

FlüchtlingsRAT NRWe.V.

Newsletter August 2016

Dear Reader!

„I am happy that the borders are closed for now“. An odd statement made by North Rhine-Westphalia's prime minister Hannelore Kraft in an interview with the WDR. Those people who are working on refugee issues either full-time or as volunteers might somehow understand Mrs. Kraft and feel relieved about telephones not ringing every other minute and NGOs, counselling centers and authorities being finally able to provide more than basic emergency care; yet this tranquility is misleading. While the total figure of refugees entering North Rhine-Westphalia has declined by 75 percent since the beginning of the year, the worldwide number of refugees has reached an all-time peak. While many reception camps remain empty here, millions of people are waiting in Greek and Turkish refugee camps under degrading conditions. While authorities and politicians in North Rhine Westphalia are relieved that the land route between Greece and Germany is blocked, many people are risking their lives and die on the dangerous Mediterranean route. For these reasons we cannot share the joy of the prime minister.

If you have any comments, we are happy to receive compliments, criticism and remarks on our Newsletter. If you don't want to further receive this Newsletter please write to [initiativen\(at\)fnnrw.de](mailto:initiativen(at)fnnrw.de).

Flüchtlingsrat is searching for artistic contributions to our events

The general assembly of the Flüchtlingsrat NRW takes place six times a year. At these meetings we report on the activities of our organization, invite guest lecturers as well as discuss and exchange on different thematic issues. We think that our general assembly would be a great exhibition space for people interested in showing their artistic work. At the same time this is a good means to support organizations, volunteers and refugee artists.

We are therefore searching for refugees who do photography or write texts, artists working on the topics of migration and flight, as well as refugee organizations, who do artistic work. In short: we are searching for art worth being shown!

If you are interested to shape our general assembly artistically, please write to [info\(at\)fnnrw.de](mailto:info(at)fnnrw.de) or call us at 0234-5873156. The next assembly takes place on September, 3rd 2016. The individual design of the exhibition would have to be adapted to the capacities of the venue.

Abolish *Vorrangprüfung* (priority review) also in the Ruhrarea!

Refugees who are still in their asylum procedure or whose asylum application has been rejected, have only very limited access to the German labor market. If they find a job, the German Employment Agency will first examine whether a German citizen, an EU-citizen or other people who are prioritized are *potentially* qualified to do the job. This procedure is called *Vorrangprüfung* (priority review). Refugee organizations have criticized this regulation for years as it is discriminatory and hampers integration.

The *Integrationsgesetz* (Integration Act), which came into force most recently, allows the federal governments to suspend the priority review in some areas or in the entire federal state. The government of North Rhine-Westphalia has implemented this law and herewith eased the access to the labor market for many refugees – the Flüchtlingsrat NRW strongly welcomes this step. Yet, according to the plans of the federal government, in the most populated region in the federal state – the Ruhrarea – the priority review shall continue being used as before.

Flüchtlingsrat NRW criticizes this decision: “Employment is one of the most important steps for a sustainable integration”, states a press release of the NGO. “To exclude refugees from the labor market for at least 15 months strongly hampers integration and goes against the integration law.” Birgit Naujoks, the managing director of Flüchtlingsrat NRW, urges the Ministry for Work, Integration and Social Affairs, to find forward-looking solutions against unemployment and thus to reduce welfare dependency. For refugees the first important step to reach this would be the full abolishment of the priority review – also in the Ruhrarea. “The legal means have been created on the national level. Now it is up to the federal government of North Rhine-Westphalia to put them into practice!”

Flüchtlingsrat NRW fordert: Vorrangprüfung auch im Ruhrgebiet abschaffen!

Federal government reviews thousands of *Duldungen (toleration statuses)**

Nedjmija and Ramadan Aliju had lived in Essen for 25 years. Their asylum application had been rejected already in the 1990s, yet due to a disease which was not treatable in their country of origin Serbia, the family received a *Duldung* and could stay in Germany. Now, after more than two decades, the couple was deported. The hardship commission of North Rhine-Westphalia, a commission which decides upon extraordinary asylum cases, will now decide upon the future of their 20-year-old son who was born and grew up in Germany.

