in Germany? Do they feel welcome? In the film project “#MyEscape” people describe their experiences very vividly in mobile phone footage and interviews. It is special because they do so from their own perspective, not through the lens of the host country. The project was exciting enough for the director to continue documenting the experiences of refugees.

By Jürgen Grosche

A jet plane approaches, and releases bombs, people flee in panic, gunfire spatters in the background. The film “#MyEscape” begins with these scenes of Syria. “Over a million people fled to Germany in 2015. Some of them filmed their escape on their mobile phones” is the accompanying caption. Videos follow of happy times before the escape, of experiences along the way, dealings with people smugglers, the tension at closed borders, and, at last, the arrival.

One man tells of how a voice over the speaker on the train greets them with “welcome to Austria” in Arabic. “That was the most wonderful moment of the journey” he says, “Nowhere else had anyone said ‘welcome’ before.” In Frankfurt they were even met with “welcome” signs by Germans. “I was surprised,” says a mother, “the people were so kind, especially to the children.”

High level of credibility for mobile phone videos

Afghans, Eritreans, and Syrians, who are happy “to now live like free people.” Taking the first steps into a new life. Children happily riding a rollercoaster. That was 2015. The director, Elke Sasse, found the videos, and then, together with the broadcasters Deutsche Welle and WDR, considered whether they could be made into a film. When, after an appeal, even more such mobile phone footage came in, Sasse and the producer Stefan Pannen, got started with weaving the videos together and interviewing refugees about the scenes.

“We wanted to draw on a different perspective with it,” the director describes the aim of the production, “not from our perspective of ‘so many people are coming over here,’ but rather from the other point of view.” For Sasse the mobile phone footage has a very special authenticity: “You can only authentically document the escape in an empty petrol tank of a bus when you yourself are the one who is fleeing.

How are those people today, three years after these dramatic events? Do they still feel as welcome? Are they integrated? Naturally, Elke Sasse still has contact with her interviewees. “Many of them really struggle with obstacles on various levels,” she says. Some had to wait a long time for their language courses, another for a permission to relocate to a different city, where he had found a place to study, and later work.



Crossing Europe on foot. Finally, arriving in Passau. Many refugees record their experiences on their phones. They document the journey from their perspective.



Photo: Berlin Producers

Elke Sasse, director of the film “#MyEscape.” The filmmaker has already got numerous documentaries underway about people in intercultural contexts. For example Berbers, who are without fixed residence and move from place to place, German-Russians stranded in Eastern Europe, or wedding musicians in New York.

Follow-up project: documentary film is in the works

This topic did not leave the thoughts of the filmmaker. The follow-up project, “MyDeutschland” presents two brothers, who initially live in a village, “isolated in a house overlooking a maize field” Sasse says the pair then does a tour of Germany. Along the way, they visit the VW factory in Wolfsburg. For one of the brothers it is a special moment as he had had his own Volkswagen in Syria. He had to sell it in order to finance his escape. “Now he wants to know where these vehicles are built.” The third stage of the journey shows how the pair finally arrives in Hamburg, find jobs and feel at home there.

Currently, Elke Sasse is concerning herself again with this group of themes. In the follow-on project “The War on my Phone”, which she is carrying out together with WDR and Deutsche Welle, refugees receive text messages from friends and relatives in Syria. “The documentary shows the inner conflict of the refugees,

between their lives here in Germany, and their worries about people in the war zone.” It is expected that the film will be broadcasted in December.

Photo exhibitions document the stories of refugees and their strife

Since 2015, several projects have documented stories and events from the perspective of refugees. The photographer Kevin McElvaney from Hamburg, for example, gave 15 disposable cameras to refugees in Izmir so they could document their journey. Included was his address so the cameras could be sent back to him. Seven cameras were actually returned to him. The exhibition “Refugee Cameras” originated from these photos. It has since been shown in many cities. “I wanted to give a voice to the refugees,” the photographer said to describe the intention of the project.

INFORMATION

#MyEscape – the film

Director – Elke Sasse, producer – Stefan Pannen, produced by the Berlin Producers Media GmbH (2015).

Feature length: 90 minutes.

