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Post-2014 migrants' access to housing,
employment and other crucial resources
in small- and medium-sized towns and rural
areas

in Germany

Country Reports on integration



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REPORT

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Abstract

This report looks at post-2014 migrants' access to housing, employment and other relevant resources (language classes, neighborhood centers and social meeting places) in six small and medium-sized towns and rural areas Germany. The report also investigates the effects of the COVID-Pandemic on integration and social cohesion in the localities. Primarily based on interviews conducted in each of the six selected municipalities, it provides an overview of 1) the concrete barriers that post-2014 migrants are facing in relation to housing and employment; 2) the local actors who are involved in, and/or seen as responsible for facilitating their access; 3) any concrete local measures or practices that help or hinder this access; and 4) the specific target groups of these measures, initiatives or practices.

The report finds that the federal system in Germany leads to different frames for post-2014 migrants' access to housing and employment due to *Länder*-specific distribution systems, residence regulations and differing funding programs for target groups. On the local level, housing and employment are, in the first instance, market-driven fields of action. The availability of housing and the ownership structure on the housing market play a crucial role for post-2014 migrants' access to housing, and so does the need for (skilled) workforce in the field of employment, especially in economically thriving localities. Policy programs (most often from the *Länder*-level) that support access to the labor market are only implemented if engaged actors (public and private) take action to do so. Structural factors, such as demographic development (esp. ageing and shrinking of the population), and the size of a locality, and role within the federal integration policies play a key role in shaping the housing and labor market. Experience with diversity also impacts post-2014 migrants' chances to access housing and labor market. Still, this does not apply to all actors in one locality as there are engaged companies and landlords across localities, also in those with hardly any experience with migration-related diversity before 2014. Regarding the effects of the COVID-Pandemic on local integration outcomes, the report finds devastating effects in all researched areas. Language knowledge, social contacts, employment possibilities and administrative processes have been reduced to a minimum with most troubling effects for integration and social cohesion. The next years will be crucial to mitigate these effects and (re-)built cohesive communities.



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Abbreviations

AufenthG	Aufenthaltsgesetz (Residence Law)
AsylG	Asylgesetz (Asylum Law)
AsylBLG	Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz (Asylum Seeker’s Benefits Act)
AsylvfG	Asylverfahrensgesetz (Act on asylum procedure)
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees
BMAS	Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs
BMI	Federal Ministry for Interior and Homeland
BMFSFJ	Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth
BQFG	Law on acknowledgement of professional qualification
DeuFöV	<i>berufsbezogene Deutschsprachförderung</i> , profession-specific language classes, established program of language training on national level since July 2016
ESF	European Social Fund
FIFA	Regulation for migrant women’s integration to labor market in Lower-Saxony
IQ Network	Federal Program “Integration through qualification”
NAF	Netzwerk Arbeit für Flüchtlinge (Network labor for refugees)
NRW	North Rhine-Westphalia
MV	Mecklenburg- Wester Pomerania
MSO	Migrant Self- Organisation
SGB II	Social Security Law II
SGB III	Social Security Law III
WoFG	Wohnraumförderungsgesetz (Housing support act)



List of Interviewee-Codes

Locality code – 1	Regional Policy Maker
Locality code – 2	Mayor
Locality code – 3	Local official in charge of integration affairs/local coordinator for integration
Locality code – 4	Pro-migrant group
Locality code – 6	Member of opposition in the local council
Locality code – 7	Expert/ journalist
Locality code – 8	Street-level bureaucrat, local Jobcenter
Locality code – 9	Street-level bureaucrat
Locality code – 10	Street-level bureaucrat
Locality code – 11	Private company/Business sector
Locality code – 12	Private company/Business sector
Locality code – 13	Employer’s Organisation
Locality code – 14	Real Estate Company/ Public Housing Company
Locality code – 15	non-profit service provider (migrant counselling)
Locality code – 16	Trade Union

Localities

G-1	small town in Saxony-Anhalt
G-2	rural area in Lower-Saxony
G-3	medium-sized town in Lower-Saxony
G-4	small town in North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)
G-5	medium-sized town in Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania (MV)
G-6	rural area in Saxony



1. Introduction

The research project Whole-COMM focuses on small and medium sized municipalities and rural areas (SMsTRA) in eight European and two non-European countries that have experienced and dealt with the increased arrival and settlement of migrants after 2014. More particularly, the research project explores how these communities have responded to the presence of “post-2014 migrants”¹, that is, which policies have been developed and implemented and how these policies shape and enable migrant integration. Taking an innovative Whole-of-Community research approach which conceives of migrant integration as a process of community-making, Whole-COMM pays particular attention to the interactions between multiple actors involved in local integration governance (for example, individuals, public and non-public organizations, institutions and/or corporate entities). Moreover, the project looks at the embeddedness of local actors in multilevel frameworks in which regional, national and EU policies and stakeholders may play a decisive role in shaping local integration policymaking, considering both potential collaborations as well as tensions between actors at different government levels.

Work Package Four (WP4) focuses on local policies, initiatives, and practices addressing post-2014 immigrants’ access to housing, employment and other crucial resources or services.²

Following the Whole-comm approach, we assume that the multiple actors involved in integration and community-making processes may have different interests, strategies, resources, and power positions; and that mutual adjustment (between newcomers and long-term residents) and social cohesion do not necessarily represent the only rationale guiding their various efforts. Instead, the interplay between different actors (and their various interests and rationales) may also lead to exclusion and inequality. This interplay and the resulting measures can thus be analyzed in terms of what Collyer, Hinger and Schweitzer (2020) call the ‘politics of’, or ‘negotiation around’, ‘(dis)integration’. As these authors point out, integration/disintegration or cohesion/fragmentation should not be understood as simple binary categorizations but as processes that are intertwined and often coexist within and across policies and everyday practices.

¹ The group of migrants that arrived in (Western) Europe after 2014 is very heterogeneous, “but mostly comprises migrants that left from areas of political and humanitarian crises” (Working Paper 1 2021, 1-2). The majority of ‘post-2014 migrants’ entered thus as asylum-seekers but may have obtained different legal statuses by now (see for more detail Working Paper 1 for the Whole-COMM project by Caponio & Pettrachin).

² As data collection was ended before the start of the Ukraine War at 24 February 2022, the case study information and empirical data does not cover current developments in the national and local reception and integration measures of Ukrainian refugees.



By looking at how a wide range of actors (private actors, civil society actors and street level bureaucrats) foster but sometimes also hinder migrants' access to adequate housing, work and other crucial resources or services, we hope to better understand (and be able to compare) these local politics of (dis)integration across different local and national contexts.

The choice of focusing on housing and employment follows two main rationales. First, they are key resources for granting fundamental rights and sustainable integration. Second, they are not exclusively dependent on local administrations but involve a diverse range of actors, thus allowing us to fully apply the whole-of-community approach. Housing is (partly or, in some cases, almost completely) in the hands of private actors, from big owners (including banks and international investment funds) to single private owners. Work depends on employers, which again are very diverse ranging from big to small (including family) employers, from private to public employers and across different economic sectors. In both cases, between migrants and these private actors, we find a broad range of intermediaries (CSOs, trade unions, real estate agencies, civil society organizations, social networks, etc.) and a diverse (and sometimes even contradictory) set of policies and programs at the national, regional (*Länder*), and local levels.

Apart from housing and employment, we are also interested in local policies, initiatives or practices that affect migrants' access to other relevant resources and services and their participation in society. This part is open to any issues raised by the interviewees. It does not focus on any specific area or kind of policy or services, but should capture any policies, initiatives or practices that respond to local challenges regarding integration, beyond employment and housing. For the German case, this report looks at access to language courses and conversation classes, to neighborhood centers and social meeting places, and engages with challenges that were created through the COVID-pandemic for post-2014 migrants' integration.

To assess the role (and understand the interplay) of the different actors in relation to migrants' access to housing, work, and other services and resources, WP4 identifies and analyses:

- **major obstacles/challenges** that are reported to exist in each locality for post-2014 migrants, particularly focusing on those that are perceived as being particular to each locality;
- **the actors (public, private, and civil society) involved**, and their concrete role (e.g., as initiator, promoter, implementer, critic, etc. of a concrete policy, initiative, or practice);
- **concrete local policies, initiatives, and practices** that intend or help to overcome these obstacles. There might also be certain policies, initiatives and practices that have exclusionary effects (whether intended or unintended) and thus aggravate existing obstacles and inequalities in terms of access to adequate housing and employment;
- the **target groups** of local policies, initiatives, or practices: who is entitled to particular services and how is this entitlement justified. This question will allow us to delve into the main



deservingness frames regarding migrants' access to housing, employment and other key resources and services.

1.1 Methodology

This report is based on field research that was conducted from September 2021 to March 2022. Methods involved document analysis and qualitative expert interviews. The document analysis included (1) official legal and policy documents on policy instruments and programs regarding access to labor and housing market on the local, regional (*Länder*) and national level, (2) grey literature, such as reports, newsletters on access of post-2014 migrants to these services by NGOs and (3) local newspaper articles and other online material, such as websites of the localities. Semi-structured interviews with 98 interview partners were conducted in six different localities in Germany with local policymakers, actors from the private housing and labor sector, civil society organizations and street-level bureaucrats. The cases for the research project were selected based on a set of variables, namely:

Population size	Medium town: 100,000 – 250.000 Small town: 50,000 – 100,000 Rural area: 5,000 - 50,000 and low population density
Presence of a reception center AND/OR Reception facilities	Time period: 2014-2017
Number of currently residing migrants	Time period: arrived after 2014
Share of Foreign Residents	Time period: in 2005 (SF2005)
Variation of Unemployment level	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARUN)
AND/OR Unemployment Levels	Time period: 2005 and 2014
Variation of number of inhabitants	Time period: 2005-2014 (VARNI)
Regional variation	For example: East / West or North / South, choosing localities from different regions
Local politics	Parties in government and local political tradition, choosing localities with different political traditions (conservative / progressive)



The variables ‘SF2005’, ‘VARUN’ and ‘VARNI’ were used to identify **four** types of localities:

Type A	Characterized by a recovering local economy and an improving demographic profile and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type B	Characterized by an improving economic and demographic situation and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014
Type C	Characterized by demographic and economic decline and migrants' settlement before 2014
Type D	Characterized by economic and demographic decline and no remarkable arrivals of migrants before 2014

From the six German case studies, three are based in the subregion of Western Germany and three in the subregion of Eastern Germany, because we expected the experience with migration-related diversity as well as structural conditions to differ between these regions (see above). When conducting the expert interviews, the term “post-2014 migrants” was communicated to our interviewees as “refugees”, which includes in the German understanding asylum seekers, people with protection status and people with unclear status. The scope of actors in our sample is limited by the fact that private companies as well as trade unions were very hard to access or refused to be interviewed, because of bad experiences with journalists before or because of lacking experience. To gather all relevant information, other labor market actors were approached, for example the Employer’s Service of the Federal Labor Agency (*Bundesagentur für Arbeit*) or local *Jobcenters*.

Analysis of the empirical material followed the main questions of WP4 and focused specifically on the following four aspects: (1) obstacles and challenges for post-2014 migrants to access housing and labor market in each locality, (2) local policies and practices that intend to overcome these obstacles, which could also create further (unintended) challenges in the localities, (3) the actors involved and their concrete role, (4) the target groups of local policies, initiatives and practices.

In what follows, this report first introduces the national and regional context of local policies and practices regarding post-2014 migrants’ access to housing and labor market and describes case studies’ local context. The second part engages with the obstacles and challenges that post-2014 migrants face in accessing housing, and local policies that seek to counteract these challenges. The third part refers to obstacles regarding migrants’ access to the labor market and thereto related policies and practices. Part four turns to further services that might positively affect the arrival of post-2014 migrants and presents the cases of a) language courses and conversation classes and b) neighborhood centers and social meeting places, and c) the effects of the Corona-pandemic as a cross-sectional challenge for migrant integration. The report closes by a summarizing cross-locality comparison.



