

Living Together in Germany

How can we bridge the gap between idealism and reality?



Output of the discussion at the workshop

09.07.2016, No Border Festival, Magdeburg

1. Which problems of integration are we facing/ do you recognize?

Social Factors:

- The language barrier in social life and work
- Cultural differences
- Social differences in mind set and traditions - how do we develop a common understanding?

System Factors:

- The challenging and complicated bureaucracy in Germany with little assistance or options in other languages. You need good German or help from someone to figure it out
- Few study, training or job positions available
- Long waits for basic needs like apartments / language courses create frustration and impatience

Psychological Factors:

- The impact of trauma is not to be underestimated: some refugees need time to not only adjust to being forced to be in a completely new place but also to work through their experiences.
- Refugees should be introduced to the culture first before learning the German is sprung on them. Before they come to terms of living in this new place, they won't be ready to learn German
- Some refugees don't want to integrate as much or don't see the point, as they want to return to their home country as soon as possible
- Refugees don't feel welcome here, suffer from racism, blame - even among each other
- Fear of future, have no perspectives
- One needs to find a way of treating them like adults

2. What can you personally do to get involved/solve these?

- Create a place of contact or exchange in your city where locals and refugees can meet and help each other in their concerns, but also engage in contact with each other → should be central in the city, for many people to see
- Create an association for refugees and employers alike, where one can be a member and benefit from the network. Employers can seek skilled people and have more direct contact to them
- Create places to connect without language, by doing sports or art together: such activities need to be made more known and public

- Politics need to be pushed more, more needs to be demanded from local politicians
- Find ways of empowering refugees to do things by themselves and be more independent, this will facilitate their integration
- Connect existing network of initiatives to a larger network, where more people can be reached and helped and the awareness in society grows → who could start this? In Magdeburg the Uni, Welthaus, Miteinander e.V.? <http://www.miteinander-ev.de/index.php>
- Jobcenter should develop a training system, to enable young refugees to learn and help others by taking care of their paperwork and daily life challenges

3. How can you approach people who don't welcome refugees?

- Always address racism directly, if you witness it
- Try and show people that they will not lose their culture, just by welcoming other people from a different culture → a together is possible
- Find shared interests e.g. in sports
- It will take time to fight prejudices, some will never change their minds, but the more personal contact between refugees and locals exist, the easier it gets to work through existing fears and prejudices
- Create ads in the city center (would need approval by the city) with refugees or multiracial inhabitants - e.g. at a bus stop - where all people would see it, to change the social consciousness

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