

RESPOND

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Global Migration: Consequences and Responses

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Reception Policies, Practices and Responses

Germany Country Report

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Scope

The report focuses on **reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to the current refugee flows** in the selected countries.

WP 4 focuses on **reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to refugee immigration between 2011 and 2017**. Despite efforts to achieve harmonization (especially promoted by the 2016 CEAS and by the ENP), relevant differences exist in this field in the countries that are the object of research. Nevertheless, the definition and scope of “reception” in EU legislation can serve as a common point of departure and a heuristic to grasp the various (possible) dimensions of ‘reception’. E.g. Directive 2013/33/EU points out a number of “*material conditions*” of reception including “*housing, food and clothing provided in kind, or as financial allowances or in vouchers, or a combination of the three, and a daily expenses allowance*” (Art. 2 (g)). The directive also touches upon matters of *education* (Art. 14) and *basic health care* which ought to be provided during the period of reception and formulates criteria for proper *accommodation* (e.g. an adequate standard of living, protecting vulnerable populations, qualified staff, see Art. 18). Even though the time frame of ‘reception’ is not clearly defined in EU legislation there is an implicit definition: reception starts as soon as the border of a given state has been crossed (WP 2) and an application for international protection has been made (WP 3). It ends either with the “effective expulsion” of unsuccessful applicants or with the acceptance of their request for protection (which, in the terminology of RESPOND, makes them subject to ‘integration’, WP 5).

In our **working understanding**, reception refers to the liminal period between the arrival and application for asylum and the decision about the asylum application. As a matter of fact, experiences of reception can either be *protracted* (e.g. due to the prolongation of the asylum process) or *iterative* (e.g. if refugees have been subject to reception measures in other countries in previous stages of their journey). The WP 4 national report will concentrate on measures and experiences of reception in the respective country of arrival and only elaborate on instances of reception in other countries as far as they have an impact on measures and experiences of reception in the country of arrival. For instance, refugees might want to avoid central accommodation centers because of earlier experiences of detention centers. In addition, applicants who have not been granted asylum, but another title of protection, applicants who appeal against the decision or applicants who were rejected and are supposed to leave the country without it being enforced by public authorities remain in the liminal regime of reception.

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Glossary & List of abbreviations

AnKER Centre	Center for Arrival, Decision Making and Return <i>Zentrum für Ankunft, Entscheidung und Rückführung</i>
Arrival Centre	Centre where registration and security checks take place prior to distribution to a federal state <i>Ankunftszentrum</i>
Arrival Certificate	Certificate received upon arrival in the arrival centre, attesting registration of the intention to apply for asylum <i>Ankunftsnachweis</i>
Initial Reception Centre	Reception centre where a branch office of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is located and where asylum seekers are generally assigned to reside for up to 6 months <i>Aufnahmeeinrichtung</i>
Transit Centre	Initial reception centre hosting asylum seekers for a period of up to 24 months, in application of Section 47(1b) of the Asylum Act. <i>Transitzentrum</i>
AIDA	Asylum Information Database
AfD	Alternative for Germany <i>Alternative für Deutschland</i>
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees <i>Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge</i>
CDU	Christian Democratic Union of Germany <i>Christlich Demokratische Union Deutschlands</i>
CEAS	Common European Asylum System
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
DRK	German Red Cross <i>Deutsches Rotes Kreuz</i>
EASO	European Asylum Support Office
EASY	Initial Distribution of asylum seekers <i>Erstverteilung der Asylbegehrenden</i>
EC	European Commission
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights

ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ENP	European Neighbourhood Policy
EU	European Union
GU	Accommodation Centre Gemeinschaftsunterkunft
LGBTQ or LGBTQIA	Queer, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, asexual
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany <i>Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands</i>
UN	United Nations
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VG	Administrative Court <i>Verwaltungsgericht</i>
ZAB	Central Aliens Office <i>Zentrale Ausländerbehörde</i>
WP	Work Package

About the project

RESPOND is a Horizon 2020 project which aims at studying the multilevel governance of migration in Europe and beyond. The consortium is formed of **14 partners from 11 source, transit and destination countries and is coordinated by Uppsala University in Sweden**. The main aim of this Europe-wide project is to provide an **in-depth understanding of the governance of recent mass migration** at macro, meso and micro levels through cross-country comparative research and to critically analyse governance practices with the aim of enhancing the migration governance capacity and policy coherence of the EU, its member states and third countries.

RESPOND will study migration governance through a narrative which is constructed along five thematic fields: (1) Border management and security, (2) Refugee protection regimes, (3) Reception policies, (4) Integration policies, and (5) Conflicting Europeanization. Each thematic field is reflecting a juncture in the migration journey of refugees and designed to provide a holistic view of policies, their impacts and responses given by affected actors within.

In order to better focus on these themes, we divided our research question into work packages (WPs). The present report is concerned with the findings related to WP4, which focuses specifically on **reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses to the current refugee crisis**. Despite efforts to achieve harmonization (especially promoted by the 2016 CEAS, Common European Asylum System, and by the ENP, European Neighbourhood Policy), relevant differences exist in this field in the countries that are the object of research (Austria, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Sweden, UK, Turkey and Lebanon). WP4 will map the policies and practices of reception and humanitarian responses of the afore-mentioned countries and migrants' perceptions, actions and reactions to policies and practices. The main objectives of WP4 are as follows:

- to develop a mapping of policies and practices of reception in the countries being researched;
- to develop a typology of reception policies
- to assess the coherence of these policies and practices with respect to international and EU standard
- to study migrants' perceptions, actions and reactions to policies and practices
- to provide basic information in the area of reception for the development of all subsequent WPs.

The last point will be achieved through an additional comparative report that will be based on the data from individual country reports.

Executive summary

- The report focuses on reception policies and practices in Germany between 2011 and 2018. In the reporting period, Germany has received more than two Million asylum applicants, mainly from Syria, Afghanistan, Iran and Iraq, but also from the Balkans as well as North and sub-Saharan Africa.
- In line with EU legislation (namely Directive 2013/33/EU), the operational definition of “reception” in this report includes a number of “material conditions” such as “housing, food and clothing provided in kind, or as financial allowances or in vouchers, or a combination of the three, and a daily expenses allowance” (Art. 2 (g)) as well as early education and employment measures (Art. 14) and basic health care.
- Within Germany, there are two major legal sources related to reception, i.e. the Asylum Act (*Asylgesetz*) and the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*). The Asylum Act outlines the process under which asylum is applied for and granted in Germany. The Asylum Seekers Benefits Act defines specific government benefits for asylum seekers including monthly payments for living expenses and health care services.
- The crosscutting and multilevel nature of reception fosters an *incoherence of migration policies and practices* within and across different levels of migration governance (European, national, regional, municipal). This fragmentary constellation is reinforced by the federalist and corporatist structure of the German polity and, in effect, leads to substantial insecurity of both asylum applicants and immigration administrators.
- Since 2015, reception policies have increasingly adopted a paradigm of “Integrated Refugee Management” which builds on logics of detention and control and involves a set of punitive measures to sanction non-compliance. The isolationist nature of this approach can severely compromise the capabilities of refugees and entails the risk of impeding *social* and *structural* integration.
- Although speeding up asylum decisions has become a central policy goal since 2015, our data points to many instances of protracted reception, i.e. a continuance of refugees within the reception regime for more than six months. An important reason apart from the high numbers of applications in the years 2015 and 2016 has been the frequent relocation of asylum applicants within Germany - “politics of dispersal”.
- The provision of reception practices on the local level relies strongly on multi-actor networks including administrators and representatives of educational institutions, NGOs as well as employer associations. On the upside, these networks are flexible and can respond quickly to pull resources across a great spectrum of agencies and specialists and facilitate data sharing and expertise. On the downside, the polycentric structure and fragile constitution of these networks may lead to a lack of accountability and transparency.
- Volunteers and charity organizations fill important gaps in reception practices where neither the federal state nor regional states, nor municipalities, provide the services or information needed for refugees. However, volunteers and charities may also perform a negative role of demarcating spaces and setting a culturally rigid, one-directional and paternalistic attitude to the reception of refugees in Germany.
- As a result of the multilevel nature of reception and a high degree of subcontracting, refugee accommodation centers vary considerably in terms of the quality of infrastructure

and personnel (e.g. social workers and security staff). Several of our interlocutors have reported experiences of conflict and tension either between refugees and staff members or among the residents.

- Apart from the overcrowded situation between 2015 and 2016 and the general lack of privacy within accommodation centers, our interlocutors mentioned conflicts based on gender (e.g. different forms of sexual harassment), age (e.g. young vs. old) as well as ethnic or national grounds (e.g. racist assaults on residents from sub-Saharan Africa by other residents). In contrast to dominant public debates in the year 2015, religious differences occurred to be less relevant as a source of conflict.
- Strategies of conflict prevention and resolution include physical separation and mediation. Some administrators and social workers reported that they sought to factor in animosities and conflict constellations when allocating residents within their facility. Since 2016, protection measures to prevent (gendered) violence against women, children and LGTBQI people have increasingly been put into practice.
- Early access to education and employment can be severely restricted as a consequence of the remote location of some accommodation centers and their limited public transport connection between there and urban centers. At the same time, educational measures and work opportunities which are organized within Arrival centers are often more occupational in nature and hardly apt to facilitate early integration.

1. Introduction

The present report examines Germany's reception regime as part of Work Package 4 (WP4) of the EU Horizon 2020-Research Project "RESPOND – Multilevel Governance of Mass Migration in Europe and Beyond". It focuses on an examination of a particular element of the German asylum system, namely the refugee reception regime within Germany in the period 2011 to 2017. This report explores developments at the national and federal level and their interconnectedness with changes on the EU level that occurred in response to managing recent migration movements, particularly since the eventful year of 2015. Since that time, Germany has seen more than a million asylum applicants crossing its borders. The events of 2015 were a catalyst that led to what has been categorized as emergency policy items or "packages" since it was soon clear that the then-existing structures were not adequate to deal with those high numbers of asylum applicants. Since 2015, the bureaucratic and institutional structures were reworked and several laws and amendments were passed that prolonged and made the reception system more arduous and restrictive, which we could also describe as unequal and often unpredictable.

In line with the overall RESPOND research methodology, the present report looks into policy developments whilst examining the perception of migrants subjected to the reception procedures and the role of NGOs and civil society, including their experiences and perceptions, not to mention other government-bound meso-level actors. This analysis shows that the asylum procedure in Germany has become increasingly selective, leading to the categorization and division of asylum seekers at an early stage of the often long process. We explore how these developments – that have widely been legitimated as a means to increase the efficiency of the reception and integration systems and returns – rather contribute to the systematic exclusion of certain groups of asylum applicants, endangering the rule of law and legal protection standards inscribed in international and European declarations and regulations.

An obvious overall framework for this report on reception policies, practices and humanitarian responses is the relationship between federal asylum law and the implementation of legislation amongst the German *Länder*. Germany's federalism structures the field of migration and asylum to a large degree (see El-Kayed and Hamann 2018, Laubenthal 2016). However, the *Länder*, differently shape the living conditions, social situations and reception processes, practicalities and realities of the lives of refugees on a daily basis: from housing to education, from employment to nutrition, from freedom of movement to family reunification, a larger part of the lives of refugees in Germany is in fact dictated by local authorities. The execution of federal law by the single federal states implies that they establish the necessary administrative bodies and regulate all related administrative procedures (Art. 84 §1 Basic Law). Consequently, there is a variety of administrative procedures that reflect the preferences of the different regional governments to some extent.

This complexity is further enhanced by the prominent role of local governments. In fact, according to estimates, between 75% and 80% of federal laws are executed by local administrations (Stoy 2015: 85). Hence, the implementation of federal law may vary considerably across Germany depending on the local administrative practices and regional administrative regulations. This means that reception policies are interpreted and practiced in considerably different ways across Germany, with very many implications for the refugee populations.

The complexity of the system is increased by the complexity of each individual case as well by the reality of different legislation and treatment of asylum applicants, those who are considered eligible for asylum claim and those who are not. For instance, most countries in Eastern Europe now are considered “safe third countries” as are some countries in West Africa (e.g. Ghana and Senegal). On the other hand, a “good prospect to stay” is assumed for refugees from countries of origin with a rate of protection (“Schutzquote”) of more than 50 per cent. In the reporting period, this included Syria, Iran, Iraq, Eritrea and Somalia and was later on restricted to Syria and Eritrea.¹

For most refugees from countries not in direct civil conflict or under foreign military intervention, their situation in Germany is largely precarious. For instance, most asylum seekers from West Africa we interviewed have endured very long protracted states of legal limbo where they are “stuck in reception” for years, never formally or legally, transitioning to the integration phase of their asylum process. This means that sometimes basic rights are suspended or at least curtailed, such as freedom of movement within the country or the possibility of living a dignified life with employment opportunities that fit their skills and the possibility of entering education.

The complexity of the reception regime in Germany demands a multilayered analysis of both *policy* and *practice*, including the subjective experiences and participation of refugees in the reception process. For this reason, we organized this report in two main sections specifically concerned with reception **policy** (section 1) and **practices** (section 2). A brief prelude is offered where we discuss methodologies and sources used for the collection of the material we used in sections 1 and 2.

Section 1 offers a *multilevel perspective* on **policies and legal regulations of reception**. Here we briefly discuss the main tenets of upper or macro-level corresponding in this case to the International and European Regulations from the Geneva Convention to the EU Directive 2013/33 of the European Parliament and of the Council, both of which lay down some of the basic principles for the reception of refugees in EU Member States. There we also detail the meso-level by looking into our national case represented here by the **German national policies and regulations**, the focus of which is on the major legal sources related to reception, namely The Asylum Act (*Asylgesetz* - AsylG) and the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerber-Leistungsgesetz* – AsylbG). Finally, in this section, we turn our attention to the lower levels of reception policy and practices by offering a brief analysis of the **regional and municipal policies and regulations** in Germany. Since it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a comprehensive overview on all 16 regional states, for this section, we will concentrate on Lower Saxony as a focal region and selectively refer to other regional states as contrasting cases.

In Section 2, we turn to the results of our qualitative enquiry of asylum seekers in Germany. In this part of the report, we are concerned in elucidating in particular the **practices or implementation of reception policies** and their impact on the lives of refugees in Germany, but also the reactions of refugees to them. After a brief description of the sample (60 participants) and the geographical parameters of our enquiry (Bavaria, Lower Saxony and Berlin/Brandenburg), we describe a series of “encounters” between asylum applicants and the

¹ Available at: <https://www.proasyl.de/news/ene-mene-muh-und-raus-bist-du-mehr-asylsuchende-von-integrationschancen-ausgeschlossen/> (accessed 27/02/2020).

German asylum system. We begin by describing for instance encounters with state officials, police, local authorities, civil society actors and others in positions of power including translators, lawyers and volunteers. We go to some length to show the self-determinacy and resilience often shown by refugees and to portray this rarely discussed aspect of asylum-seeking. Also important in this section is a description of the interactions between refugees and volunteers of all kinds and their complex relationship. We then move on to more structural interactions such as those involving experiences regarding the fulfilment of basic needs such as housing (central and de-central), nutrition, education and employment. Cutting across these issues, our data reveals a wealth of detail also in terms of gender, age and ethnicity issues, hygiene, privacy, safety and securitization, criminalization, discrimination, racism, disability and altruism, to cite only a few.

We finalize with a brief conclusion and some summarized insights and recommendations aimed at policy makers and other practitioners.

1.1 Methodology and Sources

The current report compiled data from different sources in order to provide comprehensive insights into regulations, policies, practices and experiences of reception in Germany. The part on regulation and policies is based on a document analysis of legislative and policy documents. In a broad sense, *legislative documents* comprise relevant acts of international, supranational, national or (in federative states) subnational law, but also jurisdiction and authoritative administrative orders such as statutes on the protection of vulnerable populations. *Policy documents* can be position papers or resolution proposals and all other forms of written political intervention in debates concerning the reception of refugees. In addition, the report draws from semi-structured interviews with politicians, administrators and executives who are concerned with different dimensions of reception (see below). These interviews are also used to account for the implementation of reception. They are complemented with public statistical data sources on reception as far as these are available. For Germany, the *Asylbewerberleistungsstatistik* offers detailed information on general and particular allowances for asylum seekers whereas the *Integrationskursgeschäftsstatistik* contains data on the participation in early integration measures. It is integral to this report to critically analyse reception policies and institutional practices of reception in the light of subjective experiences of reception. This analysis is based on 60 semi-structured interviews with refugees from various countries of origin who arrived in Germany between 2011 and 2017.

Data has been analysed through a qualitative content analysis approach which combines deductive and inductive elements. In a deductive fashion, categories of analysis were derived from the overarching research question about the match or mismatch of reception policies and practices across various levels of governance (e.g. EU, national, federal, municipal, see Annex III for more details) as well as from the EU reception directive which distinguishes different dimensions of reception such as allowances, accommodation, health care, access to education and legal counselling. In an inductive fashion, interviews with decision makers and executives as well as with refugees were examined for additional themes and categories which have proved meaningful for a holistic understanding of the multilevel system of reception. Regarding the interviews it should be noted that both interviews with decision makers and with refugees were conducted in a context of significant social desirability: executives have a

motivation to portray “their” measures of reception as appropriate and effective and refugees may feel the urge to resort to biographical narratives which support their claim to asylum.

Analysing Reception Practices: A Note on Ethnographic Work in Brandenburg

In order to gain a more comprehensive understanding of actual practices of reception we decided to complement the methodological strategy by intensive fieldwork in Brandenburg and Berlin. We use this data to contextualize insights from the interviews in the sense of a triangulation of results. Our approach to the people we have interviewed has been nothing but open, ethical and respectful. Our researchers fully disclosed their position as researchers first and foremost and have reported what we believe to be first-hand accounts of the reception phase of refugee experience in Germany. However, we are not only researchers but also human beings with emotions and roles that stretch beyond academia. For instance, one of the writers of this report, whilst conducting fieldwork in Brandenburg, also had to consider his position as a local resident of the area, his own position as an immigrant to Germany, his linguistic abilities and shortcomings and even his religious beliefs. His membership in the local football (soccer) club allowed for many insights into the activities of local volunteers for example, but it also placed him in a position of observant-participant since his interactions with refugees taking part in such schemes was inevitably blurred by naturally occurring proximity between people who collectively practice a high contact sport such as football. The geographical location in question is also a place of homogeneity in terms of ethnicity (mainly white former East Germans and some Polish residents) and a voting tendency towards the far right (the AfD has made substantial gains in this region recently). Being an immigrant himself, the researcher in question was often placed in an awkward, if not uncomfortable position as being perceived as some kind of buffer or “intercultural translator” between the newcomers and the locals. In a sense, he became the accepted white migrant who drove a middle-class car, spoke reasonably good German, had a European passport, ate pork, drank beer and is a lapsed Christian. However, being an immigrant from Latin America also made him highly sympathetic to the plight of refugees going through the material and emotional poverty of the reception process. As a father and family person, it was difficult at times to remain impartial when watching the suffering of families and their young dependents without trying to interfere in some way, like offering them some form of material or emotional support. On many occasions, some of the relationships established for the purpose of research quickly developed into friendships, others remained a detached question-and-answer type of exchange. No interview was ever the same. However, there is a general sense in which there is no circumstance in which a researcher working with refugees will ever be immune from the emotional exchanges that occurs when people open themselves up to stories that are often filled with suffering, feelings of discrimination, fear, injustice, physical and psychological abuse but also joy, adventure and hope, all of which inevitably resonate with those who are there to listen.

2. Reception Policies and Legislation: A Multi-level Perspective

Before we can explore the multilevel nature of migration governance in Germany, it is important that we take a short step back and address a terminological distinction between “regulations”, “directives” and “decisions”. According to the EU’s nomenclature, *regulations* have binding legal force throughout every Member State and enter into force on a set date in all the Member States. *Directives* on the other hand, lay down certain results that must be achieved but each Member State is free to decide how to transpose directives into national laws. Finally, *Decisions* are EU laws relating to specific cases and directed to individual or several Member States, companies or private individuals. They are binding upon those to whom they are directed. With this distinction in mind, we now proceed to a brief discussion of international, European and then German national legislation on the reception of asylum seekers.