2. Context & cases

2.1. General information on the relevant national and regional contexts

This section provides an overview of the relevant national and regional laws and regulations regarding post-2014 migrants' access to the housing and labor market. In general, it can be said, that the extent to which these systems support integration strongly depends on different 'tracks' resulting from different legal paths which can be found in different policy fields, e.g., refugee status and country of origin limits or allows for housing options or access to labor market.

2.1.1. Housing

Due to the federal structure of the German administrative system, the 16 **federal states**, *Länder* (singular *Land*) in Germany have considerable responsibility in the distribution and housing for refugees and asylum seekers. In fact, there are 16 different systems. We first describe relevant aspects of the national context and then turn to important regulations of the five *Länder* that our case studies are located in.

National context

Germany's housing market is characterized by a comparably **high share of renters**. 53.5% of the population live in rented apartments or houses (destatis, 2021, p. 262). The ownership structure of the rental housing market is varied, with 42.6% of rental housing units being owned by private persons, and 22.9% by associations of private owners. Municipal housing, housing cooperatives, and private companies each own around 9% of the renting housing stock (BMI & BBSR, 2019, p. 14). The high share of private owners³ in the rental housing market (in total almost 65%) compared to only 9% of municipal housing renders private owners important partners for the provision and access to housing. As policy makers have hardly any influence on renting decisions on the private housing market, **locals' attitudes** towards post-2014 migrants and possible experiences with renting to this group present an **important factor for post-2014 migrant's access to the housing market**. This is especially true for small towns and rural areas with a higher share of private ownership and less rental housing stock in general (see section 2.1).

In 2019, **social housing** comprised 1,137,166 residential units (Deutscher Bundestag, 2020, p. 15). These are mainly located in urban areas and in localities that observe rising demands on the rental market. Access to social housing is granted through the so-called **Wohnberechtigungsschein (social housing legitimation)**, assuring the access to people with

³ Private persons plus associations of private owners.

limited financial resources only. In general, the Wohnberechtigungsschein is only granted to persons that are long-term, not temporary, residents in Germany (§ 27 WoFG (2)). If refugees (with different legal status) fall under this definition differs between the *Länder* (see below).

Regulations on housing for refugees on the national level

Accommodation depends on asylum procedure varying between *Länder* and the form of asylum granted. Since 2017, asylum seekers are at first distributed to **first reception centers**, where they need to stay during the first six months (families with children). Refugees can be obliged to stay in the following reception facility until a maximum of 24 months (others) for ensuring their constant availability during the asylum procedure. Asylum seekers from countries with low acceptance rate can also be obliged to stay in the first reception center longer than 18 months, for ensuring easy deportation after their asylum claim has been turned down (BAMF, 2018). After decision on the asylum status (protection status, subsidiary protection or tolerated stay *Duldung*⁴ - the latter not being a regular residence status), accommodation is competency of *Länder* (§12, Absatz 9, Aufenthaltsg). This means not one, but 16 different systems of accommodation processes after the initial distribution (“Erstaufnahme”).

The **distribution of asylum seekers** to the *Länder* follows distribution **quotas** after the so-called Königssteiner Schlüssel (§45, AsylVfG) based on the preceding year’s tax revenues and number of inhabitants (§45 (1)). Distribution quotas vary considerably between the *Länder*. In our case study regions, the share ranges from over 21% (North-Rhine-Westphalia) to 1.9% (Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) of all incoming asylum-seeking migrants that the *Länder* have to take in. The ***Länder* then assign the local level** (mostly county level) to take over this task (a so called “required task”) for the follow-up accommodation. Similar to national level, in most of the *Länder* there are distribution quotas to assign asylum seekers to certain counties.

Whether or not refugees are allowed to choose their place of residence depends on their legal status (asylum seeker or obtained protection status). During asylum process, refugees are obliged to reside in the district of the relevant immigration authority. This applies also for refugees with tolerated stay (at least for three months). Most *Länder* in Germany lifted this regulation (Residenzpflicht), so that asylum seekers and refugees with tolerated stay are allowed to move freely in the entire *Land* (however not in the whole country). However, Bavaria and Saxony still practice this regulation.

After decision over asylum status (or in most cases latest after 24 months), refugees with protection state and subsidiary protection are allowed to **move to a private apartment**. For

⁴ The “Duldung” is a certain status similar to a residence permit (issued according to [§ 60a Asylum Act](#)) for asylum seekers who are, actually, obliged to leave the country and did not receive a refugee status, but whose departure is not possible e.g. due to obstacles to deportation, other humanitarian reasons or personal reasons like severe illness or the lack of identification papers.



refugees with tolerated stay, the right to move to a private apartment depends on the discretionary decision of the relevant immigration authority.

According to **§12a, AufenthG**, national law **obliges refugees to stay three years** after the completion of their asylum procedure in **the Land to which the applicant has been distributed** for carrying out the asylum procedure. The *Länder* have the competency to decide whether the residence law (Wohnsitzregelung) applies to the whole *Land*, to a specific county (*Landkreis*), or even a specific municipality within a county. This differs in all *Länder* (see below). However, during that period refugees can apply to move to other *Länder*. Recognized reasons for movement are for example a job opportunity or family bonds.

Regulations on regional level

This section summarizes the most important laws and regulations concerning access to housing of the five *Länder* in which this research was conducted.

In **Saxony-Anhalt**, refugees are assigned to specific counties taking into account the number of inhabitants, the unemployment quota and number of available trainee positions (Land Sachsen-Anhalt, 2017). Counties can decide to further assign people to concrete localities (G-1-1; Land Sachsen-Anhalt, 2017). The rationale behind this practice is to allocate refugees close to available “integration resources”, such as housing, labor and education (ibid). Saxony-Anhalt mainly offers shared accommodation to asylum seekers, locality G-1 is the only locality in the region that offers decentralized accommodation (G-1-1).

Asylum seekers in **Lower-Saxony** are generally obliged to live in Central Accommodation Units (ZUE). These are in full responsibility of the *Länder* level. After decision over asylum status, **Lower-Saxony** distributes refugees to the counties according to § 1(3), Niedersächsisches AufnG which sets into relation the number of asylum seekers per county to the county’s number of inhabitants. In general, Lower-Saxony does not implement residence obligations (Wohnsitzauflage) for refugees with a protection status except for three cities that observed overwhelming numbers of post-2014 migrants. Following § 12a(4) AufenthG, these cities do not receive refugees until today, except for special reasons, for example family reunion. Case study G-3 is one of these localities.

North-Rhine Westphalia (NRW) exerts a three-step-system according to the NRW AsylG. Asylum seekers are registered in one central registration institution that decides if the person stays in NRW or is redistributed to another state. Afterwards, asylum seekers are transferred to one of the five central reception centers for registration and filing asylum (approx. 7-10 days). Subsequently, refugees are sent to Central Accommodation Units (ZUE). These are divided between ZUEs for people with bad expectations to obtain asylum (fasten deportation

process), and ZUEs for people with “good perspective to stay”⁵. Locality G-4 hosts a ZUE for refugees with bad expectations to obtain asylum.

Refugee reception law in **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania** (MV) foresees shared accommodation for asylum seeking migrants (§ 4 (1) FIAG). After decision over asylum status, the distribution proceeds according to MV’S refugee reception law, considering the number of inhabitants of the county (Flüchtlingsaufnahmegesetz (FIAG), 2005).

In **Saxony**, refugees are accommodated in centralized reception centers and later transferred to one of the 13 counties. Counties can decide how they distribute refugees within the counties (kreisscharfe Wohnsitzauflage) which varies between the counties. The county of locality G-6 contains 56 municipalities, and the county administration decided to implement a centralized distribution mechanism. This means that G-6 currently has no reception center but only five rental flats for first reception. Most refugees in G-6 came to the town after the asylum procedure, when they were allowed to search for their own flat (Interview G-6-2, G-6-4).

2.1.2. Labor

Access to labor market is regulated mainly on the national level, **so it applies equally to all 16 Länder**. Access to labor market primarily **depends on the asylum status, date of arrival and on the kind of residence permit granted** (BA, 2022): Excluded from work on the formal labor market are asylum seekers (1) in the first three months after registration/filing for asylum, (2) who are obliged to live in a reception center, (3) individuals from so-called “safe countries of origin”⁶ who filed for asylum after the 31.08.2015. Asylum seekers and people with tolerated stay are allowed to work after permission. Employers must ask permission for future employee from this group from the Local Immigration Office that decides after consulting the Federal Labor Office. Normally, this request takes four to six weeks. Consultation of the Federal Labor Office is not necessary for vocational training in an officially recognized occupation, for all people with university degrees that meet the requirements of the EU-Blue Card, internships up to three months and for persons who live four years or more in Germany. Still, the local immigration office has some discretionary power regarding work permit due to duration of stay in Germany. **Refugees with protection status can access the labor market without further permit**, so there is no further difference between people holding asylum and those holding subsidiary protection.

⁵ The rationale of “good/bad perspectives to stay” has been introduced by the Ministry of Interior in 2015 to deal with high numbers of refugees and speed up the asylum procedures. The “perspective to stay” is bound to the country of origin and the median protection rate for asylum seekers from the respective country. Refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Somalia for instance fall under the category “good perspectives”.

⁶ Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ghana, Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, Montenegro, Senegal und Serbia are classified as “safe countries of origin” according to annex II of §29a AsylG.



During the last years, several decisions have been taken to alleviate labor market access also for persons with a weak or no protection status. The so-called integration law of 2016 introduced the “**Ausbildungsduldung**”, a specific toleration status which enables migrants with weak protection status, such as “Duldung”, to **follow a three-year vocational education without being at risk of deportation during that period**. Afterwards, it is possible to prolong this status for two years to collect labor market experiences. According to foreigner’s law, a stable residence status can be awarded under specific conditions after that period (§25a AufenthG). The new ruling coalition of SPD, GRÜNE and FDP plan to further open opportunities for long-term tolerated migrants to acquire a residence status under the label of the “**Chancen-Aufenthaltsrecht**” (residence title by opportunity) for tolerated persons, who at 1 January 2022 live five years or more in Germany (SPD, BÜNDNIS90/DIE GRÜNEN, FDP 2021, 138). This new regulation, which of course first needs to pass the parliamentary procedure, would be the finalisation of an enduring debate about possible “Path Changes” between humanitarian and labor immigration in Germany.

Jobcenter as a central institution

The *Jobcenter* is the responsible public authority for unemployed people in Germany. Post-2014 migrants’ access to the *Jobcenter*’s services depends on asylum status and on the kind of residence permit granted. As soon as refugees receive protection status, subsidiary protection or legal prohibition of deportation (“Abschiebungsverbot”), the relevant legal frame changes from AsylbLG (special regulations for asylum seekers) and Sozialgesetzbuch III (SGB III) to Sozialgesetzbuch II (SGB II). The **change to SGB II** presents a remarkable change for refugees living situation and can be considered as “**integration track**”. SGB II also applies to unemployed nationals, so the transfer to this legal scheme presents an important **step to legal integration**, involving different topics such as housing, labor or education and access to *Jobcenters*’ services. Transfer to SGB II shifts responsibility for social support from the local foreigner’s office to the *Jobcenter* and allows access to all their services. People with tolerated stay (“Duldung”), people obligated to leave the country and people with a temporary residence are under the AsylbLG and cannot access the services offered by *Jobcenter*.

Jobcenters can be financed jointly by the Federal Labor Agency and local administration or by the local administration only. Their task is twofold: (1) distribution of social welfare (payments according to SGB II, costs for housing and heating, payment of contributions to health insurance, costs for the basic furnish of a flat, and support education and participation of children), (2) support of integration into the labor market through coaching and education programs.