Stories such as those of Aliju family, which was covered by the Online-portal “Der Westen” end of July, have occurred again and again over the last years. Now, the number of deportations is expected to rise. Mid-June the government of North Rhine-Westphalia has announced in a press release, that the number of deportations will double this year. A few days later the Ministry of the Interior has prompted the *Ausländerbehörden* of the cities in a letter to review the cases of people with a *Duldung* because the reasons for the *Duldung* might by now be invalid for thousands of cases. This procedure affects especially people with a *Duldung* coming from a Balkan state. As many Western Balkan countries are now classified as so-called “safe countries of origin”, the Ministry assumes, “that nor political persecution neither inhumane treatment or punishment take place”. Furthermore, the

Ministry stated, the countries concerned have been truly cooperative with the admission of deported refugees and have committed themselves “to respect the special needs” of refugees in particular need of protection. The unspoken conclusion of this letter: There are no reasons for tolerating rejected asylum applicants from the Western Balkans in NRW. Who doesn’t return voluntarily, has to be deported. The municipalities will be supported by the federal government in conducting the deportations. A coordination office will be specifically created to “assist deportations with flight and transportation management as well as to be at the municipalities’ disposal for questions concerning return.”

Refugees and supporters can thus expect a downright deportation offensive in the next weeks and months.

Background information:

Currently there are 44.000 people with a *Duldung* in North Rhine-Westphalia. Among these, 23.554 people originally come from the Balkan region. A *Duldung* is a status for those, whose asylum application has been declined but who for different reasons cannot return to their home countries – because there are no safe travel routes back, because it is not possible to go by plane for medical reasons or because identification documents needed for the deportation are lacking. People with a *Duldung* have a very restricted access to the labor market, to training programs and social benefits. Often, they live under these precarious circumstances for decades. In some cases these people were born in Germany and know their “home country” only from what their parents have told them. Refugee organizations demand and fight for a secure right to stay as well as for good integration prospects for those who have been living in Germany with this precarious status for several years.

Der Westen: Roma-Ehepaar nach 25 Jahren nach Serbien abgeschoben (24.07.2016)

Rundschreiben „Ausreisepflichtige Ausländer in Nordrhein-Westfalen“ (21.06.2016, PDF, 0,4 MB)

*We use the German word *Duldung* because it is a specific legal term.

Integration Act comes into force

On the 7.07.2016 the German Bundestag has adopted the controversial integration act, mainly with the votes of CDU and SPD. Almost one month later, on the 06.08.2016 the law has come into force.

Pro Asyl has criticized the draft in advance as "fraudulent labelling". It promises integration, yet in practice will have the opposite effect. Pro Asyl criticized among other the herein inscribed allocation of the place of residence, the limitations of social allowances and the obligation to exercise so-called *Arbeitsgelegenheiten* (work opportunities). The organization also pointed out that the draft law was tightened at the last minute before being adopted. One of the only possibilities left in the draft law to choose the place of residence after a positive asylum application has been removed. According to Pro Asyl, this shows that the coalition is promoting arbitrary treatment of refugees instead of their successful integration. Personal initiative and integration efforts would herewith be extremely hampered – at the expense of refugees, but also of the receiving society. The Integration Act was criticized the Left Party and the Greens, who had voted against the law.

PRO ASYL: Bundestag soll heute Integrationsgesetz verabschieden (07.07.2016)

PRO ASYL: Eigeninitiative von anerkannten Flüchtlingen bei der Wohnungssuche unerwünscht (07.07.2016)

Refugee Women in action

Since the end of July, the activists of the group "Women in Exile" are on the road again. For three weeks, the members of the refugee women organization will be travelling throughout Germany holding lectures and making public actions to raise awareness for the situation of refugee women and children. In addition, the activists will visit refugee shelters and network with local refugee initiatives. Women in Exile had a few stops in North Rhine-Westphalia, in Cologne and Bielefeld.

Women in Exile: Bustour 2016

North Rhine-Westphalia's integration plan still on the hold

It should have been adopted before the summer break, yet now the integration plan of the federal government of North Rhine-Westphalia won't probably be passed in parliament before autumn. Already at the end of February the parliamentary groups of SPD and Greens submitted a draft plan which should ensure a "successful integration of refugees". Among other demands the government parties want to increase the scope of the compulsory integration courses from 60 to 100 hours, create new childcare places for refugee children, further develop social housing as well as increase the support of volunteer refugee helpers.