2.1 International and European Legislation

The Geneva Convention formulates a number of principles for the reception of refugees under the category of “welfare”. It states that “refugees shall be accorded the same treatment as nationals” in terms of allowances, housing and elementary education (Articles 20-23). Furthermore, countries of residence are to acknowledge that refugees cannot turn to their countries of origin for administrative assistance and are therefore supposed to cater to their needs as if they were citizens (Article 25). They should ensure freedom of movement (Article 26) and should not prevent refugees from wage-earning employment, e.g. in order to protect their own workforce (Article 17 – see UN General Assembly 1951).

According to the Directive 2013/33/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 June 2013, the “material reception conditions” of refugees “include housing, food and clothing provided in kind, or as financial allowances or in vouchers” (Article 2g) and sets out to formulate minimum conditions for reception (Article 4). The directive formulates two general principles for member states to provide reception, namely “that material reception conditions are available to applicants when they make their application for international protection”, that they “provide an adequate standard of living for applicants, which guarantees their subsistence and protects their physical and mental health”. With regard to housing, the directive acknowledges different modalities such as accommodation centers or private premises. It emphasizes that housing should be organized in such a way that it takes into account the needs of vulnerable populations, protects the family life of applicants and allows them to communicate with relatives and legal advisors (Article 18). In terms of health care, the directive requires member states to provide “at least, emergency care and essential treatment of illnesses and of serious mental disorders” as well as “necessary medical or other assistance to applicants who have special reception needs, including appropriate mental health care where needed” (Article 19). At the same time, it allows member states to apply for a “medical screening for applicants on public health grounds” (Article 13). As far as employment is concerned, the directive requires member states to ensure access to the labour market for applicants no later than 9 months after the application was filed. At the same time, it allows member states to give priority to EU citizens for “reasons of labour market policies” (Article 15). According to Article 16, “member states may allow applicants access to vocational training irrespective of whether they have access to the labour market”. Likewise, member states are

supposed to grant minors “access to the education system under similar conditions as their own nationals for so long as an expulsion measure against them or their parents is not actually enforced” no later than three months after the application. Furthermore, the directive requires member states to provide preparatory classes and language classes in order to facilitate access to the regular education system (Article 14). Last, but not least, the directive acknowledges the “special reception needs of vulnerable persons” (Article 22). In this definition, vulnerable persons include “minors, unaccompanied minors, disabled people, elderly people, pregnant women, single parents with minor children, victims of human trafficking, persons with serious illnesses, persons with mental disorders and persons who have been subjected to torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence, such as victims of female genital mutilation” (Article 21). All in all, the EU directive takes up the principle of the Geneva Convention that applicants for international protection should receive the same treatment as national citizens. The directive embraces this idea, but qualifies it as follows: “Member states may grant less favourable treatment to applicants compared with nationals in this respect, in particular where material support is partially provided in kind or where those level(s), applied for nationals aim to ensure a standard of living higher than that prescribed for applicants under this directive” (Article 17). As the following section will show, this option of unequal treatment was also applied in the German national legislation.

2.2 National Policies and Legislation

It is beyond the scope of this report to provide a thorough overview of the German asylum law (see Chemin et al 2018 further details). Instead, the focus will be on the major legal sources related to reception, namely The Asylum Act (*Asylgesetz*, AsylG) and the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz*, AsylbG). The Asylum Act outlines the process under which asylum is applied for and granted in Germany. The Asylum Seekers Benefits Act defines specific government benefits for asylum seekers including monthly payments for living expenses and health care services. In the following, the most important provisions for reception in the Asylum Act and the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act will be outlined. Wherever feasible, recent legislative changes and jurisdiction will be discussed, however, not in a comprehensive fashion since the focus of this report is on the interplay between the systemic, institutional and subjective level of the German reception regime.

Reception Regulations in the Asylum Act

According to section 18 of the Asylum Act, a person who expresses his or her wish to apply for asylum to the German border authorities is immediately transferred to the nearest reception authority. Asylum applications have to be filed at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, BAMF). Every applicant over the age of fourteen must submit to measures establishing his or her identity and provide fingerprints. As part of the application process, information such as nationality, number of people, sex and family ties of the applicant will be recorded with the assistance of the “EASY” programme (*Erstverteilung von Asylbewerbern*, “Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers”). This then determines to which regional state (*Bundesland*) and reception center the refugee is sent. According to section 45 of the Asylum Act, the dispersal of asylum seekers within Germany is based on quota (the so called “Koenigsteiner Schluessel”), which is based on the tax revenue and the population of

the German regional states.² In the reporting period (2011 to 2017), the three states with the highest quota were North Rhine Westphalia (21%), Bavaria (16%) and Baden-Württemberg (12%).

After registration, applicants are assigned to a reception center (*Aufnahmeeinrichtung*), where the BAMF branch office is located and where asylum seekers are assigned to reside. Asylum seekers are obliged to stay in the district of the regional state they have been assigned to for a maximum period of 6 months, pursuant to Section 56 Asylum Act. This geographical restriction is known as the “residence obligation” (*Residenzpflicht*). Additionally, there are so-called “transit centers” (*Transitzentren*) or “special arrival centers” (*besondere Aufnahmeeinrichtungen*) that combine reception and deportation facilities where asylum seekers have to stay for a period of up to 24 months (see below). This applies to refugees with a low “perspective to stay”. For unaccompanied minors, a special reception regime is assigned, led by the youth welfare office.

As a rule, the obligation to reside in a reception center or another accommodation center ends if the application for asylum is granted by the Federal Office of Migration and Refugees (Sections 48 and 53 Asylum Act).

Beyond these detailed regulations on residence and accommodation, the Asylum Act also contains provisions concerning counselling, medical care and employment opportunities. According to Section 47 IV, the reception center informs the applicant about his or her rights and duties along with the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act no longer than 15 days after the application and refers the applicants to associations which can provide counselling in terms of asylum law, accommodation and medical care. While they are obliged to reside in a reception center, asylum seekers usually are not allowed to work, but can obtain a work permit if they have been in Germany for more than three months and if the Federal Employment Office (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) grants its approval, e.g. in the course of work preparation measures (Asylum Act, Section 61). Finally, applicants who are staying in a reception center are required to undergo an obligatory health check for communicable diseases such as Tuberculosis (Asylum Act, Section 62).

Reception Regulations in the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act

Eligible for asylum seekers benefits are foreigners whose application for asylum is being processed and who have a temporary residence permit (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*) or those who were not granted asylum and are bound for deportation while the deportation is suspended (*Duldung*, sometimes translated as “toleration”, according to Residence Act, Section 60a) or not enforceable, or those who have submitted a follow-up application for asylum. Eligibility expires with the acceptance of the asylum application or with the (scheduled) date of departure (AsylbG, Section 1). If applicants are granted asylum, they become eligible for social benefits according to the German Code of Social Law (*Sozialgesetzbuch*), just like German citizens. In 2015, major amendments were made to the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act in the course of the so called “Asylum Package I” (see policy background). As a consequence, a number of restrictions were introduced for asylum seekers who are bound for deportation and/or do not cooperate with public authorities. According to Section 1a, they should only receive basic

² <http://www.bamf.de/DE/Fluechtlingsschutz/AblaufAsylv/Erstverteilung/erstverteilung-node.html>

benefits for nutrition and accommodation, which should be provided as benefits in-kind. This aggravation was heavily contested for not being in line with constitutional law (Voigt 2017; Oppermann 2015).

AsylbG Section 3 underlines that asylum seekers should receive benefits in-kind or vouchers for their necessary needs (*notwendiger Bedarf*), which is supposed to ensure the physical subsistence level and includes accommodation, food and clothing. In addition, means are provided for the necessary personal needs in order to ensure the socio-cultural subsistence level, as the following table shows:

Table 1: Amount in Euros Per Asylum Seeker

	Within accommodation center	Outside of accommodation center
Single	135	219
Two adults maintaining a joint household	122 per person	196 per person
Other adults without own household	108	176
Minors between 15 and 18	76	200
Children from 7 to 14	83	159
Children from 0 to 6	79	135

Source: own illustration according to AsylbG Section 3 and Classen 2018.

While Section 3 V holds that the *allowance* for necessary personal needs must be adjusted according to the National Income and Consumption Survey (*Einkommens- und Verbrauchsstichprobe*, EVS), the Refugee Council of Berlin argued that this adjustment was not realized in 2017, whereas the standard rates of the general social security system were raised (Classen 2018: 2). The German Constitutional Court ruled that an unequal treatment of asylum seekers and other recipients of social benefits aimed at securing the level of subsistence is unconstitutional except for “short stays”³.

According to Section 4 AsylbG, asylum seekers are entitled to medical treatment in case of acute illness and pain. Pregnant women and women in childbed are entitled to medical and nursing care. As emphasized in a guideline of the Refugee Council of Berlin, the distinction between acute and chronic disease can be complicated in practice, e.g. in case of Diabetes (Classen 2018: 11). The Social Court (*Landessozialgericht*) of Hessen, for instance, has granted a therapy of Hepatitis C and argued for a wide interpretation of Section 6 AsylbG, which states that specific measures can be taken to secure subsistence and health, based on a case-by-case decision.⁴ In the interpretation of the Refugee Council Berlin, Section 6 AsylbG entitles asylum seekers for various measures of medical assistance such as psychotherapy,

³ BVerfG. Judgment of the First Senate of 18 July 2012 - 1 BvL 10/10 - paras. (1-113), Available at: http://www.bverfg.de/e/ls20120718_1bvl001010en.html. Accessed 27/02/2020.

⁴ LSG Hessen, 11.07.2018 - L 4 AY 9/18 B ER.

interpreter costs for diagnoses and psychotherapy, contraceptives and integration support for disabled children (ibid).

Based on Section 5 AsylbG, reception centers should provide work opportunities (*Arbeitsgelegenheiten*) for asylum seekers to contribute to the maintenance of the facilities or to work for other municipal or public interest organizations. In contrast to regular employment, the basic rationale of these measures seems to be the occupation and utilization of asylum seekers, which is reflected in the symbolic allowance of 80 cents per hour (reduced from 1.05 EUR by the Integration Law in 2016; see Classen 2018, 15). Persons who can work and are not subject to compulsory education can be obliged to work or to participate in early integration measures such as so-called integration courses or preparatory language or vocational training or internship (BANz AT 27.07.2016 B2⁵).

In terms of employment, it is also important to note that asylum seekers with an income or financial assets have to use their own resources before they can receive social benefits. Financial assets are protected up to an amount of 200 EUR and a certain proportion of the income can be kept in addition to the regular benefits. If the income is higher than the subsistence, asylum seekers can be asked to contribute an “appropriate amount” to the costs of their residence in an accommodation center.

2.3 Policy Reform

Within the reporting period (2011 to 2017), migration policies in Germany have undergone significant reform and there is an emerging body of research (mainly from political science and legal studies) which seeks to systematically explore these changes in terms of their historical trajectories as well as their potential future impact (for instance Schmidtke, 2015; Ueffing et al, 2015; Eule, 2016). It is beyond the scope of this report to summarize and evaluate the current state of research here. Instead, some of the most important political conditions and milestones in the reporting period will be highlighted.

As a matter of fact, immigration policy has become one of the most salient policy fields in Germany during the last years, which is reflected in a number of legislative acts (see below) and went along with a deep transformation of political parties. With the so-called *Alternative für Deutschland* (AfD), a new right-wing populist party has entered the fore, which has started as an anti-EU party and since then made a mark with a strict anti-immigration policy and anti-Muslim rhetoric. It appeals to voters who think that the previous conservative political option, the Christian-Democratic Union, has adopted a leftist stance in several policy fields including immigration, which was highlighted by Chancellor Merkel’s decision to open the German borders for refugees and culminated in the political slogan “Wir schaffen das”⁶ (We can do it – see Kolb, 2015). As a consequence of the electoral success of the *Alternative für Deutschland*, other political parties (namely the Christian Democrats and the Liberal Democrats) have embraced a more restrictive stance towards immigration.

5 Available at: https://www.bmas.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/Thema-Arbeitsmarkt/richtlinie-fluechtlingsintegrationsmassnahmen.pdf;jsessionid=74DB5DF14E9D92377AF236E2175B1ABC?__blob=publicationFile&v=2. Accessed 20/02/2020.

⁶ On 31 August 2015, Chancellor Angela Merkel visited a refugee camp near the city of Dresden. After that, she gave a press conference where she used the phrase “*Wir haben so vieles geschafft – wir schaffen das.*” (We have managed so many things — we will also manage this situation) – see Kolb (2015).

Another major policy issue were concerns for domestic security related to immigration, which were triggered by incidents of sexual assault such as in Cologne, debates on high crime rates among refugees and fears regarding Islamic radicalization of refugees. In terms of reception, political debates in 2015 and 2016 focused a lot on interreligious conflicts within accommodation centers and some stakeholders suggested a separation of Christian and Muslim refugees for reasons of minority protection (see Knipp 2015)⁷. This discussion was fuelled by a report from the evangelical Open Doors platform, which held that a majority of Christian asylum seekers would face physical or psychological violence from Muslim refugees, but was also criticized for its selective methodology. Later on, debates on violence protection have concentrated more on other vulnerable groups such as solo-travelling women or LGBTQI persons.

The political debates resulted in some major legislative acts, namely the so-called Asylum Package I and II (“Asylpakete”, 2015/2016), the Integration Act (“Integrationsgesetz”, 2016) and the Law for a Better Enforcement of the Obligation to Leave the Country (“Geordnete Rückkehr Gesetz 2017). The Asylum Packages contain a number of amendments and changes to existing laws as laid out above. Asylum Package I added Albania, Kosovo and Montenegro to the list of safe countries of origin, enabled a longer period of residence in reception centers, abolished the previous announcement of deportations and introduced the concept of a “prospect to stay” (*Bleibeperspektive*), which opens up a number of early integration measures for asylum seekers from particular countries such as Eritrea, Iran, Iraq, Somalia and Syria. Asylum Package II laid the ground for quicker asylum procedures, the cutting of benefits and the abolishment of family reunion for persons with a “subsidiary protection” status. According to the Refugee Council of North Rhine Westphalia, both Asylum Packages reflect a restrictive stance on reception politics, are (partly) incompatible with international law and therefore have met the “vehement rejection” of many human rights organizations (Refugee Council NRW)⁸. The Integration Act allows restricting the freedom of movement of acknowledged refugees: refugees who arrived in Germany after December 1st, 2016 can be required to stay in a particular state for up to three years (*Wohnsitzauflage*)⁹. Furthermore, refugees have to prove integration progress (e.g. language skills and employment) in order to receive a residence permit (*Niederlassungserlaubnis*). At the same time, access to early integration measures (integration courses) and work opportunities is facilitated for applicants with a good prospect to stay. Finally, as its name suggests, the Law for a Better Enforcement of the Obligation to Leave the Country is supposed to establish measures of surveillance of immigrants with the obligation to leave including the utilization of their private data (e.g. from cell phones), residence in reception centers for up to two years and detention.

All in all, these legislative acts reflect a general trend of exacerbating the conditions for reception. The legal changes can be read as a direct response to polemic tropes such as the “exploitation” of asylum law, the alleged preference of asylum seekers as compared to poor

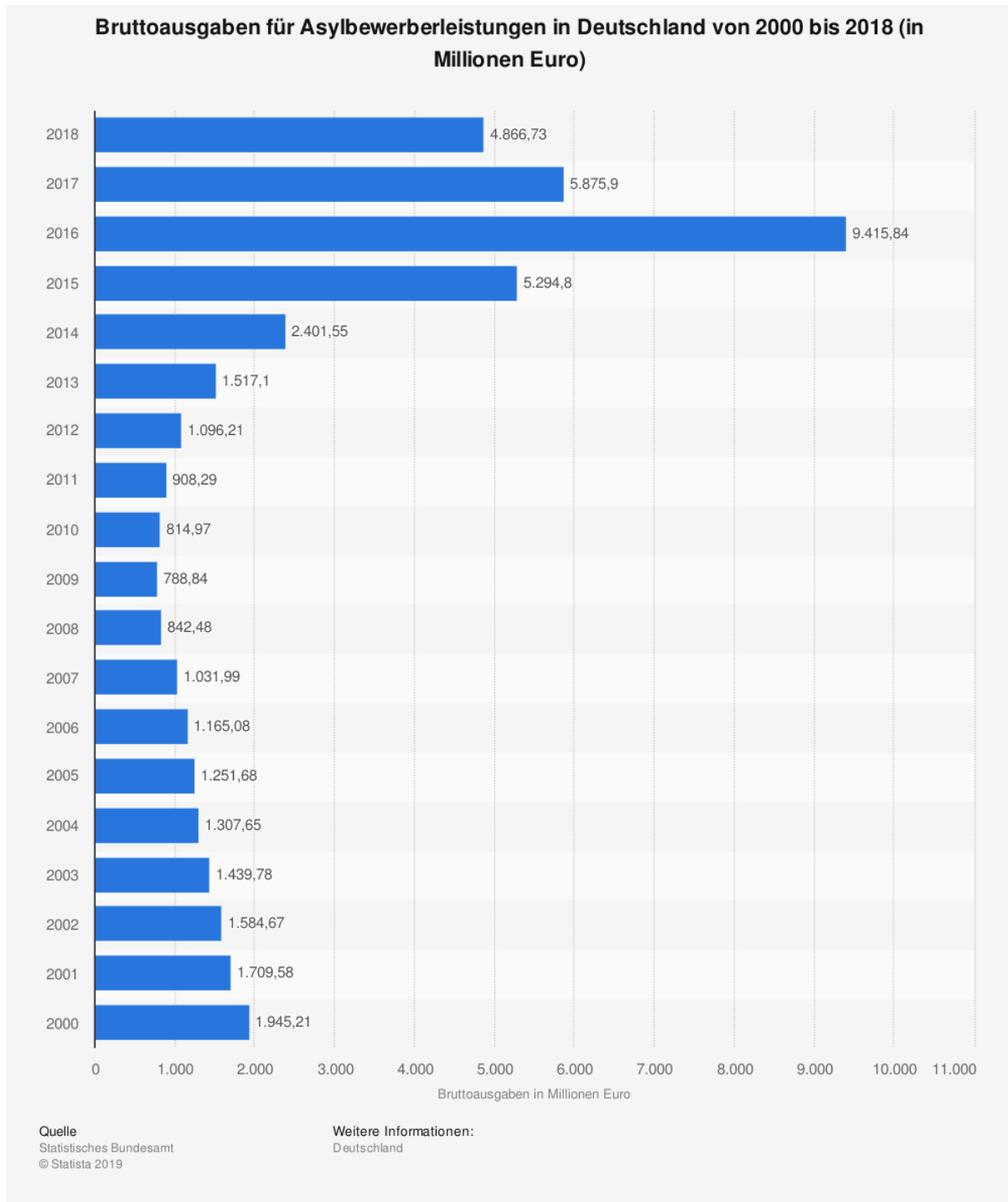
⁷ Such discourses based on intra-ethnic/religious conflict has been spanned even by prominent sociologists such as the Interior Minister and sociologist H.G. Soeffner, during an interview for media outlet Deutsche Welle (see Knipp 2015).

⁸ Available at: <https://www.fmrw.de/de/themen-a-z/asylpakete.html>. Accessed 24/01/2020

⁹ Available at: <https://www.tagesschau.de/inland/muenster-wohnotaufgabe-101.html>. Accessed 24/01/2020.

German citizens and the apparent incapacity of public authorities to enforce the law vis-à-vis rejected asylum seekers.

Table 2: Allowances for Asylum Seekers in Million Euros



Source: <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/786237/umfrage/ausgaben-fuer-asylbewerber-in-deutschland/>

Another recent change was the introduction of a more detailed statistical monitoring of the allowances paid to asylum seekers. These data provide a good quantitative measure for

monetary benefits in the framework of reception. The chart above shows the development of costs for asylum seekers benefits

Within the reporting period, there was a continuous increase of expenditures for asylum seekers benefits from 2011 until 2016 and a considerable decrease of about 36% between 2016 and 2017. By and large, these figures reflect the numbers of applicants and the progress in processing their applications. However, it is noteworthy that the decrease of expenditures between 2016 and 2017 differed significantly across the regional states. In 2017, the gross expenditure for asylum seekers benefits in Germany was 5.875.902.000,- Euro, three quarters of which was used for basic allowances (*Regelleistungen*) and one quarter was used for special allowances (*besondere Leistungen*), e.g. payments connected to health care or early employment. A small share of the gross expenditure was paid by asylum seekers themselves (271.840.000,- Euro, about 4.5 percent). From the overall basic allowance of 468.608.000,- Euro, around 55 percent was paid to recipients in reception or other accommodation centers and around 45 percent was paid to recipients in decentral accommodation.

