

Bertelsmann Stiftung (Hrsg.)

Von Arbeit bis Zusammenleben – Wie Flüchtlingsintegration in Kommunen gelingen kann

Executive Summary

How can municipalities effectively integrate those seeking protection from war and conflict? The large-scale migration of refugees from Syria and other countries to Europe and Germany that began a decade ago has been relatively well-managed. The immediate fallout from the pandemic has largely been addressed, and many of those who fled the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan have been taken in and are receiving support. However, in 2022, Germany and its neighbors faced another large influx of individuals, triggered by Russia's brutal invasion of Ukraine. Approximately one million refugees from Ukraine sought protection in Germany, along with several hundred thousand asylum-seekers from other countries. At the same time, workforce shortages and a lack of skilled professionals strained the capacity of immigration offices, schools and childcare facilities. Many municipalities expressed their commitment to managing migration and integration but warned that the challenges were pushing their resources to the brink.

Despite these pressures, municipalities and civil society have risen to the occasion, embracing Goethe's sentiment: "Even from stones placed in one's path, one can build something beautiful." Communities across Germany have developed innovative approaches to support refugees. Those who fled Ukraine after February 24, 2022, were initially welcomed with open arms.

Yet, as economic pressures mount at the national and state levels, and municipal budgets grow tighter, conflicts over resources have become in-

creasingly visible. Against this backdrop, municipalities and local civil society organizations continue to play a key role. This publication highlights nine municipalities in Germany and their good-practice examples, offering a source of inspiration for others. Journalist Michael Esser profiles these forward-thinking initiatives, presenting them as practical models for communities navigating the complex challenges of refugee integration.

This publication examines how cities, administrative districts and municipalities in Germany can strengthen their resilience and prepare effectively for future challenges associated with migration. It presents initial findings from research conducted by the DESI Institute for Democratic Development and Social Integration in partnership with the Bertelsmann Stiftung, with funding by the German Federal Ministry of the Interior. The publication also highlights national initiatives such as the Welcome Alliance and the NesT resettlement program.

The benefits of integrating refugees into work and education as quickly as possible are clear. "Seize the Opportunities!" is the theme of a study by Prof. Dr. Dietrich Thränhardt, which explores how displaced individuals from Ukraine are being integrated into the labor market. This publication builds on these findings, offering practical examples and insights into successful approaches to integration – whether through employment, early childhood education or fostering social cohesion.