During research, *Jobcenters* turned out to be **key actors in post-2014 migrants’ integration** into the labor market and in local integration policies in general. Their employees have regular contact to all their clients to ensure their participation in job search and distribute social welfare. They are a means of access to groups that are hard to reach, and they have the



mandate to support their access to work. As one interviewee from G-4 puts it: *“In the jobcenter, we have a variety of measures and concrete things that we can offer to refugees. That is different from, for example, the city administration or local neighborhood centers.”* (G-4-8:14). To cope with the new number and target groups of clients that came up after 2015, many Jobcenters introduced task forces for migration and other special services, such as translation services (G-3-9).

The next section introduces the six German case studies.

2.2. Locality 1: G-1 (Saxony-Anhalt, type D locality, small town)

Case study G-1 is located in the region of Saxony-Anhalt (East-Germany). Since the German Reunification in the 1990s, Saxony-Anhalt is confronted with structural and social change. While the bigger agglomerations experience an increase of inhabitants, small towns and rural areas struggle with the effects of structural changes and have seen a dramatic decrease of inhabitants and population ageing (G-1-1). Migration is thus seen as an important contribution to stabilize the number of inhabitants, face demographic ageing and ensure supply with work force (Integration plan Land Sachsen-Anhalt, 2020, p. 2).

Locality G-1 reflects these demographic processes of population ageing and shrinkage, which resulted in a loss of over 10,000 inhabitants in the last 15 years. Before 2014, the case study region had only little experience with cultural diversity except for the presence of labor migrants from socialist countries such as Vietnam, Cuba or Mozambique in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). However, this labor migration project was strictly politically regulated, and kept migrant workers and locals separated, e.g., through separate housing. Therefore, personal relationships between locals and migrants were rare, and xenophobic attitudes can be found in the population (G-1-4; G-1-4a; G-1-7). Today, migrants, especially refugees, tend to remain in G-1 only for the compulsory three years after receiving the residence status (Wohnsitzregelung after §12^a, Aufenthaltsg). Afterwards, migrants tend to leave to bigger cities with a more flexible labor market and, even more importantly, existing migrant communities (G-1-7; G-1-3).

Particularities concerning the housing market

Due to the significant loss of inhabitants within the last 20 years (from over 100,000 to less than 80,000, despite administrative unification with a neighbor municipality), the locality's municipal housing company owns a large housing stock that also includes the big housing blocks from the former GDR. Due to societal ageing, the locality continues to shrink and many flats in municipal ownership are available all over the locality (G-1-14). This allowed decentral accommodation of post-2014 migrants from the start which was seen as an important means for local integration (G-1-3, G-1-4a).



Figure 1: Municipal housing for accommodation of post-2014 migrants in G-1

After receiving protection status, post-2014 migrants allocated to municipal flats could take over their rental contracts from the municipal authorities. This allowed to stay on in the neighborhood and continue local integration processes. The municipal housing company's distribution policy foresees not more than two households of post-2014 migrants per entry to ensure integration and social mixing (G-1-14). Due to an aged local population, neighborhood conflicts over for example noise arise not only along culturalized lines (e.g., narrative of large families or noisy celebrations), but also between age groups (older locals vs. young people and families) (G-1-8a; G-1-3). The municipal housing company supported the arrival of post-2014 migrants in the neighborhood through a social worker to mediate between newcomers and locals. The municipal housing company understands access to adequate housing as basic need that is the prerequisite for making a home, build a future and feel safe (G-1-14).

Particularities concerning the labor market

As described above, the locality is affected by demographic change (ageing of the society and shrinkage) which would imply a lack of workforce. However, the locality is still concerned with the economic and structural change that was brought about by the end of the GDR and the



socialist production system. Larger factories were closed down, and the labor market today is very fragmented with a lot of small companies. As the responsible person for integration on the *Länder*-level puts it: “We are a region that has over 80% of small companies and only very few companies with 1000 or more employees” (G-1-1; G-1-8:6). These smaller companies have not necessarily been in touch with migrant workers and international employees before. As the companies are very small, it is a risk to “invest” in new employees with weak or unclear legal status or aspirations to move to another place. Thus, reservation against other cultures, especially Muslim beliefs arise as obstacle (G-1-4a, G-1-8). Still, companies that employed post-2014 migrants also report good experiences with very motivated workers (G-1-8a).

2.3. Locality 2: G-2 (Lower Saxony, type D locality, rural area)

Case study G-2 is located in a sparsely populated rural area in Lower-Saxony (West-Germany) with a population density of only 40/km². Before 2014, the share of foreign residents was 2.5%, which is significantly lower compared to other municipalities in Germany and in Lower Saxony. In 2014, unemployment in the region was much higher than the average in West Germany. The economic situation of the municipality is very tensed (G-2-2; G-2-3) leaving hardly any resources for integration which is a voluntary task of the municipalities in Germany. Since the 1970s, the region around the locality has been center of ecological protests, which attracted people with left-alternative lifestyles to the locality. This can be related to an outstanding welcoming reception of asylum-seeking migrants despite little experience with migration-related diversity before. (G-2-7; G-2-4b). Only recently, urban elites are moving to the region because of its attractive nature, housing opportunities and modest distances to the agglomerations of Berlin and Hamburg (G-2-13).

Particularities concerning the housing market

Housing market in locality G-2 is very tensed and, at the same time, fragmented. There are only limited numbers of public housing opportunities. Municipal housing companies and cooperative housing associations refused to participate in the study as refugees would not be a relevant topic to them (Conversation via phone with two actors, October 2021). Most of the flats are owned by single private persons, and these are the relevant actors for hosting asylum seekers and refugees (G-2-3). Attitudes towards migrants among locals as well as personal experiences with renting a flat to post-2014 migrants are thus crucial context factors for access to housing in the locality (G-2-3; G-2-4a).

In 2015/16, three primary reception centers operated by the Länder-scale were located in G-2. Refugees in these centers were not in the responsibility of the locality, but of the *Land* Lower Saxony (see general explanations in 2.1). Further refugees, who were directly distributed to the locality, were placed in decentral accommodation as this was the “*political attitude towards refugee accommodation in the locality*” (G-2-3). But this was only possible through the help of single private owners (see also advertisement for offering rental units to refugees on the localities web page). In G-2, housing was one important arena of refugee support, resulting in the founding of a private housing project for refugees and non-refugees.



Figure 2: Housing structure in G-2, Own Source.

Today, post-2014 migrants have to compete with people moving from Hamburg and Berlin to the locality. Only recently the locality was equipped with fast internet, and since the pandemic, working and retired urbanites are moving their second home to the rural area or spent their later life there. These developments meet with a small housing market and are taken up by local policy makers who focus on building new housing stock for older people, because this is seen as a possible source of revenue (G-2-2).

Particularities concerning the labor market

GL is a rural locality with no significant production sector. The area hosts mainly small and medium-sized companies, and actively works on attracting skilled workers and new businesses through a “welcome agency” (G-2-13; G-2-16; G-2-9). Local companies were hoping that refugees could provide much needed junior staff, but that was not the case to the extent the companies hoped (see 3.1).

2.4. Locality 3: G-3 (Lower Saxony, type C, medium-sized town)

Case study G-3 is a widespread town in the region of Lower-Saxony (West-Germany). The locality covers an area of over 220 km² and incorporates seven smaller towns and 31 villages.

The locality's unemployment rate of approx. 9% is higher than the West German average. The economic situation of the municipality is rather tensed (G-3-2; G-3-9) leaving only limited resources for integration which is a voluntary task of the municipalities in Germany. Since the 1960ies, so called „guest-workers“ – contracted labor migrants from Turkey, Greece, Italy and former Yugoslavia - moved to the locality, so some experience with migration-related diversity has already been developed. Existing migrant communities made the case study such an attractive anchor point for refugees that the locality urged the regional government to prohibit further movements of refugees with a protection status to the locality (according to 12a, 4§ AufenthG.). This regulation came into force in October 2017. Even though it initially helped to not further increase the number of refugees in the city, the regulation can only be implemented during the first three years after receiving the protection status. After that, beneficiaries of humanitarian protection can no longer be hindered from moving to the case study locality.

Particularities concerning the housing market

Due to locality's decentralized structure, neighborhoods differ in their social composition and one can observe patterns of segregation, especially between single-family house neighborhoods owned by locals without migrant background on the one hand and housing stock of the former housing for migrant workers on the other hand. Although the locality followed a decentral accommodation approach to foster integration (G-3-3), most of the post-2014 migrants live in rental units in those parts of the city where former housing for migrant workers is located.



Figure 3: Former housing for migrant workers; Own source

This housing stock is owned by a foreign private investor who does not invest much in the quality of the housing stock (G-3-14). As the rents are affordable in this area, we see a clustering of post-2014 migrants in this housing stock and the according neighborhoods. There



is also housing owned by the municipal company, but this higher quality rental housing was hardly accessible for post-2014 migrants due to very few vacancies there (G-3-14).

Particularities concerning the labor market

The labor market in G-3 is extremely absorptive, and especially the smaller businesses report labor force shortages (G-3-12a). The locality's labor market is characterized by the presence of five large companies that offer well-paid jobs for both, skilled and unskilled workers. Drawing on experience of working in an international context and constantly searching for new workforce, these companies were ready to employ skilled and unskilled post-2014 migrants (G-3-12; G-3-12a). Migrants are present on G-3's labor market since long, so it is not new to "integrate" migrants into the work routine. There is also a migrant labor market, especially in gastronomy sector and other service sectors, that is deemed more open to employ refugees (G-3-12a).

2.5 Locality 4: G-4 (North-Rhine Westphalia, type A locality, small town)

Case study G-4 is located in North-Rhine-Westphalia (West Germany) and surrounded by other small and medium-sized towns, offering a network of economic and social anchor points within the larger region. The economic situation of the location is advantageous with an unemployment level of only 2.3%. This is significantly lower compared to the rest of the country. The number of inhabitants decreased slower than the average in Germany from 2005 to 2014 and is rising since 2020. Although the region of North-Rhine-Westphalia has a long history of migrants, notably guest workers from Turkey, Greece, Italy and former Yugoslavia, the case study's share of foreign residents was only 5 % before 2014. This is significantly lower than the West German average (approx. 9%). In the context of the arrival of asylum seekers, policy makers in G-4 decided to settle a Central accommodation Unit (ZUE, see 1.2.1) in 2016 the locality. The ZUE hosts people with "bad perspectives" to stay during their asylum process. After final decision over asylum state, people are deported from the ZUE or, in the case people obtain a status allowing to stay in Germany, are transferred to other counties. Distribution of asylum seekers and refugees by the *Länder*-level takes the numbers of people hosted in the ZUE into account. As the ZUE is run by the *Länder*-level and managed by a non-profit service provider, this removes all responsibility for refugees in the ZUE from the locality (G-4-2; G-4-3). The locality saw a considerable decrease of post-2014 migrants' numbers in the responsibility of the locality since this decision. Actors from the political sphere and administration believe that is now possible to better accommodate and provide services for the assigned post-2014 migrants (G-4-2; G-4-3).

Particularities concerning the housing market

The housing market in the locality is tensed, especially the market for rental houses. The locality owns one municipal housing company that engages at present in the construction of new residential units (G-4-2). Some of these units are socially bound and exclusively open to people holding a *Wohnberechtigungsschein*, which could also be the case for post-2014 migrants with protection state and lower income (G-4-2). As the housing market does not offer many possibilities to move in, post-2014 migrants tend to overstay in shared accommodation even if they are allowed (and also obliged) to move to private flats (G-4-15). Finding a flat is highly dependent on personal contacts and social networks which also non-profit service providers use to foster access to the housing market. Still, due to a longer history of migration, the locality also has a migrant housing market which local policy makers estimate be easier accessible by post-2014 migrants (G-4-2).