Another national statistic documents the eligibility and participation for *integration courses*, an early integration measure which combines language training with an overall introduction into the German political system. Persons who have been granted asylum and who cannot prove sufficient German language skills are obligated to participate in an integration course, whereas asylum seekers with a good prospect to stay can, but need not participate before their application has been decided. As the statistics are very comprehensive, this report will focus on a number of core results. In the reporting period, the number of persons who are eligible for an integration course increased from about 120.000 in 2011 to 535.000 in 2016. In 2017, about 377.000 asylum seekers were eligible. As a matter of fact, the eligibility figures reflect the overall numbers of asylum seekers and therefore correspond closely with the asylum seekers benefits statistics above. At the same time it is remarkable that the proportion of persons obligated to participate in an integration course increased from 48 percent in 2011 to 69 percent in 2017. Another shift over time concerns the different forms of integration courses: while between 2005 and 2015 an average of only 10% of attendants would participate in the Alphabetization Course (for persons who have no command of the Latin alphabet), the proportion rose to more than 26% in 2017. This seems to be a reflection of changes in the countries of origin of the participants: in the years 2016 and 2017, almost half of all attendants came from Syria or Iraq.

It is important to note that these new measures of statistical reporting on reception are inherently political: on a substantial level, they allow measuring the expenditures for asylum seekers, e.g. to underline that they are not being advantaged vis-à-vis German citizens in need. On a symbolic level, they manifest the overall social political rationale of “demand and promote” - or as it is known in the UK: “rights and responsibilities” - (*Fördern und Fordern*), which strongly relies on accountability and compliance. In the following sub-section, the focus will be on the implementation of reception politics on the regional and municipal level.

2.4 Regional and Municipal Policies and Regulations

While the decision about asylum applications is a federal responsibility, all other measures of reception are in the responsibility of the regional states (*Länder*) and municipalities. Since it is beyond the scope of this report to provide a comprehensive overview on all 16 regional states, we will concentrate on Lower Saxony as a focal region and selectively refer to other regional states as contrasting cases. As outlined above, asylum seekers are distributed to regional

states according to the state's yearly tax revenue and their overall population. With a proportion of 9.4%, Lower Saxony is in the upper middle field of this system. It is an area state (*Flächenland*, i.e. all the 13 states that are not also city states like Hamburg, Bremen and Berlin) with a predominantly rural shape and a strong agricultural sector. Economically, it is less well off than Bavaria and has been a *Nehmerland* (recipient country) in the federal fiscal equalization (*Länderfinanzausgleich*) in the last two decades.

Asylum seekers in Lower Saxony are assigned by the regional reception authority (*Landesaufnahmebehörde*) to one out of six *reception centers*:

- Bramsche, in the Western part of the state, with a nominal capacity of 1200 beds in 11 residential buildings.
- Braunschweig, in the Eastern part of the state, with a nominal capacity of 973 beds in six residential buildings.
- Fallingbospel, in the center of the state, with a nominal capacity of 4300 beds in two structural complexes of an old military area.
- Friedland, in the Southeastern part of the state, with a nominal capacity of 820 beds in 12 residential buildings.
- Oldenburg, in the Northwestern part of the state, with a nominal capacity of 500 beds in one residential building (an old monastery).
- Osnabrück, in the Western part of the state, with a nominal capacity of 600 beds in one residential building.

Out of these reception centers, Bramsche and Fallingbospel are designed as so-called *arrival centers* (*Ankunftscentren*). These arrival centers are the key instrument of the new paradigm of integrated refugee management ("Integriertes Flüchtlingsmanagement") which aims at speeding up the application process and maintaining control over asylum seekers in Germany – a one-stop shop so to speak. The basic idea of arrival centers is to combine all important steps of the reception process under one roof: registration, health check, asylum application and counsel on early integration measures. One of the main goals is to speed up the application process, particularly for asylum seekers with a good perspective to remain and those with a bad perspective to remain (e.g. from so-called "safe countries of origin"). Therefore, an integral part of the accelerated decision process in arrival centers is the assignment of asylum seekers to four "clusters": applicants with a "very good perspective to remain" (e.g. from Syria, Eritrea and religious minorities from Iraq) are assigned to cluster A. It is envisaged that a (positive) decision of their application is reached in 24 to 48 hours, after which they are directly referred to municipalities and eligible for early integration measures. In contrast, applicants from safe countries of origin are assigned to cluster B. It is envisaged that a (negative) decision on their application is reached in 24 to 48 hours and they receive "return counseling" (*Rückkehrberatung*) which provides information about the remuneration of travel costs and potential measures of reintegration support in their country of origin. Applicants assigned to cluster B are supposed to stay in the arrival center or another reception center until their (voluntary) return or deportation. Cluster C comprises so-called "complex cases" which can be referred to a branch office of the reception authority. The same applies to all "Dublin cases", i.e. to all applicants who have been registered in another EU member state, who are assigned to cluster D.

A number of critical media reports have pointed out major problems in the launch phase of arrival centers such as overstrained staff as well as a lack of medical treatment or trained interpreters¹⁰. A more fundamental critique was formulated by the Refugee Council of Lower Saxony which held that “an asylum procedure which considers the needs of the applicants and which meets the legal requirements can neither be conducted in 48 hours nor in two weeks” (Refugee Council 2018, translation AKN)¹¹. As a consequence, the Refugee Council has founded a network for “Reception Management and Counselling for Asylum Seekers in Lower Saxony” (*Aufnahmemanagement und Beratung für Asylsuchende in Niedersachsen*, AMBA) with funding by the European Union, the social department of the regional state and the UNHCR. The network consists of the Refugee Council, confessional welfare associations and NGOs. Its main goals are a) to offer qualified procedural asylum consultation with a particular emphasis on vulnerable groups, b) to implement self-help groups for the empowerment of female and traumatized refugees, c) to counsel professionals and volunteers who are involved in the reception process, d) to critically observe municipal processes and concepts of receptions and e) to ensure the quality of reception processes through ongoing conversation with administrative agencies and ministries¹².

The most recent development in terms of regional reception management are the so called *AnKER institutions*, i.e. “Centers for Arrival, Decision making, Return”, which were an integral part of the coalition agreement between the Christian and the Social Democrats in 2018. Similar to arrival centers (see above), AnKER Centers are designed to combine different parts of the reception procedure in one spot in order to speed up the decision-making process. In addition, AnKER Centers are supposed to maintain control over the applicants and to enforce the return of those who are bound to leave the country. In contrast to arrival centers, applicants can be made to stay in an AnKER-Center for up to 18 month (families with minors up to six months). They have a residence obligation which allows them to leave the center itself but not the respective city or municipality without permission (Schader et al 2018: 94). It is important to note that the idea of AnKER Centers has been contested from the very beginning on many different levels: while a union of policemen voiced objections against plans to make use of the federal police (*Bundespolizei*) to guarantee security in the centers, welfare associations and refugee councils heavily criticized the detention aspect of the concept and articulated severe concerns that the isolation of asylum seekers would not only be an obstacle to integration but could lead to stigmatization and re-traumatization. Out of 16 regional states, only Bavaria has so far adopted the AnKER model and established seven AnKER-Centers, mainly in former American barracks complexes.

At the same time, representatives of the Association of Administrative Judges and the German Association of Cities and Towns were in favor of the concept as it promised a more consequential enforcement of asylum law and ensured that only persons with a good prospect to stay would be referred to the municipalities (Schader et al 2018: 97). Against this backdrop, Schader et al (2018) have critically examined whether the AnKER model will really turn out to be a relief for the municipalities. While it may entail a short-term alleviation for the municipal budget as fewer refugees would be referred to the municipalities at a later point in time, the

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.giessener-allgemeine.de/regional/stadtgiessen/Stadt-Giessen-Heftige-Kritik-an-Ablaeufen-im-BAMF-Ankunftszentrum;art71,114555>. Accessed 24/01/2020.

¹¹ Available at: <https://www.nds-fluerat.org/themen/aufnahme/erstaufnahme/> Accessed 24/01/2020.

¹² <https://www.nds-fluerat.org/ueber-uns/projekte/netzwerkprojekt-amba/>. Accessed 20/02/2020.

costs for the establishment of appropriate facilities as well as the follow-up costs caused by the long isolation period (lack of opportunities to participate in German everyday life, lack of contacts with volunteers, lack of language practice) would be all the higher (ibid: 102). They conclude that in the light of all legal and integration political concerns, the main rationale of the AnKER concept must be a political one, e.g. to promote a policy of deterrence (ibid: 103).

Despite these plans for integrated arrival and return centers, there has been a broad consensus that in terms of reception and integration, refugees would profit most from decentralized accommodation, i.e. housing in separate apartments. In a policy paper, AMBA (2018: 23)¹³ held that “only decentral accommodation grants refugees the possibility of a self-determined life and the opportunity for social, cultural and political participation.” As a consequence, municipalities are called upon to make decentral accommodation of all asylum seekers a central goal of their concepts of refugee housing and to flank it with appropriate measures of community organizing. In a recent explorative study, Hess and Elle noted that the proportion of decentral accommodation in Lower Saxony was quite high until 2015 (more than 80%), which may reflect the rural shape of the state, but has come down to less than 70% since then (Hess/Elle 2018: 4). They also conclude that decentral housing in conjunction with intensive outreach social work would be the preferred option as opposed to central accommodation (ibid: 38).

An important issue in connection to accommodation centers has been the protection of so called vulnerable groups and the development of more encompassing strategies of *violence protection*. In 2015 and 2016, public debates mainly focused on interreligious conflicts and some parties, such as a police union and the Christian Social Party, argued for a separation of refugees on religious grounds. In a recent pilot study on grounds of conflict in reception centers in Lower Saxony, Nagel and Rückamp observed that the social and administrative staff of the centers denied any sorts of group-related conflict and instead pointed to the situation of existential insecurity which could trigger personal tensions (Nagel and Rückamp 2019). At the same time, the authors could find various instances of racist or nationalist conflict. Since then, protection measures have taken (what some called) a “feminist conjuncture” (Hess/Elle 2018: 17) and highlighted the protection needs of women and children.

These debates resulted in a number of protection guidelines on *various level of governance*: On the federal level, the Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has formulated “minimum standards for the protection of refugees in accommodation centers” in 2016, which is since then being updated (*Mindeststandard* 2018). One year earlier, the (regional) Ministries for Social Affairs and for Interior had come up with a “joint concept for the protection of children and violence protection of women in regional reception centers”, which has since then been updated¹⁴. These concepts provide a preliminary definition of “vulnerable groups”¹⁵ and formulate a number of “recommendations” concerning spatial aspects (e.g.

¹³ Available at: https://www.nds-fluerat.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/2018_01_AMBA_Unterst%C3%BCtzen_Beraten_St%C3%A4rken.pdf. Accessed 24/01/2020.

¹⁴ Available at: https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi0_eKSsMfgAhXC1qQKHVWBxAQFjAAegQIABAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ms.niedersachsen.de%2Fdownload%2F103368&usq=AOvVaw2_mRp5fIR9l5Wl4ackbDdO. Accessed 24/01/2020.

¹⁵ Women, children and adolescents, LGBTQI persons, disabled persons, religious minorities, persons who were subject to human trafficking, rape or torture, persons with severe illnesses (p. 2).

separate accommodation of families, retreat zones for women, option to lock apartments and toilets) as well as the composition and training of personnel (e.g. one FTE position for 75 residents, availability of female contact persons). Finally, some cities and municipalities have come up with their own concepts for violence protection. For instance, the city of Oldenburg has presented a concept in 2016 which compiles preventive and interventionist measures and resonates closely with the protection concept by the regional state¹⁶. According to Hess and Elle, however, municipalities lack the capacity to fully implement these strategies (Hess/Elle 2018: 18).

In a recent study, Gesemann and Roth have explored *success factors* for reception and integration of refugees in German municipalities. Asked for their needs for support (e.g. by the federal or regional level), municipal leaders pointed to early integration measures such as language classes, the extension of educational measures in schools and daycare as well as measures for labor market inclusion. Furthermore, three out of five municipal leaders agreed that better procedures of remuneration of costs on the federal or regional level as well as a better coordination of refugee politics on the regional level had become more important (Gesemann/Roth 2017: 19). Furthermore, two out of three municipalities positively evaluated the quality and degree of networking between different local actors (ibid: 25), an observation which resonates with our interviews with local administrators. Most municipal leaders account for a high or very high level of volunteering, although their proportion has decreased slightly from almost 80% in early 2016 to 60% in late 2016 (ibid: 26). The authors relate this cooling down of voluntary engagement in refugee aid to higher levels of decentral accommodation, which makes it more difficult for volunteers to reach out to refugees. Other studies have pointed to a “sobering” (*Ernüchterung*) of volunteers as a response to (a lack of) recognition and appreciation of their work (Gerlach 2017). Yet another reason may be the transformation refugee aid from a setting of emergency help to a setting of integration measures which require more professional and sustainable approaches (Nagel 2018). In contrast, refugee reception has – at least in the perspective of municipal leaders – gained in overall acceptance over the year 2016 (Gesemann and Roth 2017: 29).

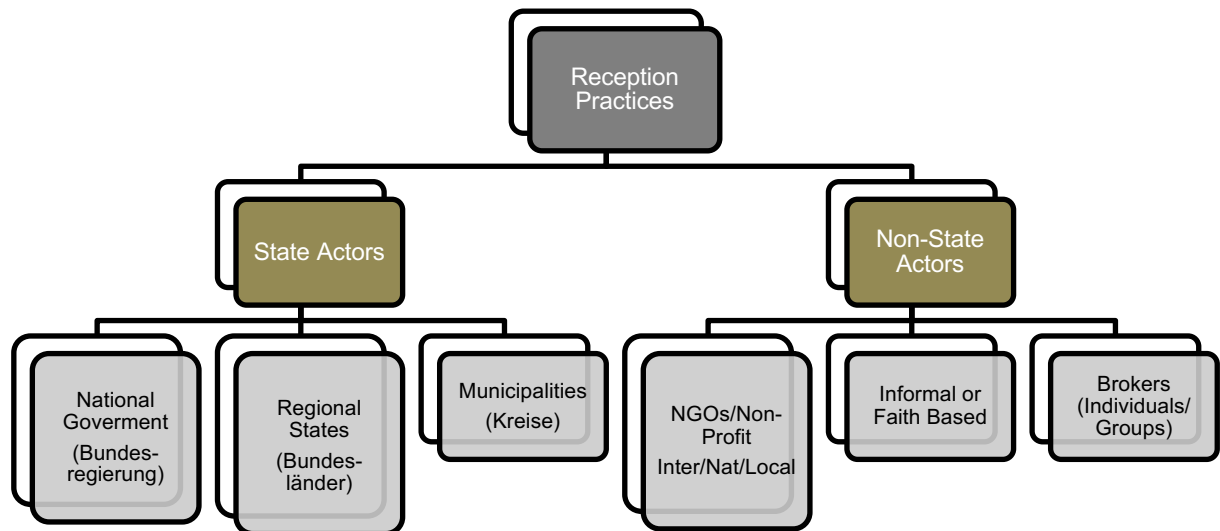
Despite these positive evaluations of refugee reception, some municipalities in Lower Saxony made use of an *immigration ban* (*Zuzugsstopp*) in order to cope with the perceived challenges of reception, namely Salzgitter, Delmenhorst and Wilhelmshaven. Salzgitter, a town of 100.000 citizens, found itself overwhelmed with the chain immigration of 5000 refugees (mainly from Syria), causing the mayor to write a letter to the head of the regional government to prevent new refugees from moving in (with the exception of family reunions). The main arguments were financial burdens and the concentration and segregation of Syrian refugees in some parts of the town, which created challenges to schools and daycare facilities¹⁷. Legally, the immigration ban is handled as a “situational residence obligation” (*lageangepasste Wohnsitzauflage*) in line with the Integration Act (see above). Cities in other German regions such as Pirmasens (Rheinland-Pfalz) and Cottbus (Brandenburg) followed these examples in order to avoid conflicts between locals and refugees. More than a year

¹⁶ “Gewaltschutzkonzept für Flüchtlingsunterkünfte in der Stadt Oldenburg”. Available at: https://www.nds-fluerat.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/2016_08-Stadt-Oldenburg-Gewaltschutzkonzept.pdf. Accessed 24/01/2020.

¹⁷ https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/niedersachsen/braunschweig_harz_goettingen/Salzgitters-Problem-mit-den-Syrern,syrer164.html

later, media reports suggest that the step might have improved the quality of reception and integration of refugees in these cities¹⁸, yet it is not entirely clear if this is a result of the immigration ban as such or of the generous additional funding provided by the regional states.

Figure 1: Actors involved in Reception Practices



Source: Own Illustration

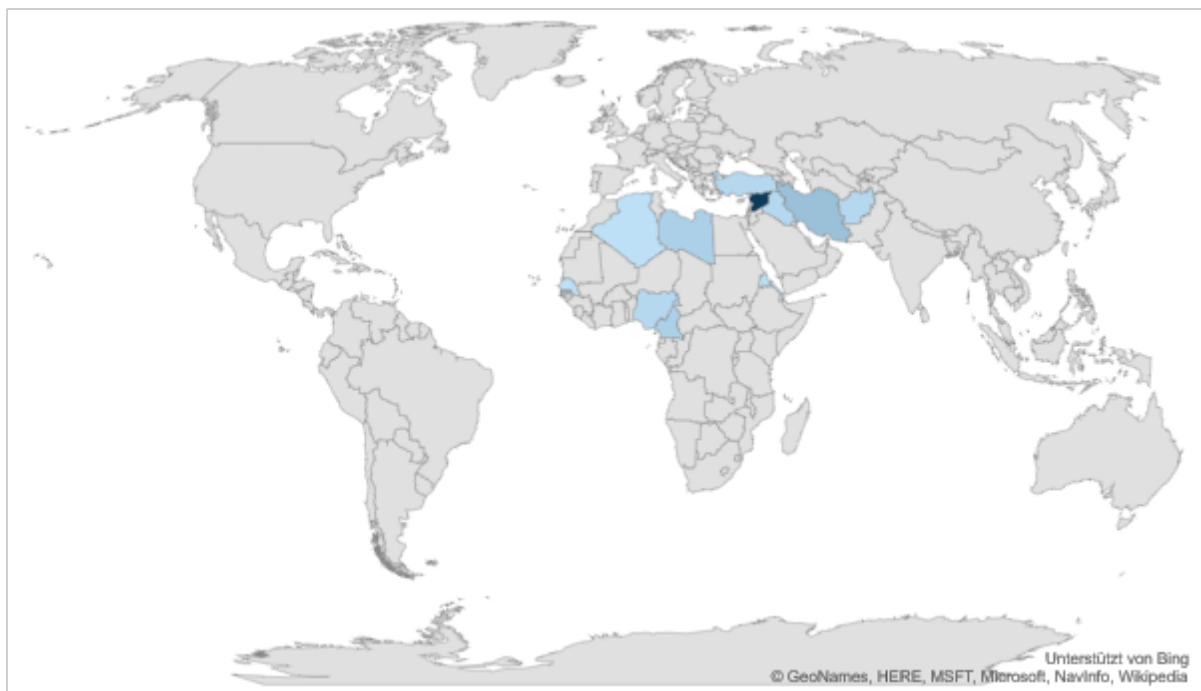
¹⁸ https://www.focus.de/politik/deutschland/nach-dem-fluechtlingsstopp-so-ist-die-lage-in-salzgitter-cottbus-und-pirmasens_id_9991290.html

3. Practices of Reception: A Qualitative Study of Asylum Seekers in Germany

3.1 Brief sample description

The findings in this report are based on qualitative structured interviews with 60 asylum seekers, the majority of whom were men (63%). This sample was comprised of mostly young participants, averaging 30.2 years old (the youngest was 19, the oldest 68). Interlocutors came from 12 countries from the African continent and the Middle East (Afghanistan, Algeria, Cameroon, Eritrea, Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Senegal, Syria and Turkey). The majority of them were from Syria (indicated in darker blue on the map).