Available via various mediums e.g.Vimeo. Information and events relating to the project:

www.myescapefilm.de

www.facebook.com/MyEscapeFilm



In Croatia, waiting for a train to take them to the north. Mass accommodation in Berlin: arrival – the end of an odyssey.

Lithuania

“THIS COUNTRY WILL NOT WOO YOU”

Why do asylum seekers leave Lithuania after having been accepted?

What makes thousands of young Lithuanians leave their home country?

How can you stay there and succeed, economically as well as personally? Insiders give answers.

By Petra Plaum

When Lithuania declared its independence in 1990, its population was 3,7 million. In the meantime, it has shrunk to 2,8 million. Though unemployment is currently shrinking, tens of thousands of people are still leaving year by year – the young, the talented, and even the refugees.

Why do asylum seekers leave?

For asylum seekers, the fact that they get less money to live on than e.g. in Germany might be crucial. Many also want to reunite with relatives in other EU countries. Of the 468 refugees who have been granted asylum in Lithuania since the fall of 2015, 388 have moved elsewhere. The team of the Refugees Reception Center in Rukla states that refugees get what they really need – first of all housing, food, clothing, access to legal and health services and education. “Although Lithuania’s financial resources are limited if compared with other European states, it has many highly-qualified staff members who ensure a quality process of adaptation of the refugees”, the Refugees Reception Center director Robertas Mikulėnas adds. Professionals work side-by-side with volunteers, asylum seekers thus also get assistance with finding apartments, help with finding schools for their children, and vocational and language training. “In general, Lithuanians welcome and are willing to

help the arriving asylum seekers”, Mikulėnas reports. “However, they have to make efforts to become part of the society, learn the language, get to know the culture, and seek to integrate.”

What immigrants perceive as a certain coldness or even hostility might be a misinterpretation, the Lithuanian film maker, writer, intercultural communication coach and founder of “Ethnic Kitchen – touching stories” Aistė Ptakauskė from Vilnius agrees. “The immigrants whom I interviewed for my two-year-long national campaign that raised Lithuanian society’s awareness to daily instances of xenophobia and racism, almost unanimously mentioned one biggest challenge that they face: they feel as if they were invisible to Lithuanians. According to my interviewees, Lithuanians never make the first move toward a person of foreign origin even if they can clearly see that the person struggles.” Their intention might be benevolent – many feel their English might not suffice, or they want to give strangers space – sometimes, there is prejudice through a lack of interaction with foreigners, too. Ptakauskė’s advice to every new arrival: “To use a dating analogy, this country will not woo you; you’ll be the one who has to do all the work.”



Pictures taken on the set of the documentary „Ethnic kitchen – Pasaulio virtuvė“: Aistė Ptakauskė, director (on the right) with Keisha Laraine Ingram, a student from Jamaica, Alicia Gian who came from the US and fell in love in Lithuania (with stylist Kastė Svilaitė on the left) and the Chechen diplomat Aminat Saiyeva. The documentary depicts the life and integration stories of five female immigrants and portraits Lithuania, a country with many facets.

Photos: Vidmantas Samuolis

Talking about work ...

Lately, Lithuania's economy has improved, jobs have been created. Wages are still low though: "According to Eurostat, in 2017, the average hourly labor cost in Lithuania was 8.00 EUR", Ptakauskė criticizes, "which is more than five times lower than in Denmark and 30% less than in another Baltic State, Estonia. It is only natural that talented people choose a higher salary." Especially since living in the Lithuanian cities is almost as expensive as in Western European cities.

People who have studied or worked abroad face additional challenges. Ptakauskė quotes the Lithuanian scholar Dr. Audra I. Mockaitis, who wrote: "Although the unemployment rate in Lithuania in 2017 was 7%, only 31.5% of repatriates found work within 12 months of return (2015 data), as many local employers prefer not to hire those with international experience." Ptakauskė adds: "As strange as this insight may sound, my personal experience – as well as experience of my many colleagues and friends – supports it."

There might be initiatives supposed to stop emigration and brain drain, she states, "but those are dedicated, to quote Dr. Mockaitis again, to a 'select few elites', which leaves most of the emigrating population feeling severely underappreciated." Dr. Mockaitis herself lives and teaches in Australia right now.