Figure 4: Single-family houses in G-4. Own source.



Figure 5: Inner-city housing in G-4. Own source.

Particularities concerning the labor market

Although the locality had to cope with the end of coal mining in the early 2010s, unemployment in the locality lies at 3% which is low compared to other localities in North-Rhine Westphalia. This already indicates that there is a receptive labor market. The locality hosts bigger companies that constantly look for employees, skilled and unskilled workers. Also in the smaller crafts companies, work force is scarce. This general lack of work force results in a comparably progressive attitude among labor market actors regarding the employment of post-2014 migrants. For example, the Union of skilled craftsmen (Kreishandwerkskammer) offers special post-qualification programs, and there exists cooperation between pro-migrant groups, companies and regional networks to bring refugees into work (G-4-13). Various actors in the locality stress that the high demand on the labor market is responsible for keeping post-2014 migrants in the locality, and they draw on the explanation of work as a means for social integration and social contacts (G-4-13; G-4-2; G-4-6).

2.6. Locality 5: G-5 (Mecklenburg-Wester Pomerania, type B locality, medium-sized town)

Case study G-5 is located in the North of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (East Germany) at the coast of the Baltic Sea. While the economic situation was harsh in the early 2000s with an unemployment rate of over 21% in 2005, the situation has improved, and the share of unemployed inhabitants decreased to approximately 10% in 2014. Also, the population is considerably growing with an increase of over 11,000 inhabitants from 2000 to 2019. The share of foreign residents before 2014 was with almost 4% higher than the East German average. In the early 1990s, the locality witnessed massive right-wing protests against asylum seekers. These incidents serve as a reference point for both civil society organizations' and policy actors' narratives on the arrival of refugees 2014/15. Due to its location at the Baltic Sea, G-5 was a relevant transit town for post-2014 migrants on their way to Norway and Sweden (G-5-4; G-5-3).

Particularities concerning the housing market

The locality is characterized by a separation between housing in the central area (older buildings and tenements from the 1920s) and neighborhoods of larger housing estates of prefabricated buildings which were erected during the time of the GDR in the periphery. In fact, the majority of the city's inhabitants are living in those rather peripheral neighborhoods. Housing is scarce all over the locality, but especially in the center.



Figure 6: Housing stock in the center of G-5. Own source.

Affordable housing can only be found in the larger housing estates which results in a clustering of social problems in these areas and, in some places, to hostile attitudes towards migrants in general making these neighborhoods non-welcoming spaces (G-5-4a; G-5-15). Construction activities target retirees from the metropolises of Berlin and Hamburg, so most of the newly built housing stock provide small, barrier-free and costly flats (G-5-3). The provision of adequate housing for post-2014 migrants is a serious issue and people tend to significantly overstay in shared accommodation (G-5-4a).



Figure 7: Housing in the periphery of G-5. Own source.



Particularities concerning the labor market

Due to its location at the Baltic Sea, tourism is an important economic segment and provides manifold job opportunities. These sectors offer jobs for unskilled workers and have been open for post-2014 migrants, also because the working conditions are not very favorable, involving work on holidays and late working hours (G-5-9). Private labor market actors were waiting for workers in 2015 and set big hope in the arrival of post-2014 migrants, however, these hopes were not fully met (G-5-3; see below).

2.7. Locality 6: G-6 (Saxony, type B locality, rural area)

The small-town case study G-6 is located in the eastern part of Saxony (East Germany) in proximity to a larger city. The region's population development is stable, observing modest growth of 1.8% within the last five years. The share of unemployed inhabitants decreased from 16% in 2005 to approximately 7 % in 2014, pointing to positive developments on the region's labor market. The case study location had only little experience with cultural diversity before 2014, as the share of foreign residents was only 1.6% in 2005.

Particularities concerning the housing market

The locality's housing market is not yet too tensed, but available rental units are getting less as the small town attracts families from the nearby agglomeration. The locality owns a considerable housing stock, and from this municipal housing some rental units are granted to asylum seekers and refugees (almost 60 of 1700 flats). As housing is affordable in municipal housing, one can observe a certain clustering of refugees in this housing stock and in specific quarters or streets of the housing stock. Asylum seekers and refugees only exceptionally live in privately owned rental units. For G-6 the *Wohnsitzauflage* applies at county level. Thus, refugees tend to move to G-6 after status determination because public transport there allows easiest access to the next greater agglomeration.



Figure 8: Initial reception center in an outlying district of G-6. Own source.

Particularities concerning the labor market

Unemployment rate lies at around 6% and increased during 2021. Still, there are labor market vacancies, targeting especially high-skilled and skilled personnel in manufacturing industries, information technology and health care. Due to the public transport available, many inhabitants of the locality commute to the nearby agglomeration.

3. Access to housing

The following section engages with post-2014 migrants' access to housing in the six German case study localities. It describes challenges and obstacles that post-2014 migrants face as well as local strategies to overcome these challenges. The section also takes a closer look at the actors involved, for example policy makers, NGOs, non-profit service providers and the private sector and at the target groups of specific local strategies. The section closes by summarizing case-by-case the challenges, local strategies and actors involved in the field of post-2014 migrant's access to housing.

3.1. Main challenges / obstacles

General challenges regarding the access to housing

Except for Case study G-1 and to a lesser extent in G-6, all case studies suffer from a **tensed housing market**. Finding adequate housing is a serious question, not only for post-2014 migrants. Reasons for this situation differ between localities. In locality G-2 (type D locality),



for example, we find a recent increase of second homes of urbanites since the provision of 4G internet and the corona pandemic, fostering the possibilities for remote working. While the housing market had some vacant flats in 2015, there are hardly any flats available on both, the rental and ownership housing market in 2021 (G-2-13). The influx of wealthy urbanites is accompanied by retiree's movement to rural and coastal areas (G-2, G-5). Local private and municipal housing actors react to the arrival of (often wealthy) retirees and focus their new building activities on this target group, e.g. assisted living apartments and housing for the nurses (G-2-2) or costly barrier-free apartments at the coast (G-5-3). G-6, which is located in acceptable distance from a greater agglomeration, is a popular target for families intending to live in a more rural area, but with access to urban life (G-6-14). Apart from G-1 and to a little extend in G-6, non-profit service providers and NGOs complain over too little investment in social housing, resulting in a lack of affordable housing. As the refugee crisis appears to be "over" for local policy makers, new building activities in the social sector rather target homeless people in general, for example the building of a shared accommodation for homeless people (G-2-2).

A second factor that generally impacts access to housing is the **ownership structure** of a locality's housing market. In G-1, for example, large parts of the housing stock are owned by the **municipal housing company** making it possible for local policy makers to offer decentral accommodation for refugees and asylum seekers in cooperation with the municipal housing company (G-1-3). However, the high vacancy rate in the locality due to a shrinking population must be taken into account for this decision.

On the contrary, G-2 (rural area, type D) has only a small stock of municipal housing, and accommodation of refugees after initial reception mainly relies on **single person landlords**. Public administration depends on their goodwill to "take migrants" (G-2-3) and has only little influence on their decision to rent their flat to refugees. In 2015, the local attitude was very welcoming towards refugees and many private owners offered flats for accommodation. However, the first enthusiasm decreased after some landlords had negative experiences with post-2014 migrants. Now it has become hard for post-2014 migrants to access the rental market (G-2-4b; G-2-15):

"There were problems, because those who got their protection state quickly left the locality without any information to the landlord. As I told you before, refugees did not know about the legal notice periods of three months for rental contracts, but if you don't inform the landlord in due time, you owe this money to the landlord. So later, landlords were reluctant to host further refugees because they lost the rent money of three months or had to undergo the annoying process of getting the money from social administration. After this situation, it was so difficult to find a flat for refugees. I tried to persuade a private landlord that "my refugee family" would be different, but he was so fed up and told me that he would not rent his flat to refugees again." (local journalist from G2).



In G-3 (type C locality), large parts of the housing market are owned by a **private real estate company** from abroad. The company mainly rents its poor-quality housing stock to people receiving social support for their rents. This means that the local *jobcenter* pays the rent. Although complaints about the quality of the housing are well known by local policy makers and the local administration, they see only little possibility to intervene and communicate with the foreign private company (G-3-3; G-3-14). Other affordable segments of the housing market in the locality, especially municipal housing, are occupied by locals who have been living there for decades and do not move out (G-3-14). As a result, newcomers do not get access to public housing, because of the simple lack of free flats (G-3-3; G-3-14). The head of the public housing company puts it like that (G-3-14:1f):

“Our company was in the advantageous position that we were always able to invest in our housing stock and provide good housing. The demand of our stock had been high since long, our vacancy rate is below 1%. And we have long lists of interested persons. So, when refugees arrived, this had hardly been a topic for us, because we could offer no flats to refugees or other migrants because there are no free flats.”

Thus, the locality is characterized by **spatial segregation** of low-income households relying on social support, often with migrant background, and households with a higher income. The situation in these poorer neighborhoods is challenging as social problems tend to concentrate. In some neighborhood schools, over 50% of the primary students do not speak any German (G-3-9). In some quarters with low-quality housing, over 90% of the residents have a migrant background (G-3-15), which can result in a drawback in ethnic communities (G-3-3).

We observe a similar pattern of segregation in the locality G-5 (type B locality), where large housing stocks that were built during GDR are a usual destination for post-2014 migrants. Similar to G3, attractive housing stock in the inner-city areas is not affordable, and post-2014 migrants mainly live in the deprived areas in the outskirts of the city. As housing in G-5 is costly, people with low income tend to cluster in these areas as well, among them also considerable numbers of people with xenophobic and right-wing attitudes (G-5-15; G-5-4). This results in **difficult neighborhood configurations** and a hostile attitude towards migrants. This is especially troubling when taking into account the racist riots that happened in the neighborhood 30 years ago, and still form an important reference point for discussions about diversity and the locality (G-5-3; G-5-15; G-5-6). Similarly, in G-6 there is a considerable rental housing stock owned by the public housing company. After initial distribution to other municipalities, most post-2014 migrants move to G-6 when there are suitable vacancies in the public housing stock. Therefore, most post-2014 migrants live in the same part of the town. However, the town G-6 is much smaller, so the cluster of public housing seems not as conflictual as in G-5.

Furthermore, we find an extreme case of conflicts in the locality of G-6, where the local county set up a shared accommodation for **70 refugees in a village with 120 locals**. This produced various conflicts and dissatisfaction between locals and migrants. For example, locals marked



paths from the shared accommodation to a local playground as private, prohibiting refugees to use the path (G-6-4). The situation continued to be politicized until the accommodation was closed in 2017.

Difficulties that particularly affect (post-2014) migrants

Across all localities, actors pointed to a **mismatch between the supply of housing and the needs of post-2014 migrants**. This relates to housing for large families, and for persons with disabilities that would need barrier-free accommodation (G-5-4a). Thus, the location of the available housing does not meet the needs of post-2014 migrants, being for example in a remote village without proper access to public transport (G-2-4a), or in quarters with a migrant-skeptical population (G-5-4a, G-5-15).

For all refugees and asylum-seekers, the **legal status** poses an obstacle to housing. Refugees can be obliged to live in shared accommodation until their asylum state has been decided (see 1.2.1). Legal procedures take long, and post-2014 migrants might have to wait for years until they are allowed to search for their own flat.