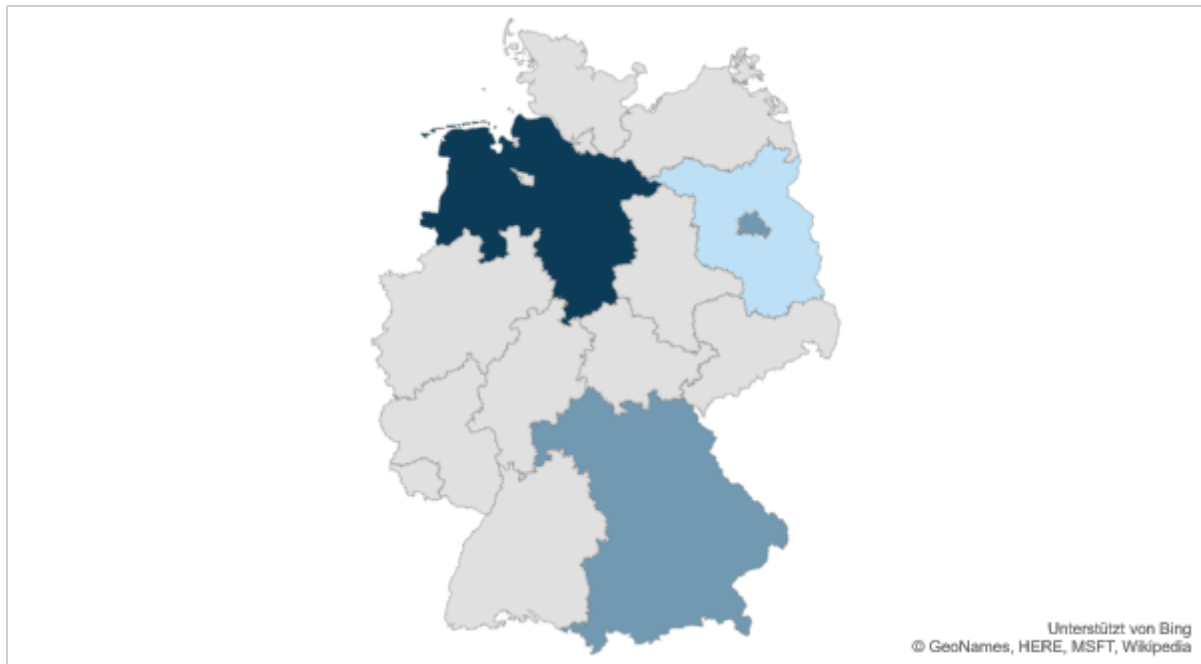
Figure 2: Refugee Sending Countries



Source: Own Illustration

We conducted the interviews in four different regions in Germany: Lower Saxony with particular emphasis on the city and municipality of Göttingen (39% of interviews), Bavaria (19% of interviews), in the city state of Berlin (27% of interviews) and in the state of Brandenburg with particular emphasis on the municipality Teltow Fläming (15% of interviews). We did not aim at any sort of random sample. Instead, we sought to reflect the overall demography of asylum seekers in Germany in the period 2011-2017. That is to say, majority male, relatively young and mostly from the Middle East.

Figure 3: Sample of Regional States: Berlin, Brandenburg, Lower Saxony & Bavaria



Source: Own Illustration

According to their own accounts, participants used four main routes into Europe: 1) from North and East Africa through Libya and across the central Mediterranean by boat into Malta or Italy and surrounding islands; 2) the East Mediterranean route through Turkey and by sea to Greece or Italy; 3) the land route from the Middle East through to the Balkans (mainly Bulgaria, Macedonia, Hungary and Austria) and from there to the North of Europe. There were also those who 4) arrived through airports directly from the country of origin or after a short stop in either Turkey, Italy or France, legally as tourists, only to later apply for asylum a few months after arrival in Germany.

It is important to emphasize that each of these routes imposed particular hardships on refugees and in some cases included long-term stays between the point of departure and their arrival in Germany. Some asylum seekers from the African continent for example have lived in long states of protracted migration lasting years, have crossed many borders and endured the reception policies of a variety of countries before applying for asylum in Germany. Other refugees have had a much shorter migratory route into Europe but not necessarily less perilous or traumatic, such as Syrians being stranded several times in different countries and almost drowning at sea. As the current report concentrates on reception in Germany, it is important to keep this background in mind as we attempt to describe the interaction of refugees with the reception regime in Germany.

Phenomenological accounts of the initial stages of asylum seeking in Germany, henceforth referred to as “reception policies and practices”, are for the most part rather different. As we have mentioned earlier on in this report, there are three levels or tiers we can discern: the systemic, the institutional and the subjective (or phenomenological). We will now focus on the *subjective* experiences of refugees in order to understand how the *systemic* and the *institutional* affect the lives of asylum seekers for better or worse. We will show how asylum

seekers find creative solutions to problems caused by the systemic and institutional forms of regulation aimed at organizing, controlling and discerning asylum seekers from other types of claimants. As we have previously discussed, the Asylum Act and the Asylum Seekers Benefit Act are the cornerstones of the German reception policies. They regulate how, where and if asylum seekers will receive protection, where and how they are going to live and whether they will be able to get an education, remunerated work or even be able to see their families again. But despite this centralized system, every regional state in Germany has its own ways of implementing the reception practices such as temporary accommodation or even controlling the number of places at the local school or kindergarten available for asylum seekers.

Since we have interviewed individuals from a great variety of backgrounds, it is worth mentioning that while some countries are recognized as refugee-producing countries due to armed conflict (i.e. Syria, Afghanistan, and Iraq), others, in particular in West Africa, are not (e.g. Nigeria, Cameroon and Senegal). That alone secludes asylum seekers from West Africa from others from some Middle Eastern countries for example, and as such, we can place their experiences in a different legal context since their chances of being granted asylum or refugee status are severely reduced (see section on the distinction between a “good” and “bad” prospect to stay as a central instrument in the organization of reception). Therefore, we must recognise the initial basic difference between certain groups of asylum seekers regarding their status within the German asylum system. For example, West Africans tend to report an exceedingly long period of protracted migration, taking months, in some cases many years to reach their destination. In these cases, we must also account for the reception conditions of so-called “transit countries” and how those experiences affect the reception conditions in the destination country. The subjective experience of being or becoming a refugee is by no means unique to those recognized by the German legal system given that asylum seekers from non-warring nations will refer to themselves as “refugees” all the same. For that reason, our usage of the term must not be constricted by the legal terminology and as such we pass no judgement on who deserves to be called a refugee. Rather we emphasize the phenomenological aspect of asylum seeking whilst placing that in contrast with the ontological (the legal, economic and political aspects) of the German refugee regime.¹⁹

For our purposes, we use the terms “asylum applicant”, “asylum seeker” and “refugee” interchangeably to denote the experience of displaced individuals who have sought refuge in Germany in general, rather than the legal categories in which the German system places them according to the result of their asylum claims. All interviews referenced in this report have an ID number. This number is composed of the three first letters of the nationality of the participant, followed by a letter indicating the gender of the interlocutor (M for men and W for woman), the place and the date of the interview, such as the example: IRA-M-BER-2011, where BER means Berlin, 20th of November. All interviews were conducted in 2019. A full list of interviews is found in the annex at the end of this report.

¹⁹ It is important to note here that the BAMF created a nomenclature in which they use the following terms to denote specific legal bases for asylum: **Asylum Seekers** are individuals who intend to file an asylum application but have not yet been registered by the Federal Office as asylum applicants. **Asylum Applicants** are individuals whose asylum proceedings are pending and whose case has not yet been decided on. **Persons entitled to protection** and **Persons entitled to remain** are individuals who have received an entitlement to asylum, refugee protection or subsidiary protection, or who may remain in Germany on the basis of a ban on deportation. (www.bamf.de)

3.2 Encounters with State Officials and Civil Society Actors

State officials, police and local migration officers

We begin with one of the most important aspects of reception in Germany which is the first contact between asylum seekers and state officials and other actors in positions of power. By this we mean: the police, immigration officers and other professionals responsible for implementing the reception policies on the ground. Those are the eyes and ears of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*) or BAMF, a German federal agency accountable to the Federal Ministry of the Interior. The first contact can set the “tone” of what is to come. While some refugees gave a differentiated account of their initial treatment in the reception process, others offered us rather disparaging accounts of their experiences before, during and after their asylum application had been filed. Some accounts show indifference regarding the procedure of first registration, interviewing, fingerprinting and second interview, or even court appearances. However, for the most part, asylum seekers tend to cast these first stages of reception in Germany in a rather negative light. That is to say, the insights we received paint a picture of a system that is hard to navigate, steeped in bureaucracy, constraining in terms of allowing for mobility and self-actualization whilst displaying overt discriminatory or racist overtones. There are reports of serious misconduct (including overt racist bias) from translators and officials as well as an apparent non-concern for individual needs and particularities. A woman from Turkey in her thirties was attuned to this problem when she went for her first court interview: *“I was very disturbed by the translator, and I could not utter this at the court, she was a very racist girl, she did not translate many things”* (TUR-W-LSAX1-2308)

When a mistranslation (either purposeful or accidental) occurs, it can lead to profoundly negative experiences for asylum seekers. For instance, a Kurdish interviewee who had fled Turkey in 1994 with the rise of civil war against the Kurds in Northern Iraq was registered with the UNHCR and stayed in refugee camps. Eventually he headed to Germany with the help of smugglers arranged by the self-governing authority of the camp where the Kurdish liberation movement was effective. He arrived in Germany by land route without any knowledge about the details of the journey. His asylum request was rejected apparently due to his political identity. He was informed by BAMF officers that his denial was grounded on him being a member of the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union), an umbrella platform of political parties organized in all four countries of Kurdistan geography. During the interview with us, the man vehemently denied this supposed connection with the KCK and blamed the translator for the misrepresentation of his narrative. Eventually, through lawyers and a long waiting period whilst suffering through a chronic illness, he managed to get his transfer request to Göttingen – where he could get care and support from his own community.

Refugees often mention the feeling that the system treats every applicant the same way, despite the varying conditions and context of each case. This often seems to lead to irrational decisions based on protocol and red tape rather than on humanitarian concerns. Refugees struggle with what is often perceived as a one-sided system that offers little opportunities for feedback. As one asylum seeker in her 30s, an academic from Turkey, points out:

Well, in the process (of applying for asylum in Germany) there is something which downgrades one to zero. The thing they say about complying to the standards is to standardize everyone at zero.

What kind of standards are they?

Well, they explain that they are concerned about equal treatment for everyone, but I don't think so. These are not humanitarian standards. Like, you're a refugee or a refugee candidate. Mm, you have come from the Middle East, so you know that at least this big German state is already protecting you...so here you must learn our rules first. Take this toothbrush and this toothpaste. Wait behind the desk, wait behind the line. No, you can't ask questions until you're given the floor. You must wait. We don't have to make explanations to you, things like that. You cannot go out, you can't go to the toilet without permission, and an officer accompanying you, you cannot go alone (TUR-W-BER3-2412)

The recurring theme of lack of freedoms and the frustration shown by refugees regarding the numerous rules and regulations they must follow on a daily basis, in particular during the reception phase of their asylum application, is felt very vividly in this interview. It is therefore unsurprising that the most-used comparison made by refugees regarding their asylum situation in Germany is between being a refugee and being a prisoner in jail. The analogy of an open-air prison has been mentioned many times over during the interviews with some refugees even going as far as to suggest that sometimes prisons offer a person more dignity and resources than what they feel they receive when they apply for asylum in Germany. It is important to mention, however, that there is a qualitative difference between the accounts of young refugees with good prospects to stay (i.e. Syrians for example) and West Africans for whom the reception period is particularly difficult. The daily lives of West Africans, for instance, are filled with anxieties that quickly become engrained in their every behaviour, sometimes with deeply negative psychological results. A man from Cameroon in his thirties offers a glimpse of how he finds himself in a constant state of vigilance and panic over potential deportation:

...I want to be out of here and find my own place, where I can be. Sometimes, when you get up and you go to pee (going to the bathroom), you find the security staff. You just think, ahh, this man wants to catch me again. So, we are not safe... you find yourself in fear, everyone that touch the door, maybe the police are coming. So, it's not easy (CAM-M-BRA-0707)

For groups who are subsumed under the “low perspective to stay” category, the reception period is perceived as a series of tests in which the participant must succeed at all costs. They often resort to omitting documents, re-applying for asylum several times, frequently changing lawyers, working without permits, and at times physically running and hiding from authorities. These groups in particular perceive the police and security personnel as a threat rather than a safeguard. Police cars, uniforms and sirens can trigger high anxiety and fear. In some cases, the police becomes synonym with deportation. This fear of authorities exacerbates an often-fragile psyche constantly under duress from the large periods of uncertainty and legal limbo asylum seekers in Germany may experience. It is not uncommon for people to hide at the sight of uniformed authority.

However, the problem goes beyond what could be judged as unfounded fears of deportation. There is also a sense that authorities often treat refugees as objects or cases rather than as

persons and holders of basic human rights. When asked about how he felt during his interactions with officials during his reception period, a Syrian man living in Berlin replied:

It makes me angry. It makes me really angry because I can see it that they don't care about it. They are just using us for their...like, just trying to use us for their benefits, you know. All of them to be honest. And that makes me feel like: "come on, I am not an object, I am a person. You know? So, there is nothing in life that gives you the right to decide something for me. Even if I am a refugee. I am still a human being. I want to make my own decisions I have my own life and for example when you hear on the news that a Syrian guy did this, a Syrian guy did that, yeah, of course, every place in the world there is good people and there is bad people don't come to me and tell me "your 'homey' did this!" I don't care about him. He is another person; I am another person. I don't care if we are from the same country or even from the same family. It is not my problem. He did something wrong, but you can't generalize it on every Syrian, you know, that's the only thing that starts me on the politics field you know, let's say (SYR-M-BER-2807)

A man from Libya goes a step further by branding his local immigration officer blatantly as "racist":

...you know the problem in the Sozialamt (I go to) is this guy - he is called N.N.. He's racist... so racist, everybody complains about him. He is just the worst person ever! Just the way he looks at you...so racist! You ask him for a little help, perhaps speak a little English, you know, and he says "no", and then he starts speaking German but very very fast, so it's very hard to understand anything. And he thinks he's right all the time and that you should just listen and shut up. I would like to tell him you know I've studied for 5 years to become a pilot what did you study what do you know? So, I'm better than you in everything...I speak many languages... what do you do? This is what I think inside, but I can't tell him that (LIB-M-BER-2704)

The experience of another refugee, a woman from Nigeria and mother of two children (6 and 8 years), contrasts with the former account. She mentions how volunteers and some of the staff at the accommodation center she lived in were helping her:

My general experience here in Germany, let me say, it has been wonderful because when I was in Eisenhüttenstadt I befriended so many staff... so they were trying to help me learn the language, and with other things, so I was well received. Even in Winsdorf (the other accommodation center) almost all the staff welcomed me. We went out together, we drank coffee together...

By the staff you mean the social workers.

Yes, the social workers but I have been welcomed by all the others as well and as such as I have been having a nice time staying here (NIG-W-BRA-2011)

These differences in perception are in line with interviews we conducted in accommodation centers with meso-level agents composed of administrators and social workers. They suggest that there is a variety of approaches ranging from a humanitarian and enabling approach which seeks to push the bureaucratic boundaries on behalf of the residents and their individual demands to a paternalistic habitus of downgrading and infantilizing refugees which is aligned with complaints about "false expectations" or the "abuse" of resources (see subsection on health care for an example). Likewise, some social workers emphasized that refugees needed

to be re-educated in order to be compatible with the “host society”. Remarkably, such an overtly pedagogical approach could also be found in some migrant self-organizations that underlined the need to help asylum seekers settling in so that they do not spoil the public image of immigrants by deviant behaviour.

Understanding of the asylum process

Asylum seekers are generally provided limited access to legal and linguistic assistance during the reception period. But this is not always the case, and help is not always at hand. Some of the asylum seekers we interviewed barely understood the process at all. As this exchange with a woman from Cameroon reveals:

Did you have any expectations about the asylum process?

I really didn't know anything about it, so I was very afraid. Because when you come to another country like Germany, it is very different from Africa and but the thing that is good is that when you are there you meet people from different countries and they have experience with that so they can help you to explain yourself.

How did they communicate with you?

Always in German. So, I couldn't understand anything. It was very difficult.

They spoke no English with you – nothing?

Nothing. I mean, my English is not good, but I would understand a lot more if they had spoken to me in English.

So, basically, you went through the entire asylum process without understanding anything?

That's right (laughs). No, no, I mean, sometimes they have people there who could explain me things in French. Sometimes they found someone who spoke French, a translator, who can explain. Sometimes, not every time (CAM-W-BRA-2411)

The above passage is exemplary in the sense that many of our interview partners could not explain the procedures they had been put through and the reasons why they were put through them. Some showed a more literate understanding of the asylum process to the point of knowing when to omit information or how to present themselves or how to tell their stories, in particular with regards to the Dublin Convention.

Translators and lawyers

Many of those we interviewed also expressed concerns with the quality of translation work offered to them during their first and second interviews. A number of interview partners reported grave distortions, some unintentional, some malicious. There are few measures of legal aid to help the asylum seeker navigate the complex German asylum regime and all of those interviewed have found the need to seek their own legal representative by paying a lawyer privately. Many changed lawyers several times in the course of the asylum application in lieu of either malpractice or lack of timely response. Lawyers are often shared between refugees. Those law practitioners with a better record will have their contacts circulated amongst the community of asylum seekers, who will then indicate that professional to others.

Lawyers' fees are usually burdensome and often refugees struggle to pay them. As one refugee from Turkey explains:

I've hired a lawyer; a lawyer is very important here. Because it is not possible to go beyond the walls of the bureaucracy and tell an official. However, with the petition of a lawyer who can be taken seriously, the voice of the person really becomes audible. So, I had a lawyer and I was able to finance it from the Solidarity fund of the GEW Trade union. I didn't get any other help during the waiting period, but they give very little money, they give something like 430 euro or something around that. They were giving 360 Euros for the rent too. In other words, this figure is not enough for a human being to afford himself/herself (TUR-M-LSAX4-1109)

What is remarkable here, in terms of the agency of refugees, is that this statement does not only indicate a problem but also a solution: associations such as GEW²⁰ cover (part of) the costs whilst society pays for the lack of legal assistance funded by the state. This is in line with other meso-level interviews we conducted with NGO representatives as well as some social workers, who confirmed that the availability and quality of legal counselling differs remarkably depending on the location of the accommodation facility. A social worker of a big accommodation center in Lower Saxony points out:

That is beyond our competencies. And if people truly want to lodge a legal claim then we look at the homepage of the German Lawyers' Association, enter the postal code and have a list of asylum lawyers within a radius of 100 kilometres. Then they can have a look themselves (translation EC/AKN)

The statement indicates that there is no regular access to legal advice for asylum seekers and that they rely almost entirely on themselves to find appropriate legal representation. Social workers can only provide logistic support whereas in some areas, NGOs organize low-threshold formats of legal consultation or subsidize the costs as shown in the example. Some refugees mentioned that in the past, they sometimes relied on social workers for legal advice. However, this has proven ineffective if not counterproductive since some erroneous advice prejudicated their process.

An important development with regard to legal assistance refers to the latest amendments to the immigration and asylum law where it has been proposed that the BAMF provides counselling and legal assistance to asylum seekers. This is regulated in a new provision "Section 12a", which lays down that the Federal Office provides voluntary and independent legal advice on the asylum procedure in a two-step approach. Firstly, it will offer counselling sessions which give information on the asylum procedure as well as on return procedures. Secondly, it will provide individual counselling sessions which can be carried out either by the Federal Office or by welfare organisations if necessary (AIDA 2019; ProAsyl 2019).

What seems to be a positive measure, however, has already been criticized. Charity organizations and the European Council for Refugees and Exiles have expressed concern that this system creates an inherent conflict of interests and bias in the defense of cases since

²⁰ GEW is the education sector union affiliated to the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB). It organises educators and teachers in schools, universities, early childhood education, vocational training and adult education. The majority of members in GEW are academics.

all legal advice is provided by the same agency in charge of or determining the status of asylum applicants later on (Mouzorakis et al 2019).

Self-determinacy and resilience

The example above shows a capacity for self-determination and at times the defiance of refugees against restrictive measures. A Syrian man recounts how he was able to circumnavigate a rather strict reception regime in Bavaria in order to provide for his family.

So, when we arrived in Munich, they put me in a military camp, and I was not allowed to go outside. They told me that I wasn't allowed to go outside, more than 100 meters from the camp otherwise the police would catch me and make me pay 100 Euros because I was not here legally. But it was ok with me because my child was very sick, and I was looking for a hospital I could take him to get treatment. They were giving him some medicine, but I was not satisfied with that because I could see my son's health was getting worse. So, after two days in the camp we could get out. Through WhatsApp and other social media, I met many people from Iraq and Syria who were living in Berlin and they advised me to come to Berlin and that they would help me because I was in a new world and didn't understand anything. So, it was my choice to come to Berlin because Berlin as I understood at the time there were many Arab people who could help me.