At the end of April, a public hearing took place in NRW state parliament at which numerous organizations and public officials could comment on the draft integration plan. In its statement the organization Diakonie Rheinland-Westfalen-Lippe pointed at the situation of the 150,000 refugees living in NRW who could not yet make their asylum application and are consequently excluded from almost all possibilities to integrate in society. Furthermore, the chances of integration are extremely low for refugees from countries with supposedly a low perspective to stay. The Diakonie demanded further investments especially in the areas of education, language support and labor market access and argued that the improvement of services in these areas were central for the successful integration of refugees. The *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (German Trade Union Federation) emphasized the role of the security of residence as a precondition for a sustainable integration. That is why refugees should be given the opportunity to make their asylum application immediately after arrival which should then be processed quickly. To meet the challenges of integration, new staff should be employed primarily in the education sector.

WDR: Laue Debatte über Integrationsplan (03.03.2016)

WDR: Wie gelingt die Flüchtlingsintegration in NRW wirklich? (27.04.2016)

Oxfam: Rich states must receive more refugees

The international organization Oxfam demands rich states to be more committed to the protection of refugees. "The six largest economies, which account for half of the global economic power, receive less than nine percent of the refugees worldwide", as explained in the organization's press release published in mid-July. "The majority finds refuge in economically speaking much weaker countries". According to Oxfam, the United States, China, Japan, Germany, France and Great Britain host a total of only 2.1 million refugees, meaning 8.8 percent of the worldwide people on the move. More than

half of all refugees live in Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Lebanon, South Africa and in the Palestinian territories. Although Germany stands out positively from the other economic giants, it could still receive considerably more vulnerable people as well as support other host countries financially, so Oxfam. According to the Commissioner for Refugees of the United Nations, whose figures Oxfam bases its report on, last year the number of refugees and asylum seekers worldwide was around 24 million. In addition, there are around 41 million internally displaced people, meaning people who are on the run within their home country.

Oxfam: Die sechs reichsten Staaten nehmen weniger als neun Prozent aller Flüchtlinge auf (18.07.2016)

Material for Refugees

Cycling App in Arabic language

The mobile app Naviki identifies bike routes worldwide. Now the app can be downloaded in Arabic and for free. Naviki's developers want to "promote refugees' mobility" and mostly "make small contribution to welcome culture".

Naviki: Willkommenskultur – Naviki App jetzt auch auf Arabisch

Events*

27.08.2016: Symposium „Was Menschen zur Flucht bewegt“. 11.00 am, Alte Feuerwache, Melchiorstraße 3, Köln.

Further information under www.boell.de

05.09.2016: Lecture „Argumente gegen Stammtischparolen“. 19.00 pm, Wichernhaus, Marktstiege 9, Mönchengladbach.

Further information under www.philippus-akademie.de

13.09.-04.10.2016: Training „German as a foreign language (advanced course)“. Four dates, always on Tuesday at 18.00 pm, Haus des Kirchenkreises Gladbach-Neuss, Hauptstraße 200, Mönchengladbach.

Further information under www.philippus-akademie.de

14.09.-05.10.2016: Training „German as a foreign language (beginners course)“. Four dates, always on Wednesday 18.00 pm, Haus des Kirchenkreises Gladbach-Neuss, Hauptstraße 200, Mönchengladbach.

Further information under www.philippus-akademie.de

27.09.2016: Lecture „Flüchtlingsarbeit konkret“. 9.30 am, Haus Landeskirchliche Dienste, Graf Recke-Straße 209, Düsseldorf

Further information under www.philippus-akademie.de

29.10.2016: Volunteer-Prize Award of the Flüchtlingsrat NRW. 15.30 pm. Kulturzentrum Zeche Carl, Wilhelm-Nieswandt-Allee 100, Essen.

*All the events are in German language.

Please take in consideration that all citations were translated into English by Flüchtlingsrat NRW e.V.

Further events, news on political developments concerning refugee issues and information about our work can be found on our homepage under www.frnw.de or on our Facebook-page <http://www.facebook.com/FluechtlingsratNRW>.

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