In all localities, NGOs and non-profit service providers report incidents of **racism and discrimination** against post-2014 migrants while searching for a flat and later on between neighbors. The social worker of a shared accommodation in G5 for refugees puts it that way:

“We realize it [racism] in our work when people are looking for a flat. Black people have hardly any chances on the housing market. People from Iran, for example who have brighter skin, get access more easily. Or they get integrated faster into the neighbourhood because they do not stand out. Housing companies, both municipal and private, justify this practice by saying “They do not fit the housing block. We already have so many of those.”” (social worker in shared accommodation in G-5:5)

One interviewee recalls how neighbors regularly call the police when post-2014 migrants come together in their flats, as the locals suspect illegal activities (G-1-4a). Prejudices are most common against young men (G-1-14; G-5-4a). Living in the same neighborhood does not necessarily translate into respect and understanding but can also mean living side by side (G-1-4; G-1-4a). Post-2014 migrants were harshly asked “What do you want here?” (G-1-14). Xenophobic incidents were also reported from very rural areas with a sworn village community (G-2-4a).

In localities where the share of older population is high, **demographic and perceived cultural conflicts intersect**. Older residents feel bothered by the sudden noise of children, which is in fact not a conflict between locals and migrants, but between generations (G-1-8a). However, locals tend to see it as a problem with “the refugees”. Discords do not only arise between older, conservative locals, but also between left-wing activists and migrants. The case of a new



established housing project for refugees and locals in G-2 reveals that the priorities of post-2014 migrant in need of a place to stay and proper housing do not fit the aspirations of left-wing activists to carefully discuss all matters of a housing project in basic democracy-processes. This resulted in various conflicts and some post-2014 migrants left the housing project (Interview with activist who refused recording). A journalist from G-2 comments the matter this way (G-2-7:4):

“So, we have a group of ultra-left people. [...] and they founded a housing project. It is a cooperative initiative that should offer housing for one third of refugees, one third of older people and one third of young families. However, the share of refugees in the project is really low, because they do not want to live in these structures. [...] They do not want to be integrated in this project. They moved to the small village because there is a train station and not because of the housing project!”

Another field of conflict arises around **correct proceeding of rental contracts**. Lacking knowledge on the regular proceeding, migrants handed over their flat to other families without informing the housing company (G-6-14). Further conflicts arise around keeping the **“house rules”**, e.g., cleaning the staircase in turn, respecting resting times or waste sorting. Conflicts tend to reinforce when there is no common language, between neighbors, but also between landlords and housing companies and post-2014 migrants (G-6-14). Then, volunteers take an important role in translating and negotiating.

Many of the post-2014 migrants, at least those approaching non-profit service providers and migrant counselling, have **limited economic resources** which makes it especially difficult to find a flat. Actors from G-5 report that there is not much choice for post-2014 migrants and finding a flat in the neighborhoods where refugee supporters from the alternative, migrant-friendly milieu live is hardly possible (G-5-4a). Beyond the ability to find a flat which could be paid by the *Jobcenter*, landlords tend to prefer renters that make their own living as this is said to indicate a stable, reliable renter that makes no problems (G-3-14). However, this does not apply to the municipal housing companies (G-6-14, G-4-2).

In case post-2014 migrants do not manage to access the housing market, they **overstay in reception centers**. Beyond the stressful situation that staying in a shared accommodation for years means for post-2014 migrants, this is also a challenge for the local administration and operators of the accommodation, as the place is needed for newly arriving refugees (G-4-15; G-5-4a). Some people move out and informally stay with friends. However, this creates serious problems as without a flat, it is impossible to formally register and without registration, social services and access to labor market are restricted (G-5-15). In extreme cases, post-2014 migrants left the locality (G-5-9) or even Germany (G-4-15) because *“improving their housing situation seems impossible [...] and the shared accommodation makes them feel not welcome here”* (G-4-15:7).



3.2. Actors involved

The responsibility in the field of housing **depends on the state of asylum procedure**. In first-reception centers and during the asylum procedure, the local administration has the responsibility to provide accommodation for asylum seekers. Depending on the size of the locality, this includes the municipal or county level (G-2, G-4 and G-6). At this stage, relevant actors are local social service departments and public housing companies, as these often work in close cooperation with the local administration (see G-1; G-3) and private operators of shared accommodations. The private operators are fully in charge of reception facilities and range from local pro-migrant groups (G-5-4a) to European operator groups (G-6). In case a locality decides to accommodate asylum seekers decentrally from the beginning (G-1; G-2, G-3, G-4), private real estate companies and single private owners are important partners for the local government.

After status determination - and in case of a positive decision - the **Jobcenter** becomes an important actor. It is the *Jobcenters* responsibility to grant social services including paying for rent. Rental contracts can thus be signed only with their consent. At this stage, pro-migrant groups and non-profit service providers are important actors across all localities (except for G-1), because they support the process of finding a flat. In the rural locality of G-2, support to access to the housing market has become the main occupation of the local integration coordinator (G-2-3). Employees of the local *Jobcenters* can also be supportive in searching for a flat, if the local *Jobcenter* follows a case management approach, and supports integration from a holistic perspective (G-5-8; G-6-8)

Private real estate companies are not responsible for the target group of 2014-migrants in the first place. However, in case they own a large stock of affordable housing, they are relevant stakeholders, responsible for the living conditions in the rental units. This was especially apparent in G-3, where local policy makers and the administration were trying to reach the main private estate company to improve the living environment (G-3-3; G-3-14), but it was not possible to establish contact with the company.

Actors pointing to problems regarding post-2014 migrants' access to housing are mainly **non-profit service providers and pro-migrant groups**. While local officials in all localities estimate the housing situation to be not perfect, but on a good way, these groups point to racist practices on the housing market (e.g. G-5-15; G-4-15; G-2-4b), neighborhood conflicts that are related to xenophobic attitudes (e.g. G-1-4b; G-2-4a) and poor conditions of the housing where post-2014 migrants live (G-3-10; G-3-4). This results in more or less open conflicts between the local administration's perspective ("we provide enough housing, but migrants are not satisfied") (G-4-2; G-3-3; G-5-3) and pro-migrant groups who complain about the inactivity of the local administration (G-3-8; G-4-15; G-5-15).

Education providers further react to conflicts between locals and post-2014 migrants and offer "renter classes" that inform about cleaning the staircase in turn, respecting resting times



from 10pm to 6 am and do the waste sorting (G-1-10; G-2-3). Participants obtain a “renter certificate” in the end.

3.3. Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster or hinder access

Generally speaking, housing, especially affordable housing, is a highly debated issue in Germany. Renters’ initiatives in almost all greater cities and increasingly also medium and small-town areas complain about rising rents and a lack of housing in general.

At the local level of our case studies, housing is a **contested issue**, however the responses by local policy makers are at limited scope. All localities, except for G-1, engage in new building activities, however this happens at rather small scale and does not necessarily target population segments with little income. In G-4, for example, public housing construction aims at building 80 housing units per year with 20% social housing (meaning affordable 16 housing units). In G-3 (type C locality), the local administration created a task force to work on problems in the housing sector, but not too successful until today (G-3-6). In G-6, a small town, the mayor offered private apartments for initial reception (of asylum seekers) to the county officials, who instead decided to open a reception center in one of the outskirts of the town (G-6-2). This decision led to several local conflicts and remains a highly debated issue although the center has already been shut down in 2018.

Legal instruments to manage (post-2014) migrant’s access to housing in a locality

According to §12^a, AufenthaltG, refugees must stay three years after the decision over their asylum state in the *Land*, or locality/county where asylum was filed (see 2.1.1). This regulation sets the scope where refugees can search for housing, at least within the first three years after status determination.

If a locality experiences a strong arrival of refugees, localities can establish a so-called negative *Wohnsitzauflage* which implies that **no further refugees and asylum seekers are allowed** to move to the locality. This legal instrument was used in G-3 in 2017 to cope with the massive influx of newcomers and give neighborhoods and educational institutions time to adjust to the new situation (G-3-3; G-3-8; G-3-6). Although highly debated in the media, all interviewed actors from the locality favor this legal instrument in order to keep the social climate in the locality peaceful and prevent social institutions from collapsing.

Initiatives and practices to foster (or hinder) post-2014 migrant’s access to housing

Initiatives and practices to foster post-2014 migrants’ access to housing respond to the local situation and thus differ between localities. In G-1, where the vacancy rate in municipal housing is high, local administration and the municipal housing company followed a strategy



of **integration of migrants into the neighborhood from the start**. This involved for example a social worker who prepared locals for the arrival of migrants, or the initiative to meet larger families' need for big flats:

“So, we have a problem accommodating large families, because we do not have such big flat. We try to find solutions, for example renting out two flats to one family or trying to combine two smaller flats to one large.” (head of municipal housing company in G-1, p. 9)

To foster integration and social mixing, the housing company allowed only two families per entry. After receiving asylum state, people could stay in their flats and change the rental contract accordingly.

In localities with a high share of single private owners (G-2 and G-4), searching for accommodation has become one of the central tasks of integration coordinators and migrant counselling. The strongly differentiated housing market requires **advertising and communication with locals** to convince them to “take” refugees (G-2-3). In these places, **private networks** play a major role to getting to know owners and thus access the housing market (G-4-4; G-4-15). The serious lack of accommodation also fostered the initiative of an alternative housing project for refugees and locals, a newly build village to live together in a sustainable and multi-cultural environment (G-2). However, this was not free of conflict (see above). In G6, there exists a cooperation of local volunteers, town authorities, county authorities and the public housing provider to offer private flats to refugees on a long-term basis.

Local policy makers in G-4 followed a particular approach. When the locality felt overstrained by the arrival of post-2014 migrants, the locality offered to *Länder* government to **settle a primary reception center** in the locality to decrease the number of refugees assigned to the locality's responsibility. The major recalls (G-4-2:1):

*“So in our locality, we still had shelter for refugees from the arrival of asylum seekers from the Western Balkans in the 1990s. So the county government asked us, if we could accommodate refugees there. Initially, we were critical, but then, it was.. I do not want to call it attractive, but it was quite interesting to start discussions with the county government. Because, as you know, taking refugees in who are in responsibility of the *Länder* government reduces our quota. [...] So we started an initial reception center there, also to release the surrounding villages from the burden to take in more refugees. And the reception center worked really well. So when there was the plan to establish ZUEs, we were open to turn the accommodation into a ZUE: This is fully run by the *Länder* level, and continues to reduce our quota. We, as a municipality do not receive “new refugees”, but can focus on accompanying the integration paths of the refugees that we already have.” (Mayor, G-4)*



As the number of asylum seekers in the primary reception center is taken into account when calculating the distribution on the local level, this led to decreasing numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in the locality that would need accommodation on the regular housing market (G-4-2; G-4-3).

As discrimination on the housing market is a common phenomenon, volunteers across case studies offer to **accompany refugees to their first appointment with a possible landlord** to increase their chances (G-4-4; G-5-15). In places, where there has been migration before, the migrant housing market proves to be more accessible for refugees, also because there are more **migrant owners** who can be more open towards migrants compared to the rural German population: “

“So we have quite a lot of landlords with migrant background who came as workers for the coal industry and made a lot of money. So our administration approached landlords with migrant backgrounds because they had less problems to rent their flat to a Syrian family than a local German farmer.”
(Mayor in G4, p. 14)

Failing to access the housing market has become an increasingly important issue and migrant counselling in different places started to offer information on homelessness and ways to re-enter the formal housing market (G-4-15; G-3-15). Another approach to face the lack of housing for refugees is the **adjustment of shared accommodation to longer stays**. One operator of a shared accommodation modified the accommodation in a way that gives families more private space in case they have to stay there long-term (G-5-15; G-5-4a).