Did you ask to leave the camp or was it they who released you?

No, I asked to leave the camp. They told me I had to stay there for three or four days and that they would later send me to a different part of Germany. But I refused this situation because I should have the right to choose my own situation and I was looking for a place where I could find medicine for my child. So, they told me they would choose for me the place where I should live but I refused to let them do that. Coming to Berlin was my choice (SYR-M-BER2-0308)

The mode of resilience presented by this interviewee is based on his own awareness that he ultimately has the right to freedom of movement even if the German authorities do not recognize that right in the reception phase of asylum applications. It is important to contextualize this particular instance of resilience within our sample. First, it is not an exception. Most refugees will inevitably come in conflict with the geographical limitations imposed on them by the system. Some will act upon it by defying the rule altogether and simply move away. Others will complain about their lack of freedom but not act on it directly or at least try to do so without directly confronting the authorities. Yet others will show indignation to the rules but remain obedient given their fear of any transgression counting against them in the final decision of their asylum process. As a man in his mid-30s from Cameroon, living in a central accommodation center in Brandenburg puts it "*I know it's risky (to move out of here), but I have to try. If I just sit here and let them decide my fate, I will die waiting. I have to take my life in my own hands*" (CAM-M-BRA-0707)

This interlocutor underlines that he is fully aware of the risks of deviant behaviour (moving out without permission) which include the retrenchment of allowances as well as detention or disadvantages for the asylum application. At the same time, the statement is exemplary of how acts of 'subversion' express the agency of refugees.

Experiencing “Welcome culture”: volunteers and solidarity

Despite the negative comments we received regarding German officials and institutions - often perceived as overtly racist or discriminatory – many refugees have positively referred to two aspects of life in Germany, namely the attitudes and actions of local volunteers and NGOs as well as random acts of kindness by local individuals. There is also some distinction made between Germany as a state and its citizens and between state officials and those who work at the accommodation centers and with whom refugees have a more flexible day-to-day relationship. Religious communities and charities, both Christian and Muslim, as well as private volunteers and volunteers’ associations, secular or religiously oriented, are seen as making a positive impact on the lives of refugees in the country. To cite one interesting case, a refugee from Eritrea (born in Ethiopia) was once forced to seek refuge inside an Evangelical Church in Berlin in order to escape a deportation order based on the Dublin Convention. Since he had given his fingerprints in Italy, he was sent a deportation order. As he explains his situation, we notice his gratitude to the people who helped him and an overall impression of Germany’s “Refugees-Welcome” culture:

They found out that I had given my fingerprints in Italy so I waited for two years because after they found out that I had fingerprints in Italy, they told me I had no right to be here to seek asylum in Germany and that I had to go back to Italy. And then, they already decided to return me to Italy. They asked the Italian government, but they didn’t answer – they usually don’t answer, they usually say nothing. So, I hired a lawyer, because I didn’t want to go back to Italy. So, I hired a lawyer I was fighting with the lawyer to get the asylum, but they refused again. They decided to send me back. So, I sought asylum in a church...my lawyer she said I could appeal. She wrote an appeal. But they rejected that appeal. And then they decided again that I should go back Italy. They gave me a certain time to leave the country – voluntarily – which I didn’t...I went to Berlin and walked into a church so there was a church in (a Berlin borough), there was a good man who took those cases. He gave us food and we could stay there. I stayed there...so I left this place and went there. So, he worked with my lawyer and I got in the church. Normally, they (the German police/authorities) don’t come into the church. It is a good thing that the Germans do that if someone gets in the church, I think the police cannot get in there and take you out. As long as I don’t leave the church, so I respect that part of German society. Because in other countries is not like that. Because I was in Libya and I know this kind of thing (ERI-M-BRA-0907)

In Germany, if someone seeks asylum within a church, the secular authorities ought not search for the person within the building. Once under the custody of the religious institution, the refugee may remain in the country so long as he or she remains inside the churchyard. This practice is known as “church asylum” (Kirchenasyl) and was inspired by the American Sanctuary Movement and similar European movements. It was formalized in the Charter of Groningen in 1988 drawn up to help refugees in need followed by the Charter of the New Sanctuary Movement in Europe in 2010. In 2015, the German government and the country’s major Christian churches found a compromise on the issue of church asylum for refugees, agreeing that every single case of a parish offering shelter to refugees would be settled with BAMF and the church boards. More recently, church asylum has been contested by politically motivated groups who pointed to the supposed incompatibility of this practice with German immigration law (see also Fuchs 2018).

Churches are also sought by refugees not only for “protection” from the secular authorities but also as a means to feel more integrated through activities such as choir singing and other music and art-related activities but also through community work, cooking and language learning – to cite only a few aspects. Others will join ethnic Christian or Muslim groups in order to receive support from people in their own community of ex-patriates. A woman from Nigeria describes how she found herself in one such church in Berlin.

In Berlin there is a pastor and his wife, and they welcomed me and...when I had just arrived here in Germany I was going to an Evangelische Kirche in Eisenhüttenstadt. Afterwards, when I was in another town I also attended an Evangelische Kirche there of which I attended for three weeks to a month, something like that, until I got the contact of this church in Berlin. I am a full member in that church now. Yeah, so nothing negative, only positive changes (NIG-W-BRA-2011).

But of course, volunteers are not only organized in faith-based groups and solidarity can be found in a broader context. For instance, a young Syrian woman living in Munich was positively impressed by the solidarity shown towards her:

How was I feeling (when I arrived)? Unstable. Coming to a new country and not knowing anything. Not knowing what to do. The most important thing was to continue my studies. When I arrived to Munich, I heard that the procedure in Bayern are very complicated and it is true. We are seeing until now, the difficult procedure is here. I was having the decision to leave it, but then I stayed here. I didn't know where to stay or what to do. To stay here or leave. What to do.

Positive? The behavior of some Germans here, not some but a lot. They helped me so much. Not only financially but also psychologically. They were families who were coming and saying that I want to help someone Syrian. I met a lot of people like that. They were helping people who they can communicate with. They were coming and asking who speaks English for example and I was speaking to them. Specially that I had my brother who is a minor, he was 9 years old (SYR-W-BAV-1408).

Individual volunteers sometimes go to extreme lengths to help those in need. In Brandenburg, one of our researchers spoke to a woman in her sixties who helps refugees with paperwork, gives them rides, helps them with learning German, sometimes lends them money or does some shopping for staple food for those who cannot afford basic living due to their status. She is often referred to as “The Mama” and has become a common sight in the local Wohnheim. She initiated a vegetable garden project on the grounds of the Wohnheim and attempted to develop a small music/language school within the premises. All this changed over time, however, as the Wohnheim changed administration and she herself lost some of the interest. Nevertheless, refugees refer to this volunteer with great affection and consider her to be a welcome source of support.

Yeah, so actually, I have a friend in a church in Brandenburg, I went there. There is a woman and she helped me a lot. Very much. And there was a woman here, she is a policewoman and she helped us at first – a lot. And she tells us everything and any problem we have we tell her and there are many, many Germans in the village's society groups and there is one woman called Frau N.N., we call her “Mama N.N.”. Actually, when I was going to join the university, I couldn't pay my student fees - 312 Euros so she paid for me and then I paid her back 50 Euro every month and in six months I finished. Then she paid for me the next semester and then I did the same. She is

helping me so much. She lives here at Bahnhofstraße. She helped me so much. And N.N. also. They coordinate everything for me. They helped me find a lawyer and they told me it was better to take this lawyer and especially last year they paid for me the lawyer – 150 Euro – and they bought train tickets for me to go to Berlin, the Monatkarte, before I got the ticket from my university. Yeah, they are my friends, very much (ERI-M-BRA-0907)

Volunteers are valued sources of support and their help can extend from financial (credit, donations) to advice, to being relied upon for translation work, or serving as a reference or guarantor. Sometimes they perform affective surrogate support roles. However, it is important to note that the role of the volunteer may serve two purposes. The first comes from a genuine need to help and a concern with the situation of dispossessed refugees and their plight. Most, though by no means all, maintain a link with local religious charities or churches and as such, there is also a religious impetus behind their good will. On the other hand, volunteer groups tend to demarcate spaces. Whether consciously or otherwise, these demarcated spaces serve as control mechanisms. For instance, distribution of donations to a reception center by the wider community may be centralized and the person in charge is usually a local volunteer, who will charge for such services by placing a small price on every donated item. The result is that most refugees do not benefit from the donations given since it is all kept locked in rooms controlled and organized by such volunteer groups. Very few volunteer initiatives allow for refugees to become self-sufficient or organize their own activities. Mostly, activities are imposed in a top-down manner where schedule, content and rules of conduct are all set by the volunteers themselves. In many cases, the activity in question often infantilizes those taking part by the adoption of a condescending structure of dos and don'ts that, to reiterate, serve the purpose of demarcating spaces and establishing control.

A woman from Cameroon puts that feeling into her own words:

Germany is not liberal. I cannot explain too well but it is like a prison, you cannot do anything, you're supposed to do everything they tell you. Like parents who can tell you: go this way and go that way, do that and do this, you know, and they don't give you any chance to... for me... maybe they let other people. But for me... for us, ... I can say I didn't go more to school, so perhaps I can do nothing about that but people who did that, who are educated, who have more experience than me, I mean people from Africa when they come here they have no chance to develop. You are always being told what you can do and what you cannot do (CAM-W-BRA-2411)

The above statement pertains to certain paternalistic attitudes of volunteers which later may translate into apathy and resignation. In turn, volunteers may gradually distance themselves from refugees given their alleged lack of ambition or gratitude. For instance, one volunteer from Brandenburg mentioned she was giving up her vegetable garden project in the refugee accommodation center near her house. She cited the lack of participation and interest of refugees in her project and how, "although it started really well", numbers of participants dwindled until she resorted to doing most of the work alone. When asked about why refugees were no longer taking part in the project, those who had previously and initially participated mentioned a lack of time (they had started full time employment) but also a lack of interest in that activity in particular. They simply did not enjoy gardening at all and weren't interested in eating those kinds of vegetables (mainly maroons, pumpkins and courgettes), none of which were part of their diets. Some also mentioned how they just joined to make the volunteer happy. What is interesting here is how the volunteer decided on an activity that made sense

to her, from her social and cultural perspective, without really taking into consideration that even when seeking asylum, people still have talents, tastes and preferences that will inevitably differ from the host culture.

One common activity, and a popular welcome practice, is through sports – in particular, football. This is a gendered observation, however, since female refugees in our sample never joined such activities. There are many women's football teams in Germany but refugee women are for the most part absent. With that gender distinction in mind, we found that, in the men's case, contact is often limited to the time of playing the game and ceases as soon as the game ends. Everyone remains within their own sphere and nothing further is shared. In fact, this is not true for all male "refugees welcome" football schemes in Germany, notably in the more cosmopolitan urban centers. Furthermore, this first contact through sports has the capacity to provide refugees with a sense of inclusion and acceptance or "welcome culture" even if the experience itself often does not result in friendships or a deeper contact or understanding between locals and newcomers. There is a certain romanticism on the part of those organizing such schemes, that football can be an overall problem-solving medium. Well intentioned as these programs may be, through football, differences can in fact be exacerbated, spaces demarcated (ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious lines are drawn) and power relations established. For instance, when a more robust dispute over a foul play occur between two German nationals, it is hardly ever condemned by other players. Things are usually resolved with the exchange of a few expletives between the two parts and the game proceeds. When the same occurs between two refugees, Germans tend to resort to punitive actions by threatening expulsion from the football scheme or even calling the police.

All in all, the examples indicate that volunteers have an important role to play in the German reception system. At the same time, it is important to note that well-intended volunteering actions can also have an obscure side that may hinder rather than facilitate the reception process. On the administrative level, the importance of volunteering was reflected in the appointment of social workers as volunteer coordinators ("*Ehrenamtskoordinatoren*"), who are supposed to act as a link between volunteering and professional social service provision. In our interviews, these coordinators observed a decline of volunteering after the first half of 2016 and pointed to several measures of professionalizing volunteers so that they can support asylum seekers more effectively.

3.3 Housing: Central and De-Central Accommodation

Access to accommodation and means of subsistence is a crucial part of the reception process, which later overlaps and may re-enforce or undermine the integration of asylum seekers into German society. As we focus on policies and experiences of reception in this report, we will concentrate on temporary accommodation whilst the asylum claim is processed. Another report on integration will focus on a more longitudinal residence period. This means we have taken into consideration experiential reports referring to accommodation centers, emergency shelters, camps or private flats, or in our jargon, *central* and *de-central* accommodation.

We cannot detach the housing situation from the regime that governs it if we are to understand some of the most basic problems and anxieties which asylum seekers in Germany are facing. As we have pointed out earlier, information such as the nationality, number of people, sex, and family ties of the applicant is recorded with the assistance of the "EASY" programme (*Erstverteilung von Asylbewerbern*, "Initial Dispersal of Asylum Seekers"). This reception regime reinforces the politics of dispersal defined by the re-fashioned Asylum Act. In that, the

destination of an asylum seeker is not based on his or her needs but rather on bureaucratic (financial and political) factors determined by the will of the federal and local authorities. This process often separates families and makes the lives of refugees highly impractical, and very little feedback mechanisms are available for them to object to decisions. Since this system infringes on a basic human right - freedom of movement - it is one of the most contended points of the German asylum system.

Remoteness and social isolation

Although some accommodation centers are in the larger cities (i.e. Berlin), a good number of those visited by our research teams are located in remote rural areas. Some of these places allow for little interaction between refugees and the local community. Some are repurposed old GDR buildings (in case of Berlin and Brandenburg) located in forest areas with weak transport links in the outskirts of towns or in between small villages (see photo below). A refugee from Libya, in his early 30s, describes some of the problems he encountered in being a resident of such a place and expresses his anxiety about living there:

The village where I stayed, in Brandenburg. It's basically in the middle of nowhere, in the forest. The last bus to pass through the place is at 17:00, so you are stuck there, you can't go out and if you want to leave the place if you want to go out you can only visit families and people like that. They allow you three days, and if you don't come back after 3 days, they don't pay you for many weeks, so the rules make the place quite like a prison. You know what I mean? (LIB-M-BER-2704)

The same interviewee points out that the involuntary allocation of refugees into remote areas can produce a profound sense of alienation:

the place is not in society it is outside of society so how can you possibly integrate if you live in a place that is outside of society? You're only connected to the trees, to the sky to nature, but you can only stay in nature for so long... you need people you need civilization around you, you need society around you...that place is completely isolated. Nature itself is not enough. Sometimes you need some time alone. But that is not that. Ok, so I have a pillow and a blanket. So you can sleep there. But you cannot live there. It's a forest. There is no society, you are not connected to the world. You know what I mean? People who should not connect to society... who are those people? Prisoners! Criminals! People like that, if they get connected to society, they will harm us. So they are kept outside. So why do you harm us? At least put us in a place where the buses pass through every hour (LIB-M-BER-2704)

This reflection paradigmatically illustrates the relationship between a remote location and isolation in emphasizing the lack of “civilization” and the stigmatization of outcasts. Another important aspect in terms of social isolation is that refugees are often obligated to move multiple times around the German territory from temporary forms of accommodation to more permanent (though still centralized and highly controlled) residential units or housing facilities. Some refugees complain that this constant moving and uncertainty has caused them to develop health problems or even to make already-existent chronic illnesses much more difficult to treat because of sanitary conditions or how they are set up and where they are located. A 62-year-old Kurdish man from Turkey undergoing cancer treatment describes his experience in the accommodation center.

The doctor said: "Your health condition is not appropriate for living in Heim [accommodation center]. You cannot live in Heim." In Heim, everything was collectively used. The laundry, the kitchen, they were all common. So the doctor said: "You are getting chemotherapy and you might get an infection there." They submitted me a medical report. I took the report to the Sozialamt. The Sozial told me that there was a place in the construction process and as soon as the construction finished, they would send me there. The guy wrote my name on a piece of paper and put the paper on the board and said: "In a month the place will be ready." A month passed, but the place was still not ready. Then he said that there was a building between AOK [Health Insurance Company] and Bahnhof [train station], and they would arrange me a place there...I also found a room...by myself. I went there. I wanted to get that room, but the guy didn't answer. It means that the Sozial didn't let him give me the room (TUR-M-BER2-2312)

In a similar vein, another refugee, a retired army Major from Libya in his 50s, explains:

...they sent me around for a few months. This Wohnheim and that Wohnheim. From Bonn to Dusseldorf then to Eisenhüttenstadt and then to Großbeeren. I have some physical health problems, some operations I had in the past and a really bad shoulder that bothers me a lot. This changing of places, with luggage and all was very bad for my health. I have been in severe pain for months now. I have been to the doctor, but it is not easy. Always sharing the room with others. I'd rather sleep out in the streets. But I can't even get out of the Wohnheim because they don't let you move somewhere else (LIB-M-BRA-2204)

We also interviewed refugees who are forced to live in "special arrival centers" (*besondere Aufnahmeeinrichtungen*) that combine reception and deportation facilities and where asylum seekers must stay for a period of up to 24 months. Here, life is lived in uncertainty and anxiety levels are high. In an exchange with a woman in her mid-twenties from Nigeria, we learn how isolated some of these places are:

The place I live is like a forest! (Laughs)...It's away from the city, like 2 hours from 2 hours from Berlin. 2 hours 30 minutes from Berlin, so it's like a village...it is in Brandenburg. That's why I would like you to visit there. It's like a village. And those people their thinking is something else.

Is the Wohnheim in the village?

The Wohnheim is not in the village. It's outskirts of the village. It's in the forest!

Ok. Is it close to supermarkets, or?

No. During weekend, there's no, there's no bus. You only have bus on Monday to Friday and it ends 7.30, I mean 5.30. The last bus. So, during weekend there's no bus. You don't you cannot get anything. The supermarket is like, how many meters, is far. It's far because I can't check to the town, because the supermarket is in the town...the place is the middle of a forest. Where I don't think Germans, they can live. They can't live there...it's boring... you don't get to see people. We don't get to see anyone; you talk with bears or all these bush animals (NIG-W-BRA-1107)

These examples strongly indicate the infringement of freedom of movement in the course of the so-called residence obligation and show how frequent relocation between reception facilities may foster health problems and impede social integration. The difficulties faced by asylum seekers submitted to these restrictions are multifaceted and can have repercussions in their lives for months if not years to come. Geography is important in many respects

including access to basic language learning, food supplies, medical care, network building, interaction with local people, and a sense of belonging, to cite only the most obvious. More importantly perhaps, refugees who have relatives or friends living in other parts of Germany, and who would otherwise benefit from the support and initial help their own co-ethnic network would afford them, are completely deprived of a period of safe acclimatization into German society that is often provided by the initial welcome offered by these networks, since they later often function as stepping stones into the new society.

A potential consequence of this restrictive isolationist policy is that asylum seekers become utterly dependent on the resources provided by the state, regions and localities instead of being able to rely on their own initiatives and ways of solving problems and going about life in a new country. There is no evidence to suggest that restricting asylum seekers to a geographical location and imposing a heavily controlled regime on their existence is in any way apt to improve their chances of adaptation and integration into the wider society or reduces the burden of asylum on localities and the taxpayer in general. As we have discussed in the policy section, Schader et al (2018) have articulated substantial doubts that these reception models will really turn out to be a relief for the municipalities. They concluded that given the lack of actual benefit for anyone, the main rationale of this concept must be a symbolical and political one, namely to promote a policy of deterrence (ibid: 103).

Decentral housing and the search for privacy

As pointed out in the policy section, decentral housing, i.e. the accommodation in single apartments, is considered to be most supportive for a good reception experience and early integration. Yet even in the most “permanent” forms of centralized accommodation, we find a constant preoccupation with trying to move out and search for private (de-centralized) forms of living. The struggle for a self-sufficient living is palpable but the obstacles are often numerous. Even refugees with a good prospect to stay, such as Syrians or Eritreans, express dissatisfaction with their living arrangements and will try anything in their power to overcome the geographical limitations imposed on their freedom of movement. One man from Syria in his thirties, for instance, explains the efforts he had to take in order to provide a private accommodation for his family in Berlin.