Ptakauskė – holding a US diploma – became a creative entrepreneur. Many immigrants choose that path, become self-made women and men. "Unfortunately, this entrepreneurial mind-set is not very prevalent in Lithuania", Ptakauskė regrets, "I strongly believe it should be encouraged on all levels of our society: families, schools, government."

How to integrate against all odds

So if you are determined to make it in Lithuania – what attitude, what behavior helps you? "Be very proactive, do not be afraid to make the first move, and don't get discouraged if your first interaction with Lithuanians does not lead to an immediate friendship", Ptakauskė says. Patience is crucial. "I would advise against one very common pattern of behavior that I observe among many immigrants: commiseration", she adds. "Hanging out with other foreigners and complaining about your hardships

is very tempting, but not very helpful. Instead, try to be where locals are: go to Lithuanian restaurants, concerts, bazaars, or join a club that cultivates your favorite hobby even if the main language of communication there is Lithuanian – especially if the main language of communication is Lithuanian!" Knowing the language – and later on, being able to read between the lines – helps everyone to find his or her place.

There are happy endings for asylum seekers, too, Robertas Mikulėnas states. Even if they don't make the big headlines: "Some Syrians, Iraqis, or people from other countries residing in Lithuania only enrich and add to the variety of our country".

STATISTICS & FACTS ABOUT LITHUANIA

After first Nazi German (1941–1944), then Soviet occupation, Lithuania declared itself independent on March 11, 1990 (acknowledged by the Soviet parliament on Sept. 6, 1991). Part of the EU since 2004

Population: 2.8 million (currently shrinking)

Unemployment rate: 5.9% (currently shrinking), source: Statistics Lithuania, <https://www.stat.gov.lt/web/lis/paieska?q=unemployment> (seen Aug. 13, 2018)

Ethnicity: almost 87% Lithuanians, 6% Poles, 5% Russians, 1.4% Belarussians, 0.7% Ukrainians. Source (Aug 13, 2018): <https://osp.stat.gov.lt/statistiniu-rodikliu-analize?indicator=S3R162#/>

Read & see more:

The documentary "Ethnic kitchen – Pasaulio virtuve." (in both Lithuanian and English, with subtitles) is available online for free. It tells the touching stories of 5 migrant women in 70 minutes: <http://www.pasauliovirtuve.eu/en/whats-cooking/ethnic-kitchen-documentary-immigrant-women-lithuania-available-online-free-16-days-gender-based-violence/>

An article by Dr. Audra Mockaitis

https://mockaitis.com/2018/08/02/lithuanians-are-leaving-their-country-in-droves-but-the-government-panders-to-expatriate-elites/#_ftn7

Learning from the past

HANNAH ARENDT – WE REFUGEES

“We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings [...] and that means the rupture of our private lives.”

Hannah Arendt

You may be wondering what motivated me to write a comment piece on the refugee debate and open it with a quote from Hannah Arendt, which was taken from her 1943 essay *We Refugees*.

This quote is representative of the timeless insight contained in her essay, although her words are clearly related to her own fate as a stateless Jewish refugee. They stand as a plea on behalf of those who have been forced to leave their homes – on behalf of refugees and stateless persons who have no rights. In clear and plain terms, they describe the emotional world of many immigrants as they search for a new home. Arendt is often quoted by writers who are unable to find better words of their own to express the condition of rootlessness – just like myself at the start of this article.

“In the first place, we don’t like to be called ‘refugees’.”

Although refugees before the Second World War were considered to be individuals who had been forced to flee due to their actions or their political views, Arendt held that the meaning of the term had shifted in the wake of the Holocaust. It lost its almost reverential aspect, and became exclusively associated with something suspicious and unfortunate. This sense of the word

is strikingly reflected in contemporary political debates and in the media reports that accompany them. A good deal is currently written about the necessity of regulating the numbers of refugees requesting asylum at the borders, and considerably less about the fact that their numbers have now reduced substantially and that a significant proportion of them have managed to join the labour market. Yet Arendt discussed these experiences too in her essay. In her view, there will always be politicians who ask in bewilderment why so much help is given to foreigners; just as there will always be journalists who are happy to report that not all refugees are ennobled by their suffering.