In some cases, **municipal housing companies create obstacles** to post-2014 migrants’ access to housing. In G-5, the biggest municipal housing company established the practice to grant rental contracts only to persons with a residence status of three years of longer (G-5-4a; G-5-15). This was not established as a formal requirement but has emerged as informal practice as migrant counseling and pro-migrant groups report from their work. As the local immigration authority usually issues residence permits for only one year, this poses an insurmountable obstacle to access a large stock of the locality’s housing market for refugees. A person from a migrant counselling service in G-5 describes the practice as follows:

“Additionally, we have a problem with racism. The housing companies demand that a person should have residence permit for at least two years to get a rental contract, but the situation is that the local immigration authority grants only one year’s residence permit. So people need at least one year to find a flat, so they would need a three year’s residence permit which they will not get. [...] And the first institutions who introduced this practice was our own public housing company!” (migrant counselling, G5, p.10)

Thus, the practice of **“social mixing”** is followed by municipal housing companies in several localities. It implies rules such as a maximum of two migrant families per block (G-5-6; G-1-14). While the intention is to create encounter and foster integration, it also reduces the stock



of housing available to post-2014. The member of an opposition party and advisory board of the municipal housing company explains the concept of social mixing that way (G-5-6: 1):

“So this is the biggest mistake, letting them [she refers to “foreigners”= Ausländer] all live together. I am part of the advisory board of the municipal housing company, and we have a different strategy, only one newcomer family per housing block. Because then, they are forced to talk to their neighbors and will become integrated. If we let the migrants live close to each other, they will meet all the time and then they do not have a reason to integrate and learn the language.” (member of advisory board of municipal housing company in G-5, p.1).

In G6, the municipal housing providers plans to offer diversity **training for the local staff**, for example English classes for the staff to increase the team’s intercultural abilities (G6-14).

3.4. Specific target groups

Regarding the perception of post-2014 migrants as a specific target group, it is necessary to differentiate between (1) different states of the asylum procedure and (2) between actors. As outlined above, during asylum procedure it is the locality’s (or the respective county’s) responsibility to provide accommodation. In this regard, provision of housing for asylum seekers - be it shared accommodation or decentral accommodation - is a task of the local administration.

If post-2014 migrants are seen as specific target group after the finalization of the asylum procedure differs between actors. In general, refugees with protection state and subsidiary protection are eligible for a *Wohnberechtigungsschein* that fosters people with limited financial resources access to social housing. If people with tolerated stay are also eligible, differs between the *Länder* (see 1.2.2). As the access of refugees with protection state and subsidiary protection does not legally differ from other people’s access, there are no local policy strategies targeting this group.

However, actors who closely work with post-2014 migrants, for example street-level bureaucrats, non-profit service providers or pro-migrant groups point to **inequalities beyond the legal access to housing**, such as the lack of social networks, racial discrimination or the lack of adequate housing for some groups, especially for larger families and people with disabilities (G-5-4a). Their programs respond to the situation of people on a case-by-case level. They involve different practices, such as connecting single private landlords with refugees (G-2-3), workshops on how to be a good tenant to reduce conflict (G-1; G-2), specific counselling for post-2014 migrants that fear homelessness (G-3-15) and accompanying refugees to landlord appointments.



Table 1: Case-by-case summary of findings regarding the area of Housing

CASE	WholeCOMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Measure(s)	Actor(s) involved	Target group(s)
G-1	Small town, type D locality	High vacancy rates → access is no problem; Neighborhood relations as challenge	Social worker of municipal housing company to prepare locals and mediate conflicts	Municipal housing company, local policy makers (decentral accommodation), Jobcenter	Locals Post-2014 migrants, esp. families
G2	Rural area, type D locality	Tensed housing market with single private owners, Provision with housing depends on landlords goodwill to rent their flats to refugees; Tensed housing market	Local integration coordinator tries to win landlords; Renter's classes to transmit knowledge on housing rules; Volunteers support search for housing; New build housing project for refugees to provide additional housing	Local administration, Single private owners, Local pro-migrant groups and activists, Jobcenter	Single private owners; Asylum seekers and refugees, esp. families
G3	Medium-sized town, type C locality	Massive arrival or post-2014 migrants; spatial segregation; Poor quality housing for refugees; Foreign real estate company as important, but inaccessible owner	Legal instrument of <i>Zuzugsstopp</i> (§12a Aufenthaltsg); Task force housing in local county Support neighborhood centres to foster social cohesion and stabilize quarters; (unsuccessful) attempts to cooperate with private owner in order to improve quality of housing and neighborhood; Migrant counselling on housing issues;	Local policy makers, local administration; Jobcenter Non-profit service providers	Post-2014 migrants, esp. families; Migrants that came long before 2014; Strengthen non-profit service providers



G4	small town, type A locality	Tensed housing market, especially affordable housing; Refugees stay in shared accommodations although they would be allowed to move out	Settlement of primary reception center in the locality; Activation of private networks by NGOs and non-profit service providers; Volunteers support search for housing; decision to leave locality or country; Migrant housing market as promising	Local policy makers and administration; Jobcenter Non-profit-service providers; Volunteers; Former migrants as landlords	Post-2014 migrants, esp. families
G5	Medium-sized town, Type B locality	Tensed housing market; Post-2014 migrants mainly live in the outskirts of the city; Discrimination on rental market	Shared accommodation adjusts its housing to families who can't find a flat; Volunteers support search for housing; Job centre's support program includes search for housing	Operator of shared accommodation; Non-profit service providers; Job Center; Volunteers	Post-2014 migrants, esp. families
G6	Rural area, type B locality	No major obstacles because available public housing; frequent obstacle is communication and paper work (e.g. fulfillment of duties according to the rental agreement); language skills	English language class for the staff or the renter should bring a translator to point out the importance of German rental law	Municipal housing company; Jobcenter External social service provider can be involved (but open to all renters of the company, not specifically migrants)	Staff of the company



4. Access to employment

The following chapter discusses post-2014 migrants' access to the labor market in the selected localities. In general, there is a **need for work force** in Germany due to the ageing and shrinking of the German population (Deutsche Bundesregierung 2007), which also reflects in the six case studies. This is especially true for the health sector and the skilled labor market. As field work in the German localities showed, these needs do not always meet migrants' qualifications and aspirations.

Key actors stress the **relation between access to work and feeling at home**: Post-2014 migrants who entered into the labor market mostly stay in the region (G-4-2; G-4-3; G-4-4b; G-4-13). Despite this need, the flexibility of the local labor markets to employ workers with foreign certificates and limited knowledge of the German (technical) language differ between localities and actors involved. The following section describes the main challenges for access to employment of this groups and shows how actors on the local level respond to these challenges. The chapter further engages with the relevant actors in the field of labor market, their roles and responsibilities, and the target groups these actors identify as especially supportable. The section closes by summarizing case-by- case the challenges, local strategies and actors involved in the field of access to labor market.

4.1. Main challenges / obstacles

Across all localities, private companies and employers hoped to gain work force through the arrival of post-2014 migrants (G-1-8; G-2-13; G-3-12a; G-4-2; G-5-3; G-6-2). The local coordinator from G5 recalls how employers approached her to send refugees as workers (G-5-3):

“So, many of the employers were like – oh wow! Finally! Work force“ [...] So this was mainly in the fields of economy who have not the best working conditions, I want to be clear in that regard. Mainly in the tourism and gastronomy sector, but also other firms. They called and asked me: Could you please send me ten of your refugees? They could come and do the work that all my German employees are not willing to do any more.“ (local coordinator for integration, G-5).

However, these hopes were disappointed (G-2-9; G-5-3) as the access of post-2014 migrants to the labor market took longer than expected and involved various challenges:

One main barrier across all localities is the lack or limited knowledge of the **German language**, especially technical terms. This is even more important in smaller companies and rural areas where employers have only little experience with migrant workers. They lack English



knowledge as well as the time and (wo)manpower to include people with little language skills in their daily business (G-2-13; G-4-16). Bigger companies have far lesser problems to employ post-2014 migrants (G-3-12b). On the one hand, this is related to an international staff where translators can be found easily. On the other hand, bigger companies tend to rely more on division of labor which includes more jobs for unskilled workers (G-3-12b) as compared to family businesses that mostly operate in the regulated sector of craftsmen, e.g., as plumber or baker. Beyond practical reasons, the focus on language is also caused by the *Jobcenter's* role to offer language courses to all refugees who have been granted protection status. Participation in these language classes is mandatory and supported by the local *Jobcenters*, as language classes count as professional development which *Jobcenters* offer to their clients (G-3-9).

The **lack of certificates**, especially in vocational training, is a second barrier that labor market actors mentioned across all localities. The structure of the German labor market has a strong focus on vocational training involving a combination of school and practical work. These trainings take between three and four years and final exams are overseen by the local chamber of crafts. Due to this specific system of combined school and practical work, the acknowledgment of foreign certificates in the sector of vocational training is a long and difficult process. Local unions of craftsmen are proud of the system and hesitate to acknowledge other certificates. One member of a local trade union recounts: *“In 2015, we asked in our company as worker’s council: ‘So, how is it? Are we going to take some of the people?’ And the answer was clear: ‘Yes, but only if they are skilled workers with a certificate.”* (G-2-16).

Beginning a vocational training from the start in Germany is not an attractive option for everyone as it takes **three to four years** and does not meet most of the post-2014 migrants’ living situation who like and need to earn money for their left-behind families or save money to be able to apply for family reunion (G-1-8; G-3-9). Besides the long-time frames, post-2014 migrants often struggle with their personal situation, have to deal with traumata and expectations of the family abroad to quickly enter the “real” labor market (G-1-8a; G-2-16).

In jobs where **no certificates are required**, the access to the labor market is not too difficult. Especially in the agricultural sector, gastronomy and logistics, work force is scarce, and people can find jobs – however these low paid and include unfavorable working hours (G-3-6; G-3-12a; G-5-8). In this regard, labor market actors point to a **mismatch between local companies’ and post-2014 migrant’s expectations**. In G-5, for example, there are plenty vacancies at bakeries, but most of the clients of the local employment program for refugees are not interested due to demanding working hours and the image of a baker as a “low prestige job” (G-5-8; G-5-9). Still, post-2014 migrants are in general portrayed as very motivated to find work – especially in comparison to the local clients of the employment agencies (G-6 8; G-6 10; G-1-8; G-3-9).

A third barrier are **legal and structural constraints** that make it difficult for local employers to hire post-2014 migrants, such as the long duration of asylum processes in Germany.



Companies are hesitant to hire refugees during their asylum process fearing that people might be expelled after some time (G-1-7). In general, hiring people with unclear legal status is experienced as too complicated by many employers (G-1-7; G-3-12a). Also, it is a risk to employ refugees with a tolerated stay (Duldung) as they can be affected by deportation decisions of authorities (G-6-10).

Structural constraints cover for example **poor public transport** that makes it difficult for people without car – and many of the post-2014 migrants do not yet have their German driving license – to access the industrial production sites (G-4-10; G-2-16).

One member of a local *Jobcenter* also points to the paralyzing effects that manifold activation activities of the *Jobcenter* can have: “*We, the Jobcenter are the biggest obstacle!*” (G-3-9: 11). According to her, the structured programs, for example language classes, internship, measures for labor market integration, keep people busy without ever asking their needs. Their structures make people dependent on the *Jobcenter* and fail to take serious peoples’ own aspirations and ideas (G-3-9).

Fourth, **cultural and country specific differences** complicate post-2014 migrants’ access to the labor market. Actors of the local employment agencies refer to conceptually different understandings of work among some of their clients, mainly those with a limited education background: While these clients have been working to meet their needs in their country of origin, the German approach to work assumes that meaningful work is a crucial part of personal development. It is in this rationale that the local *Jobcenter* offers professional development programs which from her experience seems odd to most of her clients (G-3-9). Often cultural differences are described in relation to the compatibility of (Muslim) religion and work (G-1-10). Some companies solved this “issue” pragmatically by offering access to places to pray (G-8) and an extra shift during Ramadan to make it possible for Muslims to work and fast at the same time.