I moved from Marzahn in November 2017 and moved to this place. I met a guy and he said that he could find me a house if I could give 8,500 Euros. So, I saved, and I paid the guy who said the money was going to a state agent who would then give me and my family preference in the queue. After he took the money, he said that we were lucky to get the house. This is how it is now. Refugees now pay this kind of money to people they do not know in the hope of getting a place to live with their families. 8 or 9 months later, after I paid, we found this place. But the place is now very good. We have now four rooms and two bathrooms and I am very happy with this place. But I paid 8,500 Euros for this person to find me this place... and that money is gone. But we have 112 m² and the Job Center pays the rent for us. So, the money was just for someone to find the apartment – nothing else. The Job Center pays about 1,000 Euros in rent and some of the living costs. I pay only for the electricity, water and the Internet. Also, I pay for the maintenance of the building the cleaning of staircases, that stuff (SYR-M-BER2-0308)

This is an extreme case where the interviewee was able to provide a substantial amount of money in order to secure better accommodation. However, this type of brokerage is common. Most refugees seeking to leave centralized accommodation will have to find a local person or a more seasoned asylum seeker, or, as in the example above, a broker who will charge substantial amounts to help them locate a property and then convince the proprietor to rent them the place. This is an issue related to stigma, but also to practicalities. For instance, many asylum seekers will not have the necessary proven income to rent a property, or they will lack many of the essential documents usually asked by a proprietor in order to draft a contract between the two parties including a credit rating check or a guarantor, a valid passport or other ID, a previous private address, a reference, even a bank account.

Apart from these mechanisms of the real estate market, it is important to have in mind that recent trends of reception policy are strongly based on concentration and control of asylum seekers and hence rely on big arrival and reception centers. As a matter of fact, these new strategies of an “integrated refugee management” stand in a harsh contrast to the ideal of decentralized accommodation.

Outsourcing, Securitization²¹, Shared spaces and Conviviality

Some accommodation facilities are administered by the regional state or municipality, but there is a certain trend towards outsourcing. That means that although the locale itself is chosen via the local system, the actual running of the facility is subcontracted to a welfare association or a private for-profit company. Among these, private companies in particular seem to run strict security policies of deterrence. Security staff are often untrained and/or simply insensitive to the needs of asylum seekers such as cultural, ethnic, religious or gender-based customs and needs. They are often described to be physically forceful and overreactive (i.e. calling the police for any minor incident). For instance, there have been several reports regarding the impossibility or inadequacy of cooking facilities in some accommodation centers. This infringes on many important cultural dimensions of life for some of the refugees, who may come from societies where cooking is an essential part of community life. In Germany, there are many safety regulations involving the setting up of communal kitchens and in order to avoid any eventual breach of such regulations, accommodation centers will impose severe limitations as to what and how people can utilize such facilities (when and if they are at all available). This is a source of disputes and, in some cases, it reaches the point where refugees may even be thrown out of the accommodation because they cooked in their rooms in an improvised manner. As one refugee from Syria, a man in his thirties, living on the east side of Berlin reports:

So, we were living in the camp, the whole family in one room. Eight to ten families were sharing the same bathroom and we were not allowed to cook, and we had to eat whatever they brought us from a kitchen on the 5th floor. We were not able to eat the

²¹ We use the term “securitization” as it is used in the international relations literature as the process in which state actors transform subjects into matters of “security”. It is a form of politicization that enables extraordinary means to be used in the name of security. See the work of Barry Buzan, Ole Wæver, and Jaap de Wilde (1998). *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

food. It was all so new to us, the food was so different and (we couldn't even tell whether there was pork in it or not) and the problem is that most of the people who were responsible for the camp were Turkish people and they were not good people. They looked at his wife even though she wore the hijab. He was not allowed to lock the door of the room where he was, so the door had to remain open. One night my eldest child started crying and they came and open the door of room and some other people called the police and the police came and took my children away from me for 6 days. So, I was not able to see my children for a week. Me and my wife went crazy (SYR-M-BER-2807)

It is a common perception by the majority of refugees we interviewed that these restrictions (restriction or impossibility of carrying on religious dietary needs, lack of privacy and frequent intrusions on private space) are most of the time unreasonably harsh and since, from their perspective, they present no benefit to anyone involved, that the true purpose of these punitive and intrusive measures is to keep refugees under control and to force them into an impossibly difficult existence where even returning to their country of origin would be a better option.

These narratives are recurring throughout many of the interviews. Here is another similar episode being recounted by a Syrian-Algerian woman:

So, one day we were cooking, and the smoke alarm went off. They took the food and there was a problem with my husband, and they expelled him from the Wohnheim. I had just gone through an operation and said, "I can't stay alone here with my children I am ill." But they said: "no". If you are ill, then go the hospital and your children to the Jugendamt. Like this (ALGSYR-W-BER-0208)

The passage reports two instances of the interviewee violating the restrictive house rules, first by cooking and second by letting her husband stay in her apartment (they were separated in the first place because of their different countries of origin). It also points to a capacity of resilience of refugees vis-à-vis restrictive accommodation regimes, which force them into deviant behavior. However, even when cooking is allowed, the lack of proper space and equipment hinders the process and causes residents to do it alone in their own bedrooms. As a woman from Nigeria (a mother of two young boys) explains:

We now share two beds, the three of us. But because the space is small...I bought some room appliances, like a cooking stove. I was given a pot, but it wasn't enough. I need a bigger one. Because in the kitchen they don't have anything...it's just the cooker and a sink (NIG-W-BRA-2011)

Life in centralized accommodation means to restrict one's life to the space occupied by a bed. No belongings must be left outside of that space, where they would be in danger of either be stolen by others or taken away by those managing the housing facility. When there is a kitchen for usage, pots and pans, food stuffs and other objects all must be kept in suitcases or piled up in a corner or under the bed. Life is highly contained within that small space. Every day, refugees move all ingredients and cooking pots into the kitchen and then back again into their bedrooms afterwards. Every time they have a shower, towels, shampoo and toothpaste and soap and clothes must be moved into the shower room and back into the bedroom again. The rooms smell of food and damp clothes and deodorant spray. In the following section, we will address how the lack of privacy may translate into social tensions.

Lack of Privacy and Interpersonal Relations

Lack of privacy, basic hygiene and control are all connected subject matters in the sense that they inspire feelings of dehumanization and powerlessness. The production and consumption of food is a good example of how this works.

In connection with the (im-) possibility of cooking and/or the restricted spaces in which life must be inhabited, many of our interview partners mention the poor quality of food as well as the bad sanitary conditions of accommodation centers. In those places where cooking is not allowed, basic meals are offered as replacement, but this policy is often highly criticized by refugees who prefer to cook their own food. A 39-year-old woman from Montenegro, for example, hoped she could soon move to de-central housing because "...you have a house, you can prepare a meal, cook for yourself what you want to eat and here you don't have a place to do that" (BL-M-LSAX-1801)

As a 30- year-old woman from Turkey explains, there are very particular tastes that are culturally embedded and difficult to overcome, and cooking palate is a typical example of those differences

In the heart of Europe, hygiene is zero, toilets are a problem and they do not solve these problems. I went time after time for changing my place, with the report by the doctor, my hair is infested with lice, food is terrible etc... I had to eat out always because the meals were so terrible, and the majority was Afghans there. The meal was made as to their taste and they used Afghan spices in it. These spices made me sick always, I had diarrhea (TUR-W-LSAX1-2308)

At first glance, this passage points to the bad state of hygiene in some accommodation centers and to the inappropriate cuisine. In this case, it is remarkable that there appears to be a cultural sensitivity in preparing the meals (according to the taste of the Afghan majority) which does, however, not match the taste of the interviewee. Hence, at a second glance, the statement underlines the personal and individualist character of asylum seekers and their social and cultural boundaries. It somewhat flies in the face of aspects of the reception policies which take for granted that individuals residing in reception centers should be considered as constituting a "community of destiny" (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) in which it is presumed that they will conduct common activities (e.g. buying groceries, cooking together etc.) which allow them to save costs.

Likewise, a Kurdish woman from Turkey describes the day she was sent, together with her baby daughter, to a squalid place still under construction and lacking in basic hygiene.

The minute I walked in the house, it was so bad. The house was actually a construction site. Soil, sand everywhere. I have nothing with me. Nothing to clean the house with... I looked at the floor and said: how will I live here? He said: "you will stay here". You know, furniture were being done, construction all over the place... I cleaned that sand and tried to clean it up a bit. I stayed there for a week. (TUR-W-LSAX1-2308)

In terms of basic cleanliness of some of these facilities, shower and sanitary facilities are often only cleaned superficially and often by refugees themselves. The floor is often wet and covered in hair and left-over soap. Often, toilet seats are missing and sometimes doors and shower curtains are lacking. Some of the places our researchers visited had no paper towels

or toilet paper. All this varies from locality to locality of course and we can only describe those places we have seen first-hand. Nevertheless, the accounts we have gathered do not paint a positive picture of private life in these spaces. Couples are split from one another and mothers and kids are often left to fend for themselves whilst the father is trying to survive elsewhere. Women from the Middle East suffer particularly high levels of stress with regards to this lack of privacy. They feel exposed to the stares of other men in these open spaces:

They put me in one Wohnheim and he (my husband) on another Wohnheim. So, I asked the Sozial to put us together. My husband said, "this is my wife, and these are my children and we are married and have the papers, I want to live with my wife, she needs my help and she can't stay alone with two kids." I was also pregnant at the time (with our third child), it was a bad situation. I was living in a Sportshalle – me and the two children. It was so bad, so dirty, the people there are always fighting. I had no room it was a big room with many families. It was separated with blankets and many families are cooking there and it was so hot and people there are smoking (ALGSYR-W-BER 0208)

Basic hygiene should here be seen as a threshold to or synonym with basic humanity. The woman in question was affected by what she saw as humiliating practices purposefully designed to repel asylum seekers and make them wish to return to their countries of origin. During the interview she mentioned several times how she was never told where they were taking her, or where she was or how long she was going to remain in those places. The conditions of some of the places to which she was "quite suddenly" taken were, according to her own descriptions, not suitable for a person to live in with any sense of dignity. She felt punished, reproached and humiliated. She explicitly indicates that this entire process, in particular the lack of hygiene of some of these places, is part of a process of purposeful dehumanization. After staying for a week at the place she described as "a construction site", she was then removed to yet another place. When the custodian opened the door, she could not see through because of the amount of cobwebs hanging from the ceiling. The place had been abandoned for a very long time.

The idea of purposeful dehumanization is found in many other accounts. For instance, in some cases, the Wohnheim will provide meals for asylum seekers. These meals are described as inedible by some refugees whose palate is used to other ingredients. In one case, a refugee described his reaction to the food served in his Wohnheim in Brandenburg:

They give you food there, and the dinner is always the same: breakfast is always the same bread with a slice of cheese it's always the same he doesn't change it there the lunch sometimes is ok sometimes you cannot eat it at all sometimes. The same what they put in for breakfast that is the same what they put for dinner bread with cheese. Tea and coffee is fine, when you drink coffee and you don't feel hungry afterwards, you know, I had friends there and they always make jokes about dinner you know, they said they said that maybe they think we are rats because we only eat cheese you know, a lot of jokes are made out of this (LIB-M-BER-2704)

The comparison with "rats" is a way this participant found to express the feeling of dehumanization he's experiencing and how he perceives how those involved in the asylum system see him: unworthy of equal dignified treatment. We use the term "dehumanization" critically in order to address a constant reference in the discourses of refugees to the negative attitudes and behaviours of state actors and executors of the reception regime towards asylum applicants, who often conflate a lack of German language skills of refugees with an alleged

lack of interest in German culture or a deficit in basic civility. In political science, the act of dehumanization is the inferential alienation of human rights or denaturalization of natural rights. In the sense inferred by our interlocutors, dehumanization occurs mostly on a discursive level (e.g., idiomatic language that diminishes the individual to his nationality or his appearance, verbal abuse, etc.), but it can also occur symbolically (e.g., serving only a limited range of poorly prepared food), or physically (e.g., physical abuse of various kinds but also subtle signifiers such as refusing eye contact when speaking). Dehumanization often ignores the target's individuality (i.e., the creative and interesting aspects of their personality) and can hinder one from feeling empathy or properly understanding a stigmatized group of people, which refugees are mostly certainly the case (for an interesting discussion on the psychological theory of dehumanization see Haslam, 2006).

However, the passage above also points to (gallows) humor as a creative mechanism of resilience. In reality, many of these situations may not necessarily occur because of any intentional purpose of deterrence. Rather, an endemic lack of appropriate resources, in small rural localities (but also large cities like Berlin that suffer from chronic lack of resources in areas such as housing and education), dysfunctional bureaucracy, bad planning and the overall unpreparedness of the system to better implement migration governance could easily translate into intentional and individualized malpractices such as those reported here. Nevertheless, we must also recognize the weight of the most recent turn in the politics of asylum and the resultant policies that favour a restrictive (keeping asylum seekers under permanent watch) and punitive (the constant threat of deportation) approach in shaping individual and institutional attitudes and practices towards asylum seekers.

Another important dimension of the accommodation system, which we have already hinted at, is the lack of privacy imposed on residents, which may become a source of tension and conflict. Many of our interview partners who still lived in an accommodation center by the time of the interview expressed concerns about this aspect. In Brandenburg, there is a growing tendency to have three, four or even more (our researchers witnessed up to eight) persons in one single room. The situation becomes sometimes untenable with inter-ethnic and/or inter-religious animosity occurring due to lack of personal space and different lifestyles. A refugee from Libya in his mid-50s explains some of the difficulties faced by those who are obligated to share a small space with people from different backgrounds and generations:

Well, I find it difficult. I suffered a lot so far. Much discrimination from Germans but also from other refugees. In the Wohnheim, a Cameroonian man attacked me with a knife just because I am Libyan. Also, Syrians don't like me because they were badly treated in Libya. So, they all think they can mistreat me because of the experiences they had in the past in my country. But also, I am older and sometimes the other younger people living in my room do a lot of noise, they play videogame until 5 in the morning and use drugs and I say: "stop that now" and they tell me to shut up and things like that. But the Africans are the worst. They drink and fight and sell drugs in Berlin and I must sit there and watch all that. I have had many problems like that with people in the Wohnheim. I do have some friends but my life here is not easy. As I told you, I would rather be out in the streets (LIB-M-BRA-2204)

This sequence illustrates how a lack of privacy translates into social conflict. It is also striking how age can become an important factor in social relations and communal life since, besides all linguistic, cultural, religious and political differences between occupants, conflicts can also

emerge between younger and older refugees who have different physical and psychological needs.

Whereas a spatial separation of women and families within accommodation centers has become the norm, a separation of residents along other diversity dimensions (age, religion, language, nationality) is less common. Sometimes the apartments have their own bathroom but often they must share with others. Hence, depending on the facility, little privacy is afforded, even to women. One refugee describes the situation when she arrived in a temporary shelter in Munich:

When we arrived at Munich, we went to a center that makes transfers for all the refugees. They took all our documents and also asked us about our trip of coming here. Then they took us to a camp in Unterhaching. It was made of tents, having the ground as a base. There were no rooms. The only isolation between you and your neighbors was a piece of wood but the ceiling was opened. We were 7 families from Syria and around 300 men from Africa and Afghanistan and some other families from Africa and Afghanistan. We stayed there for 7 months and we were waiting to be transferred to another place. Because they were emptying the camp from the families and want to keep it for men only. It was not suitable for families (SYR-F-BAV-0309)

It is important, however, to contextualize these incidents since there was a phase of overcrowding by the end of 2015 followed by a process of normalization. The overcrowding was experienced by most refugees as the climax of the “refugee crisis”, which quickly pushed accommodation facilities to (and over) their limits and led to the hasty establishment of provisional emergency shelters. Given the emergency character of these developments and the severely overcrowded state of many accommodation centers, it is remarkable that there did not occur more serious conflicts.

Nevertheless, even after the numbers of asylum seekers had decreased considerably, the experiences of women, in particular Middle Eastern women, in these accommodation centers remain largely uncomfortable if not contentious. Because of religious and/or cultural conventions, it is highly inappropriate for men to gaze upon a woman, let alone when she is in her private domain such as her bedroom, where she is often without her headscarf. The account of a Kurdish woman from Turkey exemplifies how this lack of privacy deeply affected her. After what seemed to her repeated random transfers from accommodation centers to private accommodation to other accommodation centers, she was taken to what she describes as a “Bulgarian neighbourhood” inhabited by Romanians, Bulgarians and other Eastern European groups, where day and night, men passing by stared into her curtain-deprived bedroom in which she and her baby daughter were forced to live (TUR-W-BER3-2412)

More serious physical and sexual aggression were also reported. In one case, a Turkish filmmaker in her 30s who found herself accidentally in Germany as the coup took place in Istanbul decided to apply for asylum in order to avoid political persecution in her country. She claims to have been a witness to the murder of the father of an 8-year-old girl who had been raped by a resident of the Wohnheim. The father of the girl was shot by the police during an altercation where he held a knife to an officer as he asked for justice for his daughter. The Turkish woman who reported these events also referred to many more women being harassed and sexually molested, including herself. She accused the managers of the Wohnheim of covering up these incidents and of profiting from refugees. The refugee in question was extremely critical of the entire reception system including the food and sanitary conditions of

some of the accommodation centers she stayed in, describing them as “terrible” and “disgusting” (TUR-M-LSAX2-2008)

According to several accounts we have been given during our field work, of both refugees and professionals working in accommodation centers, alcohol and other harder drugs are consumed on a daily basis and fights are not uncommon, in particular at the weekends. Some of the social workers and administrators in our sample tended to downplay these tensions. One employee of a confessional welfare association even emphasized the pedagogical value of communal living, which would teach the, mostly young male, residents to have a household of their own. At the same time there appears to be a consensus that it is part of the duties of the social workers to prevent or mediate conflicts. Given a staffing ratio of one FTE social worker for 75 residents (in Lower Saxony), this seems to be an ambitious goal.

The costs of refugee accommodation

In principle, refugees with an income or their own financial resources have to cover their accommodation expenditures. Despite the poor quality and the lack of choice, refugees must pay for their beds, e.g. in Brandenburg on average around 194 Euros per person and month which can be paid in cash or by bank transfer. Even when they find another place to live, refugees are tied to the accommodation center they have been assigned to. Not only do they have to cover the costs, but they must keep this information hidden from the administration since asylum seekers whose application is still being processed are not allowed to move anywhere else until a positive decision on their asylum application has been reached. As the asylum process can take years, many refugees take the risk even at the high financial cost and risk to their asylum claim. Often this means collaborating with other refugees and renting a flat or a house from some local person who does not ask too many questions, as some refugees have reported, although it is never that simple and plans to move out usually fall short. However, even when they do succeed in finding private accommodation elsewhere, they must be present to pick up their mail and generally be perceived as still living in the accommodation center. For that purpose, refugees who have moved out regularly stop by to make sure that they are seen by the managers and social workers. In addition, because the Wohnheim is also where most friendships and romantic relationships are made, it becomes a place one always goes back to in order to visit those left behind, in particular fellow countrymen.

3.4 Early Access to Education and Labor Market

Adult language learning & child education

During the reception period, asylum seekers have limited access to education. After the initial three months, they may be allowed to join what is called an “integration course” in a mixture of German language classes that make references to the political, cultural and societal aspects of Germany. Still, some are trapped for years in legal limbo without being able to get an education or learn the local language. The situation of a woman from Cameroon and her young son exemplifies this:

I have a permit to stay. But the thing is too difficult because, like I said, when you cannot explain yourself you cannot do anything. I have a problem with the language and...yeah...but I suppose to let them know first, because maybe they don't know my

situation from now. I don't know. Because when they said that I need to go move to another Wohnheim in (a location in Brandenburg) for example, I said I cannot go there because I have a permit now and I am supposed to live wherever I want. But instead, they want to send me to yet another Wohnheim. I want to have a chance to do something. Because I have been here for 3 ½ years and I never been to school because they said that I didn't have any chance to go to school because you are Cameroonian and so I stayed for three years here, I didn't go to school, I didn't do anything for those three years. When they sent me to Zossen I said: "I cannot go there, because I need to go to school now and maybe have my own place with N.N.. Because my son is 2 years and 3 months now so... that's why (CAM-W-BRA-2411)

The situation of this respondent in particular illustrates a broader connection between a “bad perspective so stay” and the push towards constant displacement (frequent moving between accommodation facilities), which inherently has an effect on the prospects of better education and even job placements since refugees under these circumstances have no chance to settle down long enough to create routines and an environment appropriate for learning and working. In addition, some of the locations are simply too far away from education facilities or potential employers, which exacerbates the lack of access to education and employment.