“Welcome culture” and the “wave of refugees”

This set of issues is currently being addressed in public debate, even as the host societies – with the assistance of public bodies, local businesses and, of course, countless volunteers – are working to put the cliché of welcome culture into practice in everyday life. But why is it so difficult to discuss the causes behind immigration and asylum-seeking without nationalist fringe groups feeling confirmed in their views and attempting to destabilise our basic democratic order by means of ‘fake news’? The fatal flaw here is that the core of the debate does not focus on the displaced people described by Arendt, and is instead fuelled by a subliminal striving to safeguard national interests.

In this respect, Arendt’s position is as radical as it is plausible: she declares that the classical tripartite political doctrine of nation, people and territory was made obsolete by the Holocaust, which clearly showed where nationalism ultimately leads. She argued that a discourse based on these categories becomes redundant against a backdrop of refugee migration, as the asylum seekers no longer fit into this simple scheme. According to Arendt, the tripartite model described above supports nationalist arguments, making it completely unsuitable for addressing problems in international law.

75 years have now passed since Arendt set down these thoughts in writing, and yet we appear to face similar challenges today. At a time when fewer and fewer eyewitnesses are available to refresh our collective memory with personal recollections of the horrors of the Holocaust, Arendt’s ideas provide a worthy substitute. As such, they serve as an invaluable reminder that the debate currently raging is not a new one, and that it must be conducted with an awareness of what has gone before.

By Kirsten Sahn

INFO

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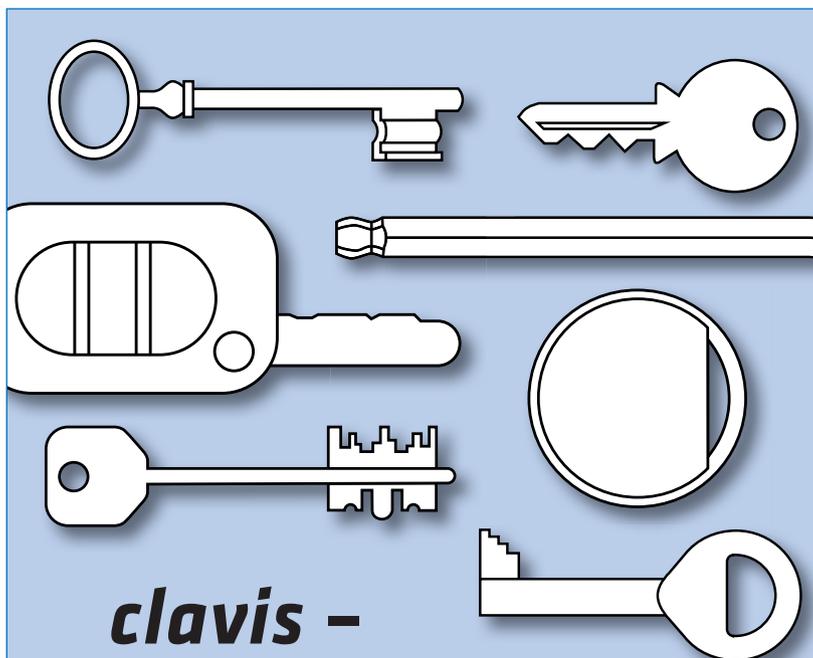
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clavis

Key to the integration of migrants into the labour market:
strategies for businesses, administration and politics

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In cooperation with:





Vom Farbfernsehen hatten wir uns mal mehr versprochen.

Willy Brandt machte den Anfang. 1967 knipste er auf der Internationalen Funkausstellung feierlich den ersten deutschen Farbfernseher an. Die Botschaft war klar: Die TV-Welt wird bunter. Mittlerweile ist ganz Deutschland sehr bunt geworden – nur die Medien nicht. Denn obwohl rund 19,3 Millionen Menschen hierzulande einen Migrationshintergrund haben, kommen die Medien fast ohne sie aus. Das soll sich ändern! Die gesellschaftliche Wirklichkeit muss sich auch vor den Kameras, an den Mikrofonen und in den Chefetagen von Sendeanstalten widerspiegeln.

Die Neuen Deutschen Medienmacher engagieren sich für mehr Vielfalt in den Medien und mehr Perspektiven in der Berichterstattung. Damit auch die Redaktionen so bunt werden wie Deutschland.



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