Following up to cultural differences, **reservations and xenophobic attitudes** also restrict post-2014 migrants’ access to work. Again, this is especially true for Muslim migrants as debates over headscarves at the workplace show (G-1-8; G-4-15). A local education coordinator from G-1 sees this as especially problematic in Eastern parts of with little experience with diversity:

“I would say that many of them left G-1, because our economy is not that stable than Western parts of the country. And, more importantly, attitudes of employers are not very open. It is.. well there was a job advertisement for part-time in the local mall. This would be interesting for many refugee women, because of their children they would like to work part-time. However, this was not possible, because they were wearing a headscarf. But in other places, Berlin, Western parts of Germany, this is standard.”
(local coordinator for education, p. 8).

Local companies can have reservations against employing refugees, for example in G-1, where only educational institutions, non-profit service providers and NGOs attended the matching



events for employers and refugees (G-1-4b). Smaller companies are doubtful how to deal with the possible challenges that employing refugees brings, such as cultural differences, language barriers and “*being different*” (G-5-8; G-4-2). In small service-based businesses (hairdresser, fast-food restaurants) actors observe a competition between long established businesses of locals and the migrant economy who are portrayed as serious threat due to lower prices and standards (G-3-3; G-5-13). In the more prestigious labor market segments, refugees are not envisaged as potentially high-skilled labor force. This reflects for example in the simultaneous but contradictory practice of conducting international recruitment programs⁷ while making it a long and difficult process to get certificates of migrants acknowledged who are already in Germany. This obstacles is also reflected by some of the political actors, for example one mayor:

“We will not be able to satisfy the need for labor, for skilled workers, purely on the basis of natural demographic developments. This means we need labour migration. Therefore, it is very annoying that we are seen as xenophobic from the outside.” (G-6-2)

Age and gender affect the access of post-2014 migrants to the labor market. Across all localities, young people and children are seen as most promising for the labor market because they attend school in Germany and undergo vocational training here (G-2-16; G-3-2). The idea that adults could undergo post-qualification and become a skilled worker seems far-fetched for most of the interview partners (except for G-4-13). Especially migrants who are older than 50 years have problems to find work as companies are hesitant to employ them. This can cause serious crisis for older, male refugees (G-4-10). Most actors in the local *Jobcenters* provide special programs to bring women into work. As many of them have not worked in their country of origin, and they are occupied by familial obligations, especially childcare, they are conceived as a target group needing special support (G-3-8; G-3-10). It is a common practice that *Jobcenters* do not urge mothers with children below three years to enter a labor market integration measure or language course, they are “*left in peace for three years after birth*” (G-3-9), however this results in declining language proficiency. For women who would be interested in working, lack of childcare facilities is described as a serious problem across localities (G-2-4a; G-4-15).

“Childcare is an issue in G-6, definitely. Because there is a lack of places and competition between locals, Germans so to say, who have jobs [and refugees]. Germans with jobs are definitely favored. This is connected to financial issues, I don’t know this exactly, but it takes so long until they [refugees] get access to childcare.” (labor market mentor, G-6)

⁷ See for example the webpage of the national recruitment program „Make it in Germany“ <https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/de/>



Lastly, **locally specific barriers** can be observed. In the rural locality of G-2 and G-6, for example, there is a limited offer of jobs, especially in the unskilled and high skilled labour market sector. For refugees in G2 this has been named as reason for refugees to leave the locality. Thus, distances to labor possibilities are far, and public transport is poor – which is not only the case in rural localities, but also in the small-town G-4 and the medium-sized town G-3. Reaching work very early as working in shifts would demand is not possible with public transport. For people with tolerated stay (Duldung), the practice of the local immigration authority has great impact on the possibility to work. It is the discretionary power of the person in charge who decides to allow working or not. While the medium-sized town G3 has a rather progressive immigration authority, actors from locality G4 (small town, West Germany), locality G5 (medium-sized town, East Germany) and locality G6 (rural area, East Germany) report restrictive practices of the local immigration authority.

4.2. Actors involved

In all six case studies, public institutions, private actors, NGOs and civil society organizations are active in the field of labor market integration of post-2014 migrants. The most prominent public institutions are the local **Jobcenters**. It is their essential task to support all unemployed persons to access the labor market by offering counselling and programs to get to know the labor market (see 3.3). As post-2014 migrants, especially people from Syria, obtained their asylum state within months and thus change from SGB III to the SGB II, local **Jobcenters** have been in the first place responsible for their integration into the labor market. A second central public institutions that focuses specifically on migrants' labor market integration is **the IQ Network**. The network has been established in Germany already in 2005 to support workers with foreign certificates during the process of acknowledgement of their certificates and works through local offices funded by the nation state level in the responsibility of non-profit service providers (IQ Netzwerk 2022). Further public funded programs, also by the Länder level support the process of certificate acknowledgement, such as “Labor for refugees” in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Federal Labor Offices also carry out activities for migrants' labor market integration, for example through the Employer's Service that provides support for employers and has since 2015 more and more requests regarding (problems with the) employment of post-2014 migrants (G-3-12b). Further involved public institutions are **vocational schools** who – in some cases – applied for programs to support vocational training of post-2014 migrants, for example in G-2.

Local coordinators for educational integration have also been involved, often co-financed by the national and the local level, in creating reports on the education and vocational situation of post-2014 migrants and existing needs (G-1-10). In localities, where there are **local coordinators for integration**, these are also involved in post-2014 migrants' labor market integration (G-1-3; G-5-3).



Local companies are important actors as they have discretionary power to finally offer or deny access to the labor market. While some companies and firms have developed special programs and internships to enable post-2014 migrants' access to the labor market (see 3.3), other have been reluctant to employ refugees (see 3.1). A pro-migrant group in G-1 recalls a matching event for employers and refugees in 2015 where no single local company was present (G-1-4a). **Established migrants** are here deemed important actors as possibly being more open to employ other migrants compared to family businesses of German owners (G-1-8; G-3-8; G-I-2). Closely related to the local companies are **Unions of Craftsmen and the Chamber of Commerce** that engage in the field of migration which is most likely in case their members are in need of workforce (G-I-13; G-1-13). It has to be said that there has been a lot of misunderstanding by local firms regarding the possibility of post-2014 migrants to work. In the first months after the increased arrival, local companies approached mayors (G-4-2; G-6-2), coordinators for integration (G-5-3) and *Jobcenters* (G-1-8; G-5-8) and asked them to “*send some refugees as workers*” (G-6-2). They misunderstood the public debate on (post-) qualification and labor market integration and wanted to show their willingness to “*take migrants as workers*” (G-4-12b), most often as cheap workforce.

The role and influence of local **Trade Unions** differs considerably between localities. While in G-3, the Trade Union of a big local company pressured the company's management to develop support programs for refugees (G-3-12), the proposals of the Trade Union in G-2 remained without consequence (G-2-16). Still, the relationship between Trade Unions and migrants can be described as ambivalent. While international solidarity is one core idea of Trade Unions, there have been fears that incoming migrants might take jobs and, more importantly, decrease labor and wage standards (Pries & Shinozaki, 2015).

NGOs and non-profit service providers are involved in post-2014 migrants' labor market integration in various senses: First, they are the main executing agencies of federal and Länder programs, e.g., labor market counselling for migrants (G-1-15; G-5-9). Second, they are institutions where post-2014 migrants reported to find internships and could gain first experiences in working in Germany (G-1-7). Third, they point to individual and structural problems that post-2014 migrants face in accessing the labor market (G-5-15) and develop programs to face these, often in cooperation with public institutions (G-1-10).

Lastly, **private persons**, especially volunteers and personal contacts play a major role in accessing the labor market. They are important go-to persons for learning about the German labor market, they support the application process and serve as door-openers for first internships.

It is important to note that these actors do not work independently but have developed **strong networks** between public institutions, the private sectors and civil society. Although these networks are not free of conflict – especially between administrative units (esp. *Jobcenter*) and NGOs or single volunteers there are differing views on obligations and rights of clients – these networks are mostly based on trust and personal relations. “*It is important to know each*



other to make people care” (G-I-13). The concrete programs and strategies of the respective actors towards post-2014 migrants’ access to the labor market are outlined below.

4.3. Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster/hinder access

In Germany, the **Jobcenter is the central institution** for unemployed persons who have not been working for more than 12 months. Its responsibilities are twofold and comprise the distribution of social welfare as well as support to find work. The *Jobcenter’s* services are open to everyone (German citizens and others) who receive support after SGB II (German Code of Social law). This applies to refugees who obtained protection status, subsidiary protection, or legal prohibition of deportation. People during asylum process, with tolerated stay and people obligated to leave the country fall under the AsylbLG (special regulations for asylum seekers) and cannot access the services offered by the *Jobcenter* (see also 1.2.2 above).

Besides the nationwide work of the *Jobcenter*, **regions with demographic problems**, such as societal ageing and shrinking, have developed further strategies to attract work force. There are initiatives such as “return-days” (G-1-13; G-2-13) where young people from the region who pursued their studies or higher education in other places are brought into exchange with local firms to make them come back. Other strategies are local “welcome centers” to attract workers from outside the region and abroad. These offices offer services beyond access to labor market, such as finding a flat or childcare (G-5; G-2). Interestingly, these offices do not perceive post-2014 migrants as their clients (informal phone conversations with welcome centers in G-6 and G-2 over interview request; report of pro-migrant group in G-2, 2021). There seems to be a strict, but doubtful division between attracting (foreign) work force and the potentials refugee reception and integration could provide.

In all case studies, there are **offices for local business development**. They function as network between local companies, employers and politicians and develop conceptual approaches for the region’s economic profile (G-2; G-I; G-5).

Special programs to foster migrants’ access to the labor market

Programs and initiatives to foster post-2014 migrants’ access to the labor market in the six German case studies turned out to be **initiated and funded by different levels**. We outline the initiatives below along the different government scales.

Initiated by national level

As integration into the labor market is one pillar of the national integration strategy (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2016), programs on the local level are funded or co-funded by the national level but implemented by local stakeholders. These programs are for example **profession-specific language courses** (DeuFöV) that post-2014 migrants can access after successfully



completing integration courses (600 hours of language class and 100 hours of cultural “orientation”). For further language training there are profession-specific language classes, which have first been financed by a ESF-BAMF-program and which are provided on the basis of § 45a AufenthG. The language program is divided into basis courses that teach general skills for labor market such as writing emails, and special courses that differentiate between labor market fields, e.g., nursing, technical jobs (Scheible & Schneider, 2020).

A second program that is initiated by the national level is the **IQ network** funded by national level and ESF. The national program has local branches that are operated by non-profit service providers. Their core task is to support recognition of professional qualifications through counselling and facilitating contact with the responsible authority for recognition of professional qualifications. In G-1, for example, the local IQ network, the local coordinator for integration and the local *Jobcenter* jointly developed a folder with relevant information on how to access labor market (legal status, recognition of qualifications, required language proficiency) that is handed to all migrants who approach the IQ network, *Jobcenter* and migrant counselling.

Initiated by Länder level

Besides national programs, the case studies also made use of various programs for (post-2014) migrant’s labor market integration that are initiated and (co-)funded by the *Länder* scale. In **Saxony** (case study G-6), this is for example a Länder-funded job counselling in each county offering counselling and practical support, such as writing applications and supporting the process of recognition of qualification. In the first stage of the program (until 2019) this was limited to labor market support, but now the program takes a more holistic approach and Labor market mentors get involved in additional fields, such as finding childcare, look for housing and support migrants to develop long-term ideas for labor market entry and career developmentlabor (GRA_9). In **NRW** (Case study G4), non-profit service providers made use of the Länder funded programs “Getting started in vocational training and job in NRW” (G-4-4b) and “New country-new chances” (G-4-10). Both programs offered profession-specific language classes and possibilities to get to know the German labor market through for example “culture classes” and internships.