The problem only increases in intensity when a person has dependents. Since childcare was also not available to her, even if she did manage to find support for German classes, she would not be able to attend them. Usually, underage children have access to primary and secondary schooling. Pre-school age children have access to Kindergarten; however, this is often a struggle since places are very limited. In Berlin, Kindergarten is free; however, capacities are so limited that it is normal for mothers to wait years for a place. As this Syrian mother of three explains:

I look forwards to going to German classes but because I have two kids at home I can't. I can't find Kindergarten for them, but it is so hard. If I had a place for them I would directly to the school (to learn German) – really. There is a kita here (on the other side of the street) but it is full until 2021 (ALGSYR-W-BER-0208)

For those children going to school, the situation is often complicated because schools, especially in the countryside, are not prepared to teach “foreign” children. Language limitations and sometimes lack of sensitivity and adequately trained staff allow for many misunderstandings and setbacks. However, during the reception period, some children may remain in the Wohnheim looking for something to do whilst their parents asylum claim is being processed. In some of the bigger accommodation centers, preparatory schooling is organized on the premises of the centers. In a so-called Arrival Center in Lower Saxony, there are language classes for children but no measures of regular schooling, e.g. in collaboration with neighboring schools. The administrators acknowledge that the lack of schooling violates the principle of compulsory schooling (“Schulpflicht”). They point out that it constitutes a major problem if the asylum procedure takes more time. In another big accommodation center, a staffed play room (“Spielzimmer”) for children aged 3 to 6 has been established, as well as a preparatory school with three teachers who were delegated by the regional State Board of Education (“Landesschulbehörde”). The administrators explicitly welcome that reception centers are exempted from compulsory schooling because they fear that regular schooling could not be properly organized within the center.

Refugees from Western Africa are particularly vulnerable in this respect and often feel disadvantaged vis-à-vis other groups (i.e. Syrians) for not been given a chance to attend language and integration classes. An exchange with a woman from Cameroon shows the implications of that:

I'm not – I was not treated well. First, where they – where the Wohnheim they say no, there's no school. I've – for two years now I've not gone to school.

Since you arrived?

Yeah. I only went to school in (...?) Just for, like-

German classes?

Because I was one the – I went, I paid to twice, and the money was too much for me. I said what will I be paying, they said school is free for some people. So, for me, I don't see – now (...?) is out of the question, because they said they want to integrate those – in my area, there's no school for Cameroonian or African. It's for Syrian. So, for me, I think the basic thing they could have given, for these two year I could have been going to school, even though they don't want me to work or do anything, but that integration course could have been very, very important.

In what sense? In what way?

One of us is going to school.

Why do you think the integration course was important?

It's important – there's no way you can't – I can't go and buy anything. I cannot – If I'm even looking for a job, you need the language. So, there's no way you can do without learning the language.

So, since you arrived here, you were not able to have any work?

There's no school. There's no school, there's no work (CAM-W-BRA-1007)

In this passage, we see how the geographical isolation of the accommodation center she lives in hinders her chances of studying and better adapting to her surroundings. A man from Senegal shares a similar experience. When asked if he took any classes since his arrival in Germany, he replied: *"No, I tried but it didn't work. They didn't accept me. I tried two times, but they said I am not allowed."* This was even before his asylum case was rejected. A few years later and he had still not attended a single German language class and could only communicate effectively in French and some English.

Higher education

Some refugees mentioned to have contacted university professors with the same background as they in order to continue their studies in Germany. In fact, some universities have come to offer specific re-training and adaptation courses for academics who have become refugees. Others give free language classes or accept foreign certificates of completion of secondary education. Thus, the system is not completely closed, and many institutions will offer ways forward. One master's student from Iraq used his contact with a German university in Berlin to help him get into the country despite his precarious situation.

... because it was my first time out of the country and I don't know even how to apply and it was a new story for me but I was lucky that the university helped me actually. They helped me by giving me directions, how to get a visa and also they helped me with the embassy in Baghdad and they said "this person we met him, we know him" they (the Freie Universität Berlin) they helped much and without them I couldn't get the help I needed. Because the problem is that it's so difficult to get the German visa from Baghdad because they don't trust people many people came by getting student visa and then they ask for asylum, so therefore they don't trust people. But because they saw my papers and the university sent many emails to the embassy, so it was quite easy to get the visa...(IRAQ-M-BER1-3007)

This aspect of reception is also witnessed by academic refugees, where universities become an active actor in the immigration and reception process sometimes collide with the federal system vis-à-vis differences in each of the regions. An academic from Turkey explains her situation and that of some of her colleagues in Germany:

I worked in private teaching institutions and worked in relatively precarious jobs, so I don't feel psychologically disturbed because of insecurity because this is something, I know a bit. But it is very uncomfortable for many of my friends because they only worked in academia through all their lives, they had only secured jobs, so they work in such an insecure area in an unfamiliar field for the first time. Secondly, almost all of us started to think of a plan B. It's obvious that how limited the funds are in the academy. A significant portion of the funds we receive are solidarity funds, or some of them are charity funds, even far from solidarity, we think. Therefore, while there are so many German and native German people in the academy or unemployed ones, how long we can sustain more, we are not so sure (TUR-W-LSAX1-2308)

The statement underlines the precarious nature of academic employment as a result of scarce resources. It also shows that the respondent is very aware of the competitive mechanisms which are in place and regards herself to have a competitive disadvantage as compared to "German people". At the same time, she points out that her being used to "precarious jobs in private teaching institutions" may function as a source of resilience as compared to people who used to work in "secured jobs" and now face a high degree of relative deprivation.

Similar to basic education and language learning, the access of asylum seekers to higher education turns out to be heavily restricted. Diplomas and graduate certificates from other countries are rarely fully accepted in Germany. Some try to continue their studies in this period but the way to college and a well-paid employment is fraught with difficulties and bureaucratic barriers. Indeed, other comparative studies in Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Turkey, for instance, found that it is much easier for refugees in Sweden to have access to higher education than in these other countries (see Crul et al, 2017).

Despite these structural disadvantages, the Syrian refugees revealed a much more optimistic evaluation of their educational prospects. As this 20-year-old woman from Syria explains:

I felt so happy and I am still very happy. I want to work on myself and future. The positive incidents are the stuff I did. I did an internship in the medical station in Friedland for one month through Malteser. I did the language courses until B1. There was a three weeks period between the "integration kurs" and the "orientierung kurs" I did and internship in the hospital in Weende. Then I did the B2. I then I started the "ausbildung" in nursing (SYR-F-BAV-0309)

Another Syrian woman, also in her twenties, displays similar positive feelings:

The great happiness (laugh). 2 years in Saudi Arabia waiting for this day. So... Thank God, I don't regret my choice. Like not picking Jordan or so. Something very positive and something very negative? The positive is passing the exam and getting an acceptance. It's all positive (SYR-F-BAV-0911)

These examples underline the considerable significance of the so-called “prospect to stay” for an early participation in higher education or the labor market. While practically all refugees in our sample had to struggle with the accommodation system, the recent policy changes have proved effective in creating a two-class society among asylum applicants, lending a hand to people from Syria and Eritrea and detaining all those with a “bad prospect to stay”, namely people from Western Africa.

Employment and labor market

There are also obstacles if one is to find paid employment during the reception stages. After the initial three months, one may request a work permit. If that is approved, refugees are often employed in local firms. In the case of Brandenburg, this is often in the logistics sector (loading and unloading jobs). In fact, it is difficult to disentangle early access to employment from early access to education, namely language and integration courses. The reason for this is that in the German asylum system, language and integration courses are obligatory (for those with a good prospect to stay) and may lead to apprenticeships, trial periods and what is often called “mini-jobs”. Frequently, refugees point out how they are doing an internship and working many hours a day without appropriate pay. Sometimes, depending on the employer, lunch and snacks are provided and maybe even help towards transportation, but no effective remuneration.

In terms of internships or apprenticeships some companies offer paid training programs whilst others will pay only a symbolic amount that barely covers transportation costs. There is some level of abuse in this regard with some employers making refugees work full hours whilst not remunerating their work, holding out the prospect of full employment after completion of the initial training and acceptance of the asylum claim. When asylum seekers are granted work permits, they can rarely work in the same professions they held in their countries of origin. Bureaucracy and a highly rigid system of certification and tests are often big hurdles for refugees to overcome. A Turkish academic, holder of a PhD, is a case in point. She went to the Social Welfare Office hoping to get a permission to work in her profession in Germany. The constant questioning of her qualifications frustrated her:

I said I have a PhD, so I said I don't think I need Ausbuilding (vocational training), I don't think I need something like that. The officer in charge told me that we don't know if your diploma is valid. Maybe you'll want to go to college again. I mean, you know, it could be something like that, but how can he say that if my diploma is valid or not. You know, in fact, that was the implication, clearly, implying that you were lying, maybe (TUR-W-LSAX1-2308)

As a consequence, sometimes highly qualified job applicants will resort to manual labour (i.e. in warehouse facilities or in delivery firms). The example of man, a journalist from Turkey, shows the crossover between employment and training. He asked for a job opportunity as a

journalist but was offered an internship with a television channel in Berlin. When he asked about the payment, the company told him

...that they are paying 450 Euros. I am still connected to Job Center. I started an internship for three months there now. I will complete one month in January. Actually, it was my first work experience. We say internship but we actually mean work (TUR-M-BER2-2312)

With such a small salary, the respondent must still rely on the job center to provide financial assistance and is thus kept in a state of dependency on social benefits. As the same interviewee mentions,

The Job Center makes me feel very stressed. I have a feeling every time that something would happen to me from the Job Center and they would cut my money and this is a terrible feeling. I don't want to be a Job Center person... (if) I would disconnect from Job Center... I would certainly be more comfortable in my life (TUR-M-BER2-2312)

If the situation is already difficult for younger job seekers, older applicants find it even harder. A Kurdish man from Turkey in his late 60s who suffers from a chronic illness explains this when talking about his willingness to work in Germany:

Have you ever thought of finding a job here?

If someone gives me a job, which is suitable for me, I will work then.

Did you tell this to anyone?

No, I didn't. Sometimes I tell it to myself, to my friends. The lady at the Sozial asked: "When your treatment finishes, will you work?" I said: "Why not? If I am done with the treatment, I will work for sure."

But she said, "What can you do at your age?...You will be retired, who will offer you a job?"

But I want to work right now, if I can find a job that fits me. If I find such a job, I will do it. I am willing to do that. A rolling stone gathers no moss (TUR-M-LSAX4-1109)

The proverb about the rolling stone associates movement with something positive and hence expresses a mechanism of resilience, of endurance that characterises many refugees to whom we have spoken. Implicitly at least, it shows that even those of a more advanced age feel the need to be active. Similarly, when asked about his prospects to remain in Germany long term, a 36-year-old man from Iraq describes how he resorts to volunteering in order not to be idle, despite being in perfectly good health and more than willing to work full time.

The problem is the job. How do I get a job? Because I have been rejected and have no residence permit, only for six months, I am not allowed to work and because I am very energetic I like to work a lot, now I work for free for many German organizations. I take care of animals, I go painting with the German social organizations so I spend a lot of time working with them for free. I am only allowed to work 2 hours per day and I must be paid not more than 0.80 cents of Euro for one hour. So, if I work for those two hours I get paid 1,60 Euros. And even if I want to get a better place to live, no one will accept me because I have been refused permission to stay and most owners want to see at least two years on the permit and because I only have 6 months and have been

rejected I cannot get a place to live with my family and I can't get a job, I can't work
(IRAQ-M-BER2-0208)

Since the refugee quoted above lives in Berlin, it is pertinent to mention the official stance on work during the reception period. The *Landesamt für Flüchtlingsangelegenheiten* (the State Office for Refugee Affairs – LAF) states on their website that

You can do charitable work at your accommodation or for an association even before a decision has been made on your asylum application. These jobs are available through the management of your accommodation, and they will pay you €1.05 an hour for them. You are permitted to earn up to € 84.00 a month this way, in addition to the benefits you receive.

A couple from Serbia describes what an ideal asylum process would look like for them:

If my asylum was accepted I would just have my own apartment...we would work. I would find employment for sure, no social welfare, nothing – I would send our kids to kindergarten, to school, to lead a peaceful life and that's it...I would do my job and I wouldn't need anything from anyone. God gave you luck, your health but you have to earn the money yourself. I don't want welfare or this and that, I just want to work and earn that money. If they would give me an asylum here I wouldn't ask for anything (BL-M-LSAX-0702 and BL-F-LSAX-0702)

The enforced dependency on a welfare system not only displeases those with an already negative view of asylum and immigration in Germany but also asylum seekers themselves, who for most part want to be productive and able to construct a new life for themselves on their own terms and through their own efforts.

Administrators and social workers also refer to early employment as a challenge. A representative of the Regional Reception Authority in Lower Saxony states that although, in principle, asylum applicants could apply for a work permit after three months in reception, this is an exception rather than the rule. A social worker describes the kind of support measures she offers to refugees (help with CV and application procedures, referral to public employment agencies) but criticizes that the system would not leave space for the agency of the refugees themselves: "They feel that they are provided for, but at the same time incapacitated and powerless. And that takes all initiative from them and urges them into a passivity which robs them of their self-esteem and makes them depressed."

Another problem is that this system often pushes people into the shadow economy. A young Turkish man (30 years) discusses how he was forced to resort to illegal employment in order to sustain himself.

I will have the right to apply for a job in February...I try to make my professional life legal; I have two places I work but I am not legal. I even want to write a letter to BAMF actually, that I found a job and please give me the permission so that I can survive. That is a chance for me. I think of doing it (TUR-M-LSAX4-1109)

This is a way refugees find to react against the imposed idleness cast upon them by the system. However, few German employers wish to run the risk of employing workers informally. Thus, asylum seekers often work for other migrants or at least employers who themselves have a migration background, for example in construction sites owned by Polish firms, or in restaurants and fast food stores owned by Turkish or Syrians or in market stalls or as cleaners and cooks in ethnic restaurants. The problem of course is that this kind of employment often

makes refugees vulnerable to further exploitation since they have no rights under this type of employment arrangement. There is no formal contract, no holiday pay, often they do not get paid even half of the national minimum wage and yet have to work long hours. They also run an enormous risk regarding their asylum process since, if discovered, they will face punitive measures that can result in deportation and have severe consequences for their asylum claim.

It is often argued that asylum seekers with a “very good prospect to stay” will have a much smoother path towards employment. After being issued a permit to work, they often find full-time employment with contracts and all the securities afforded by the employment laws of the country. However, even in these cases, we note that the types of jobs available for these individuals is mostly menial and low paid in nature given their level of German and the aforementioned obstacles imposed in terms of academic qualifications. Even when some speak German fluently, their language skills are often judged as not good enough to work in white-collar jobs involving, for instance, customer service or office work.

More importantly, however, after the obligation to stay in an initial reception center and the waiting period have both expired, access to the labour market is granted in principle, but with restrictions. To apply for an employment permit, refugees have to prove that there is a “concrete” job offer. That means that an employer has to declare that the asylum seeker will be employed in case the employment permit is granted, and they have to hand in a detailed job description to the authorities. Furthermore, for a period of 15 months following the registration of the asylum application and the issuance of the *Aufenthaltsgestattung*, the job center usually has to carry out a “priority review” consisting of an examination of whether there is another job-seeker who is suited for the offered position and who has a better status in terms of employment regulations. The consequence is that, until August 2016, priority was given to either German citizens or those foreigners with a secure residence permit. Based on this data, an addendum to the Employment Regulation (*Beschäftigungsverordnung*) turned this rule on “priority review” into an option but it is still in place in parts of Bavaria (11 out of 23 regions), parts of Nordrhein-Westfalen (7 out of 30 regions) and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (see AIDA/ECRE 2019).

Some asylum seekers used to have stable middle-class professions before arriving in Germany. However, they often must accept seasonal, part-time employment to supply their income, often having never done any sort of menial work back in their own country. Doctors will wash dishes and lawyers and architects or even military generals will work in gardening or as assistants in a car mechanics workshop. Many vocational skills are hardly transferable into the German labor market, which has a very particular system of *vocational training*. Hence, often, the way forward during the reception period is to attempt to retrain in another profession whilst showing a willingness to learn and to contribute, in the hopes that this kind of attitude will add points to their asylum claim or at the very least land a more stable job.

Although there are clear labour shortages in many sectors of the German economy, there are anxieties surrounding the employment of asylum seekers, in particular reservations regarding the burdensome bureaucracy associated with employing a refugee, to the extent that potential employers may refrain from hiring an asylum seeker for that reason. Another often-quoted problem is racism and discrimination which are perceived by refugees (but also by outside commentators such as journalists) to be potential barriers to employment. Although none of our interlocutors declared to have become a victim of racism *in the work place*, many respondents in our sample, in particular refugees from sub-Saharan Africa, have reported racism in public places. One woman from Nigeria for instance reports that

the racism is too much. I don't know, maybe because I'm living in a village also, I know that the German people are so racist, they are very, very racist, like where I live, people used to look at you like there's not even – like they never even hear that there is black race. Sometime you pass people who spit, sometimes you pass people who throw things on you. So that aspect alone is really, really bad (NIG-W-BRA-1107)

A woman from Syria reports similar racist behaviour suffered in public:

...sometimes when you are walking in the street old people start looking at you. They are racist and sometimes they even start talking to you. They don't like refugees. For example, they approach you and ask you about something specific. You don't know the answer, so they start saying: yes anyway you came here just to eat, sleep and get money from the job center (SYR-F-BAV-1408)

Many refugees also complain about what they see as inherent racism in the German refugee agencies such as BAMF or the *Ausländerbehörde* or the *Sozialamt* and they attribute many of their difficulties they face to these discriminatory attitudes. However, although refugees often mention racist and discriminatory behaviour in public settings and, in some cases, during the asylum process, we could not find clear cut evidence in our sample to suggest *that individual or institutional racism directly impairs the employment prospects of refugees*. As we have established previously, the asylum system itself seems to create most of the barriers for employment without the need for us to rely on racism to account for the difficulties faced by asylum seekers in the German labour market. Whether this is a case of accidental inefficiency, lack of resources or foresight, or deliberate discrimination, it is unclear.

An online report from AIDA (Asylum Information Data Base 2019) titled “Access to the Labour Market in Germany” distinguishes between the ideal policy plan and the reality faced by asylum seekers on the ground. Despite the limit for access to the labour market being generally only 3 months, asylum seekers are barred from access to employment as long as they are under the *Obligation to Stay in Initial Reception Centers*. The maximum period for this stay is 6 months for most asylum seekers. However, (a) asylum seekers from safe countries of origin are obliged to stay in initial reception centers for the whole duration of their asylum procedures and (b) since July 2017, Federal States may impose a 24-month obligation to stay in initial reception centers with Bavaria and Saxony already having implemented this rule. AIDA argues that this law results in “unequal treatment” since it provides that asylum seekers from safe countries of origin do “not have access to the labour market at all, while other applicants may face serious impediments to accessing employment for periods reaching up to 6 or even 24 months as long as they remain in initial reception centers”. Nevertheless, access to the labour market also has to be granted to these groups of asylum seekers as soon as their obligation to stay in initial reception centers ceases for legal reasons or when they are transferred to other types of accommodation, for instance if the BAMF cannot promptly decide on the application or if the application is deemed manifestly unfounded and an appeal is pending. Asylum seekers are also not allowed to work on a self-employed basis for the whole duration of their asylum procedure, since the permission to pursue self-employment is dependent on a regular residence title. The asylum seeker's permission to stay (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*) does not qualify as such. As a result, AIDA concludes, “access to employment is impossible in initial reception centers”.

3.5 Services and Allowances

In the phase of reception, asylum seekers in Germany are entitled to basic health care (see above). In practice, most procedures from simple consultations at the local GP to surgery are covered by the national health care system which asylum seekers contribute to once they are employed. Yet, there are limitations in terms of mental health, and it is not uncommon for refugees to receive a hospital bill during the reception process. A good example of this is found in the story of a Kurdish male interviewee in his late 60s, who was diagnosed with colon cancer soon after he arrived in Germany. At the time, all medical care, including his operation and chemotherapy sessions, was supposed to be covered during his ongoing asylum case. However, during this time, he had to deal with the bureaucratic problems related to the payments of his medical care, as the Social Welfare Office (*Sozialamt*) refused to cover the costs of treatment. He also complained about his dependency on translators, which complicated his access to medical care or at least slowed down the process.

Several refugees have told us about PTSD symptoms or instances of depression and other mental disorders such as anxiety and panic attacks, but only very few have sought professional help. Many have enquired about where to obtain professional advice but have not followed through with it. The experience of a Cameroonian woman who experienced many forms of abuse during her protracted migration through Africa, including sexual assaults, is particularly poignant. She sought help by going to a hospital in Berlin and they referred her to private mental health professionals, the services of whom she could not afford. Since she was forbidden from working, she could not find the money to pay for the treatment she needed in order to get out of her depression. Another interviewee, a political activist from Turkey explains his situation in these terms, following his exodus from Turkey due to political persecution:

I don't have any health problems, but I want to be treated psychologically. In fact, I'm afraid, but in the sense that I do not know the language and I know that psychologists are very busy, to get an appointment is possible after 6 months or 1 year, and they call you then. Ah, until a year passes, my psychology will be broken already. I mean, until a year waiting for a doctor there. In this sense, we tried to get one or two "terminals" (appointments) but we couldn't. Now, if there's a doctor I don't know, I might have trouble describing myself. When I have a doctor, I know the language, the term is usually 1 year later, or even if you don't know it, it gives you the "Termin" or puts you in the queue after 1 year. This distress is huge (TUR-M-LSAX5-2310)

Besides these more financially-based fears or anxiety with regard to approaching a mental health professional, we also see how language barriers may impede people from seeking help. In addition, the sheer lack of available mental health professionals or even fear on the part of refugees to be stigmatized reduces the chances of treatment.

Apart from the sanitary circumstances and the quality of food (see section on housing) our interlocutors were not very outspoken about the modalities and scope of monetary allowances or benefits in kind they received during the reception period. A young man from Iran provided us with an account of the tense atmosphere at the State Office for Health and Social Affairs (LAGESO) in Berlin, which became an infamous symbol of administrative failure in the year 2015:

We refugees received appointments there. We had to get up at 4am so that we could be there before 7am. The office was far away. There, we sometimes waited until 5pm and did not see an officer. Sometimes, I could see an officer around 1 or 2pm. The

conditions were difficult. The people needed the money to survive and became impatient. I often saw how the security personnel treated refugees in inhumane ways. If someone got out his mobile phone, he was attacked like a foe, so that he could not record a video. We did not have any proof, so the police did not believe us (IRA-M-BER-2011)

The statement underlines that while in theory all asylum applicants are entitled to an allowance to cover their basic needs (see policy section), the modalities of distribution were, at least in the years 2015 and 2016, far from optimal in many cases. Other respondents reflected on the scope of monetary assistance:

Yes, the only source of my money is the State Office. They don't ask us how much money is enough for us. They calculate by themselves, they know that this child needs 180 Euros, this person needs so and so and they have a kind of calculation but they do not ask us how much do we need. But he says that for the family, we are six members, we get about 1,500 Euros. Sometimes this money is enough and sometimes it is not because we have to pay for Kita and everything else and I have to do that with that 1,500 (IRAQ-M-BER2-0208)

Here, our interlocutor reflects critically on the calculation of the allowance which is based on fix rates (lump sums) rather than individual demands.

As far as benefits in kind are concerned, we only have accounts by asylum applicants from Syria who underwent the reception period in Bavaria. Many of them describe an infrastructure of emergency supplies such as tents where warm clothes and blankets could be obtained. In contrast to the above-mentioned example of the LAGESO, they come to a more positive evaluation of services. As one young man says, "The employees were very respectable and nice. No one was mean. In every camp there was a room with a doctor in case you need it and there was another room where you can get used clothes. There was a lot of food." (SYR-M-BAV-0412).

4. Conclusion: Challenges, prospects and policy recommendations

Despite efforts to achieve harmonization of migration governance by the EU, it has become clear that substantial differences in policy exist not only among, but also within EU Member States. To better understand these differences, this report has focused on the policies and practices of refugee reception in Germany, a country that has absorbed a large number of incoming asylum applicants during the so-called “refugee crisis” of 2015 and afterwards.

Within the reporting period between 2011 and 2017, there has been a major change in the position of asylum seekers vis-à-vis the reception regime: from a panic-driven climax of overcrowding numbers and emergency discourses in 2015/16 to what many of our interlocutors perceived as a process of “normalization”. It must be noted that this “normalization” was not only driven by domestic policy reforms alone. Instead, the Turkey-EU deal has proved quite effective in limiting the overall numbers of asylum applicants in Germany and to relieve the reception system. At the same time, “normalization” has become a policy doctrine in itself and is closely associated with a paradigm of “integrated refugee management”, which seeks to regain control based on spatial concentration and a number of punitive measures.

At the beginning of this report, we have defined “reception” as the liminal period between the arrival and application for asylum and the decision about the asylum application. However, as we came to learn through the accounts of refugees themselves, experiences of reception in Germany can extend over many years, thus blurring the sociological or indeed political distinctions of *reception* and *integration* on which the RESPOND project is based. A refugee living in Germany for a few years may not yet have achieved any significant legal status as his or her case (or appeal) is still pending. He or she may well be living a perfectly normal, “integrated” life in Germany and still be a step away from deportation. In that sense, refugees can become “stuck in reception” for a rather long time.

In our understanding, the asylum application is an integral part of the reception process. In this regard, refugees must navigate a variety of bureaucratic stages formed of long waiting times, paperwork, courts, interviews, translators, lawyers, police, immigration officers and other public officials and institutions (Hänsel et al 2020). Their interactions with and experiences of the German reception system at the federal level and, more importantly perhaps, at the local level, offer important insights into the mechanism of the reception regime. Tensions between human rights ideals and European legislation on the one hand and national and regional particularisms on the other are evident in the accounts of asylum seekers we have interviewed in practically every aspect of the reception process: from initial application to housing and education to health care and freedom of movement. The discordance between German reception policies and European regulations is mirrored by 40 infringement procedures against Germany and other 18 Member States by the European Commission in 2015 (European Commission 2015) Germany was also sent administrative letters requesting clarification on compliance with the EURODAC Regulation (Regulation EU/603/2013). In several cases, the European Commission found that Germany did not live up to the European Union’s standards regarding the treatment of migrants/asylum seekers regarding the asylum procedure and the reception conditions through a failure to transpose EU directives into national legislation. More recently, the UNHCR submitted recommendations to both German

and Croatian presidencies of the Council of Europe regarding issues in the reception of refugees in both countries (UNHCR 2020).

Despite its immigration history since the 19th century, Germany can be regarded as a “reluctant” immigration country. In turn, migration policy making has been defensive and erratic for quite a long time. The very term “guest workers” for the early labor migrant to arrive in the 1950s indicates that the right to stay is transitory and based on appropriate behaviour. It purports an asymmetric understanding of hospitality and stands exemplary for a human capital-centred strand of the public discussion of immigration, which is also prevalent in actual debates on refugees compensating for a lack of skilled workers.

Furthermore, the strong federalist structure of the German state fosters an *incoherence of migration policies and practice* within and across different levels of migration governance (national, regional, municipal). Whereas border management and protection (e.g. asylum application) are national responsibilities, reception and integration (in the terminology of RESPOND) are in the general implementation responsibility of the regional states (*Bundesländer*) and in the organizational responsibility of the municipalities. It has been an important result of our analysis that regional states and municipalities differ remarkably in terms of reception practices (e.g. central vs. decentral housing, *Wohnsitzauflage*, monetary vs. material allowances).

The multilevel setting of the German reception system along with the fragmentary nature of migration policy have created tremendous *legal uncertainty*, which contributes to the vulnerability and insecurity of asylum seekers, e.g. with respect to their right to legal advice or to their bodily integrity being affected by the generalization of mass accommodation. While it provides the means for basic subsistence for a high number of asylum applicants, the new reception policy paradigm of an “integrated reception management” severely confines the capabilities of refugees as a) it infringes the freedom of movement for the sake of national control, b) it actively prevents self-subsistence and inclusion in the labor market by maintaining a couple of protective measures and a systemic lack of encouragement and opportunity and c) it does hardly allow for any form of civic participation.

Another major challenge to the implementation of good reception practices in the German case is connected to the *division of expenditures*. So far, the federal state has paid a lump sum to the regional states to cover accommodation and early integration expenses, which has recently been renegotiated (Scholtz 2019). As a consequence, there is a cascade of delegation of organizational responsibility and accountability which can increase the risk of protracted reception and is inefficient in the sense that it entails high transaction costs and a high volatility in the quality of delivered services. Our report brings to light that this system burdens people on both sides of the equation (i.e. refugees and reception professionals), which may translate into bad living conditions and a lack of support structures (council, early integration, participation) and can only partly be compensated by special endeavours of municipalities or NGOs.

The multi-level nature of reception governance in Germany translates into particular social forms of service provision on the local level, where *governance networks* have emerged. These networks can include administrators, churches and welfare associations, trade and labor unions or representatives of big local employers, educational institutions, job centers, migrant self-organizations and other NGOs in a common endeavour to provide measures for refugees in various stadiums of the reception process and to facilitate early integration. While the informal and governance structure of these networks bears the capacity of flexible, quick

and demand-tailored solutions, their strengths can also be thought of as a problem: unlike formal organisations, local reception networks may lack transparency and accountability. As far as they rest on interpersonal relations, they may be fragile and purport vested interests as well as asymmetries of power.

In terms of the actual experiences of refugees, we encountered a significant tension across all of our three focal regions (Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Berlin and Brandenburg). On the one hand, refugees perceive that they are treated individually (as a human rights approach would entail) but on the other, they are categorized and administered according to collective categories of origin from the very beginning. This is reinforced by new strategies of an “integrated refugee management”, which rely on the concentration and isolation of asylum applicants based on their alleged prospect to stay. One consequence of this restrictive isolationist policy is that asylum seekers become dependent on the resources provided by the state, regions and localities instead of being able to rely on their own initiatives and ways of solving problems and going about life in a new country.

It is important to note here that there is no evidence to suggest that restricting asylum seekers to a geographical location and imposing a heavily-controlled regime on their existence is in any way apt to improve their chances of adaptation and integration into the wider society or reduces the burden of asylum on localities and the taxpayer in general. Hence, as sociologists and migration researchers we have to strongly *question the new paradigm of “integrated refugee management”*, not only from a human rights perspective which duly points to the infringement of basic rights within the arrival centers, but also in terms of a lack of effectiveness and efficiency of this approach as far as early integration measures are concerned. In line with Schader et al. (2018), we presume that restrictive measures seem in this case to be deployed as *a symbolical and political tool used to promote a policy of deterrence*.

An important result of our analysis refers to the implications of the new *arrival and reception centers* for the freedom of movement and early access to employment, education and interaction with German people. The situation of some of the refugees we interviewed illustrates a broader connection between a “bad perspective to stay” and the push towards constant displacement (frequent moving between accommodation facilities), which substantially degrades the prospects of better education and job placements since refugees under these circumstances have no chance to settle down long enough to create routines and an environment appropriate for learning and working. Also, some of the locations to which asylum seekers are sent are simply much too remote from education facilities or employers, which in turn exacerbates the chronic problem of lack of access to education and employment. In a similar vein: remote location and social isolation impede early forms of social integration; the new paradigm of concentration and control stands in a harsh contrast to the common sense that as many refugees should move into decentral accommodation as early as possible.

Another important observation which was frequently mentioned by the refugees we interviewed concerns the connection between the *quality of accommodation (including a general lack of privacy and intimacy*, but also bad sanitary conditions) and interpersonal as well as group-related conflicts. Not only can poor housing conditions be a trigger for tension and conflict, but it also purports a negative image of asylum seekers who are seen as deviant and in need of constraint, regulation and punishment (i.e. deportation threats). In this sense, a lack of privacy, basic hygiene and control are all connected subject matters as they inspire feelings of dehumanization and powerlessness, which are aggravated by a tightening of

securitization measures in central accommodation centres. All this leads to these places being constantly compared to by refugees to incarceration units or prisons rather than “homes”.

Through our fieldwork with refugees, we discovered how the continuous *control and paternalistic treatment* of refugees may lead to a state of *apathy, resignation and depression*, a malice which seems to affect or have affected a considerable part of our sampled population. As a matter of fact, paternalism is not confined to official structures, but pervasive in other structures of the reception system, too. For instance, volunteers, albeit having the best intentions at heart, can be overwhelming and infantilizing in the sense that they tend to impose their concepts of a good life on the refugees. In this regard, cultural lenses often distort realities and even well-intentioned actions from the part of civil society actors can turn into superficial, often misguided attempts to “do good”. Volunteers and charity organizations fill important gaps in reception practices where neither the federal state nor the federations or their subservient municipalities provide the services or information needed for refugees. However, volunteers and charities can also limit capabilities by setting a culturally rigid, one-directional and sometimes condescending attitude to the reception of refugees in Germany.

At the same time, we have found different *mechanisms of resilience* throughout the narratives of the asylum seekers we have interviewed, which can be summarized into at least three basic categories: a) subversive and deviant behaviour (not living in the accommodation centers, cooking in one’s room, letting husband stay without permission) to b) constant use of irony and playfulness in describing one’s disadvantaged situation to c) the support of NGOs and volunteers who do make a difference and are indeed important in many aspects of the reception regime.

Based on these conclusions we formulate the following recommendations:

- We strongly recommend to turn away from the reception policy paradigm of “integrated refugee management” as it is neither in line with humanitarian standards nor an efficient instrument to enhance the quality or duration of the asylum process.
- Instead, we encourage to reconsider a system of decentral housing and early self-reliance as envisaged in the so-called Leverkusener Modell.²² There is little evidence that such freedom necessarily results in “ghettoization” or cultural and linguistic isolation from mainstream society or an extra financial burden for localities.
- Regardless of the (central or decentral) mode of accommodation we recommend that greater freedom of movement should be afforded to refugees already at the initial reception stage of asylum claim within the German territory.
- As far as central accommodation cannot be avoided, we encourage all measures to create private spaces. In terms of infrastructure, these may include rooms of silence or options of individual cooking. In terms of organization, it could involve a voice of the residents in the allocation of rooms (e.g. through an elected board or spokesperson).
- Given the high significance of (paid) labor for an experience of self-efficacy and psychosocial well-being and for an expansion of capabilities, we recommend lessening the restriction of early employment and demand a closer collaboration between

²² https://www.deutscher-verein.de/de/uploads/vam/2015/doku/f-9903-15/das_leverkusener_modell.pdf

accommodation centers and local governance networks in order to ensure work opportunities beyond an idea of 'occupational therapy'.

- All dependants of asylum applicants who are subject to compulsory schooling should have access to regular or systematic preparatory education as early as possible. We encourage a critical evaluation of schooling measures in arrival centers in light of a) the average period of residence and b) an assessment of the learning outcomes and their capacity to grant access to regular schooling.
- De-securitization of accommodation centres could potentially minimize not increase conflict between residents. Over use and increase in numbers of poorly trained security staff often have the opposite effect on refugees staying in central accommodation. A sense of living in a prison rather than a welcoming home can affect residents in negative ways, for instance by increasing depressive states and augmenting the abuse of substances such as alcohol, which can exacerbate conflicts between residents living in central accommodation.
- Since the reception process is marked by profound experiences of insecurity we consider it a joint responsibility of asylum administrators, reception authorities and social workers to be as transparent about the decision making process as possible. This includes an open stance to NGOs and civic initiatives who offer legal and administrative counselling.
- While we acknowledge the positive impact social workers and volunteers can have in the reception period, it is necessary that they adopt approaches of empowerment and self-efficacy instead of paternalizing and infantilizing refugees. We recommend to implement respective training and preparatory measures for both social workers and volunteers.

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Annex 1. Guiding Directives on Reception

DIRECTIVE 2013/33/EU OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL,
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A32013L0033>

Proposal for a DIRECTIVE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL laying down standards for the reception of applicants for international protection,
https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/sites/homeaffairs/files/what-we-do/policies/european-agenda-migration/proposal-implementation-package/docs/20160713/proposal_on_standards_for_the_reception_of_applicants_for_international_protection_en.pdf

EASO guidance on reception conditions: operational standards and indicators
<https://www.easo.europa.eu/news-events/easo-guidance-reception-conditions-operational-standards-and-indicators>

Reception of female refugees and asylum seekers in the EU Case study Germany,
[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/536497/IPOL_STU\(2016\)536497_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2016/536497/IPOL_STU(2016)536497_EN.pdf)

Annex 2. Additional Texts

CONFRONTING THE GLOBAL FORCED MIGRATION CRISIS, 2018, CSIS https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180529_Ridge_ForcedMigrationCrisi.pdf?xG6zs9dOHsV2fr2oCxYTT6oar049iLfA

STATE OF THE SYRIA CRISIS RESPONSE, 2018, Voluntas,
https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/180416_Voluntas_Advisory_Syria_Crisis_Response_Assessment.pdf

GLOBAL COMPACT FOR SAFE, ORDERLY AND REGULAR MIGRATION, 11 July 2018,
https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180711_final_draft_0.pdf

Annex 3. List of Interlocutors

Number	ID	Duration/h	Language
1	ALG-W-BER 0208	02:00	English
2	CAM-M-BRA-0707	01:28	English
3	CAM-M-BRA-2307	02:05	English
4	CAM-W-BRA-2411	01:04	English
5	CAM-W-BRA-1007	01:19	French/English
6	ERI-M-BRA-0907	02:56	English
7	GAM-M-BER-0607	01:01	English
8	IRAQ-M-BER1-3007	01:26	Arabic/English
9	IRAQ-M-BER2-0208	02:02	Arabic/English
10	NIG-W-BRA 1107	00:44	English
11	NIG-W-BRA-2011	01:04	English
12	SEN-M-BRA-0807	01:36	English
13	SYR-M-BER-2807	01:06	English
14	SYR-M-BER2-0308	02:14	Arabic/English
15	IRA-M-LSAX-0908	00:31	Farsi/Dari
16	IRA-W-LSAX-0908	00:31	Farsi/Dari
17	IRA-M-LSAX-1110	01:11	Farsi
18	SYR-W-LSAX-0712	01:00	Arabic
19	SYR-W-LSAX-0812	01:00	Arabic
20	SYR-W-LSAX-1412	01:00	Arabic
21	SYR-W-LSAX-2710	00:45	Arabic
22	SYR-W-BAV-0512	00:30	Arabic
23	SYR-M-LSAX-2610	01:30	Arabic
24	SYR-M-LSAX-2710	00:15	Arabic
25	SYR-M-LSAX-2810	00:40	Arabic
26	SYR-M-LSAX-3010	00:30	Arabic
27	SYR-M-LSAX-0412	01:00	Arabic
28	SYR-M-BAV-0312	00:45	Arabic
29	SYR-M-BAV-0412	00:45	Arabic

30	SYR-M-BAV-1512	00:40	Arabic
31	SYR-W-BAV-0309	01:20	Arabic
32	SYR-W-BAV-0911	01:00	Arabic
33	SYR-W-BAV-1408	01:15	Arabic
34	SYR-W-BAV-2308	00:45	Arabic
35	SYR-M-BAV-0809	01:20	Arabic
36	SYR-M-BAV-2711	01:00	Arabic
37	SYR-M-BAV-2811	00:40	Arabic
38	AFG-M-LSAX 11.10	01:10	Farsi
39	AFG-M-LSAX 17.10	01:07	Fari/Dari
40	IRA-M-LSAX 1909	01:56	Farsi
41	IRA-M-BER-2410	01:25	Farsi
42	IRA-M-BER-1812	01:00	Farsi
43	IRA-M-BER-2011	01:28	Farsi
44	IRA-M-BER-0911	01:09	Farsi
45	IRA-M-BER-0512	01:26	Farsi
46	TUR-M-LSAX5-2310	01:11	English
47	TUR-M-BER2-2312	01:27	Turkish
48	TUR-M-LSAX2-2008	01:30	English
49	TUR-W-BER3-2412	1:38	Turkish
50	TUR-W-LSAX1-2308	2:16	English
51	TUR-M-LSAX1-1808	01:37	Turkish
52	TUR-W-BER1-0311	01:38	Turkish
53	TUR-M-LSAX4-1109	01:43	English
54	BL-M-LSAX-1801	01:30	Bosnian/Croatian
55	BL-W-LSAX-1801	01:30	Bosnian/Croatian
56	BL-M-LSAX-0702	01:00	Bosnian/Croatian
57	BL-W-LSAX-0702	01:00	Bosnian/Croatian
58	LIB-M-BER 27/04	01:37	English
59	LIB-M-BER 28/04	01:24	Arabic (Translator)
60	LIB-M-BRA 22/04	01:53	Arabic (Translator)