In **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania**, the program NAF plus (Network labor for refugees) is the second stage of the ESF and Länder funded program NAF. It seeks to bring refugees into work through a case-management approach. The local non-profit service provider that carries out the program conducts interviews with the clients and then offers appropriate measures such as focused language training, legal advice, internships, or further support during the first months of work. The network offers its services for all refugees that are allowed to work, which excludes refugees in the first three months after registration/filing for asylum, refugees who are obliged to live in a reception center and post-2014 migrants from so-called “safe countries of origin” who filed for asylum after the 31.08.2015 (see 1.2.2). The local university

inG-5initiated Länder funded language courses that go beyond B1 level (highest level that can be obtained in integration courses) to prepare refugees for integration into the tertiary education system (G-5-10).

In the two case studies in **Lower Saxony**, local stake holders made use of different *Länder* funded programs. This includes for example the so-called “Sprint classes” in vocational school that include classes on language, culture, the structure of the labor market and internships. The classes were open for post-2014 migrants up to 22 years. In G-2, the local school applied for the SPRINT-Program to secure students in a scarcely populated area with shrinking population (G-2-9). The school intensively invested into the SPRINT-classes and hired 10 new colleagues within the scope of the program (G-2-9b). In G-3, various programs to support women’s labor market integration were implemented (e.g., FIFA, DigiCARE). They include language training, professional-competences (e.g., writing applications, professional emails) and access to internships. The programs are implemented in close cooperation between the local *Jobcenters* and non-profit service providers (G-4-8; G-3-8).

In our case study in **Saxony-Anhalt** the local university made use of *Länder* funding to start preparation programs for post-2014 migrants. The program entailed intense language classes and preparation for special subjects, such as mathematics or biology. To enable migrants to attend these courses, the local university closely cooperated with the local *Jobcenter* because in general, students are not eligible to support on the basis of SGB II. However, most post-2014 migrants would not have been able to pursue the preparation program without financial support. The local *Jobcenter* in G-1 informally allowed participants of the preparation courses to attend and receive social welfare which was clearly outside of the usual decision-making framework of the Jobcenter. This practice was made possible through personal networks between the coordinator of the international office of the university and the local jobcenters which have been established and fostered through a local network by the coordinator for integration for all actors working on integration in G1. The practice was not communicated to the public, as this is a grey legal area still the head of the local Jobcenter agreed to this practice against the backdrop of the demographic situation (ageing and shrinking) in the locality (informal communication with G-1-10b after the interview).

Initiated by local level

On the local level, local *Jobcenters* are key actors because it was in their regular scope of work to support post-2014 migrants to access the labor market (see introduction to 3.3). In the first place, this concerns their clients’ participation in the BAMF-funded integration courses. As **integration courses** are the first part of the German national integration strategy, all post-2014 migrants who obtained protection status were invited to these courses. The practical coordination, e.g., who goes to which course, was carried out by the local *Jobcenters*. In 2015/2016 this was a challenge, as there were not enough language schools in the beginning and non-profit service providers with a focus other than language started to offer language



classes, sometimes with questionable quality (G-5-3; G-1-8). Experiences and narratives of good and bad language courses spread fast among post-2014 migrants. In some cases, people decided to wait another six months to enter the course of the preferred provider which led to conflicts between migrants and the employees of the *Jobcenter* (G-5-8; G-1-8, see also 4.1).

Beyond the coordination of integration courses, all local **Jobcenters** included in the study developed strategies to cope with the new situation. Some founded **special teams** or task forces for refugees' labor market integration (G-1; G-5; G-4; G-3). In some cases, these units were jointly funded and developed by national and local scale (G-3-9). Across localities, these teams were **intercultural**, mostly with one or two **Arabic speaking persons** and followed a '**case-management approach**'. This implied that employees in these teams had a more personal relationship to their clients through lower numbers of assigned persons (G-5-; G-1; G-1) or personal involvement and measures to increase trust such as giving out private phone numbers and writing invitation letters with a photo of the case manager on it (G-1). In G-4, the *Jobcenter* took the new situation in 2015 as occasion to draft a **local concept on integration into work for migrants** and strengthen their cooperation with the integration network of the county (G-1-8). In G-5, the case-management approach for post-2014 migrants has been so successful that it has been decided to **open this offer for all clients**, regardless of their migrant background (G-5-8).

Thus, local *Jobcenters* have been involved in events to bring employers and refugees together, sometimes by innovative ideas, such as soccer games or a boat race in G-5 (G-5-8). **Matching events** have also been organized by local policy makers and employer's organizations (G-1-2; G-1-13; G-1-13), and also between vocational schools and employers to find internships for refugee students (G-2-9). In G-5, where there were hardly any local companies at the first matching event, the *Jobcenter* offered **intercultural trainings for employers** to reduce prejudices against post-2014 migrants (G-5-8).

In cooperation with other local stakeholders, *Jobcenters* have also been involved in local programs for post-2014 migrants to "get to know the German labor market". In G-1, for example, the local hospital, together with a NGO, the local administration and the local *Jobcenter* developed in 2016 an **internship program** that offered refugees the possibility to experience working in hospital and nursing home (G-1-11). The program attracted primarily women, out of the 14 people who started the program, two continued after the program and started a vocational training. Still, the initiators estimate the program as successful, because it provided much needed support for refugees in the beginning and stressed the caritative and intercultural approach of the hospital (G-1-11).

Actors from the private business sector also actively engaged in supporting post-2014 migrants' access to the labor market. In the first place, this involved simply **employing refugees**. Big firms in economically strong localities are always in need of workers and could absorb qualified as well as unqualified personnel (G-4-12a; G-2-7). Some family-led companies, for example hairdressers or in the building sector, employed people without certificate and supported them in **post-qualification while working** (G-2-13; G-4-13). In G-3,



this was made possible on a larger scale through a support program of the Federal Labor Office's local branch that organized co-financing for employing post-2014 migrants as well as counselling for employers in case they encountered problems with their new employees (G-3-12a). In small businesses, employers and colleagues provided support beyond work, for example through searching a flat or childcare. Big companies, as in G-3, developed a special **three-months preparation course** for six refugees per year to access vocational training. Participants are selected in a competitive procedure, however once they enter the course, most of them complete their vocational training and enter the company (G-4-12). The program started because of the **Trade Union's pressure to develop support for refugees** (G-4-12). In G-4, the local Union of skilled craftsmen, together with local vocational schools initiated so-called **welcome guides** to support young refugees to enter vocational training by gaining required language level and organize internships (G-4-13). On a higher level, the Union of skilled craftsmen fosters the application of **modular vocational training** which is especially relevant for middle-aged people. Instead of spending three years in vocational training with very low wages, it is possible to complete single modules of the training while working. Exams are drafted and organized by local education providers in cooperation with the local Union of skilled craftsmen. This allows for more flexibility, such as for example oral exams (G-4-13) or more time for migrants with little language knowledge to complete their exams (G-2-9). Similar to the welcome guides, the Chamber of Commerce in G-5 established integration guides (G-5-3).

Lastly, **civil society actors, NGOs and private persons** have developed initiatives to provide post-2014 migrants better access to the labor market. One example would be **paid internships** at a local self-organized radio channel to provide migrants an idea of the German labor market and job opportunities. The internships were co-financed by BMFSJ within the volunteering program (*Bundesfreiwilligendienst*). Thus, countless activities by pro-migrant groups that support post-2014 migrants to reach the required language level to start vocational training or enter university, and one-to-one trainings to write applications exist in all localities. Across localities, **personal contacts** prove to be key to access the labor market. This is especially true in small localities where there are limited employment opportunities on-site.

4.4. Specific target groups

As outlined above (1.2.2 and 3.1), as soon as refugees receive their asylum status, they enter the general employment policies and have access to the related services and resources. The responsible stakeholders in all localities, especially local *Jobcenters*, have been actively developing programs and support for this group. Still, for some nationalities, e.g., Iranian and Afghan people as well as many African countries, asylum procedures take long. Some post-2014 migrants are still waiting for decision over their asylum application making it hard to enter the labor market, as for example access to integration courses are denied. In principle, asylum seekers are allowed to work (three months after arrival and permission of the Local



Immigration Office), but as they are not included in the *Jobcenters'* services, they rely on their own or the help of volunteers to find a job and to develop their language skills in German or other working languages within their field of profession. This fact has been highly criticized by members of the local *Jobcenters* who deem this practice unfair and as an obstacle to long term integration (G-4-8; G-3-8). There are separate, mostly Länder funded programs that support also **refugees with tolerated stay**, such as NAF in G-5 (G-5-8).

Across localities, we find programs that target **migrant women's integration into the labor market**. The initiators of the programs – mostly female – identify different obstacles for women which they aim to alleviate in their programs. The lack of childcare is often seen as main obstacle for women to work. Consequently, the *Jobcenter* in G-1 offered **internships with integrated childcare facilities** (G-1-8). In G-6, a *Länder*-funded counselling program targets women as they experience a lack of labor integration in the previous project cycle (G-6-10). Personal attitude and gender roles are perceived another obstacle of women's access to the labor market. In G-1, the local coordinator for education, for integration, the local Jobcenter and the university jointly organized a **lecture series on working and childcare** in Germany, including the presentation of a working (German-born) woman on how she organizes her day (G-1-10). The vocational coaching for women only in a migrant counselling in G-2 is designed in a similar rationale (G-2-4b). Programs that inform women about possibilities on the German labor market are another main focus. In G-3, the responsible person at the *Jobcenter* has identified women as "her" target group (G-3-8). As the *Jobcenter* provides helpful co-funding, her rich networks mainly offer programs for women's labor market integration. She approached all the institutions she worked with previously and tried to win them for programs supporting refugee women's labor market integration. These programs combine internships and workshops on labor market skills. There is for example one course where women have theoretical courses on the labor market three days a week (e.g. what kind of jobs exist, how to write an application, acquiring digital competences, etc) and two days they work in (unpaid) internships. Actors in G-3 justify their focus on women with reference to the integration of former (referring to the so-called guest worker period) labor migrants' wives who are seen as lacking integration in the labor market and in society (G-3-8; G-3-10; G-3-10a).

Across localities, it is striking that **programs mostly address young people**. Compared to their parents they are seen as a promising target group by companies, Trade Unions (G-3-12; G-2-16) and local policy makers (G-3-3; G-1-2), because they will undergo the formal German school system or/and vocational training. On the contrary, middle-aged men are seen as less promising group, who has problems to adjust to the new labor structure (G-1-8; G-3-12; G-1-10). A local coordinator for education from G1 describes the situation as follows (G-1-10):

"Where I really see needs are men aged 50 years and older, it is extremely hard for them. This target group was not acknowledged as target group, nothing was done for them. In my view, it would be so important to strengthen integration policy for them. Because in their society, the men is



the bread winner, and now his situation has changed completely, he is dependent from social welfare. This must be so frustrating! He can't do anything, he won't learn the language with 55, 60 years and to ever enter the German labor market is not realistic."



CASE	WholeCOMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Measure(s)	Actor(s) involved	Target group(s)
G-1	Small town, Type D locality	Language barriers; Acknowledgement of certificates; Social climate; Women’s labor market integration; Understanding the German Labor market	Language courses, including DeuFöV; IQ Network Matching events for employers and refugees; Internship with childcare, course on female career Internship programs; Special Unit in the local JC	Local coordinators for integration & education; Local jobcenter; local university; pro-migrant groups; NGOs; Local companies (e.g. local hospital)	Post-2014 migrants with protection status; women;
G2	Rural area, Type D locality	Lack of Jobs for unqualified workers; Lack of Public Transport; Acknowledgement of certificates; Understanding the German Labor market; Women’s labor market integration	Language courses, Matching events for employers and refugees; IQ Network SPRINT-classes in vocational school; Internship programs Counselling for women	Local Jobcenter Pro-Migrant Groups Vocational School Local companies Non-profit service providers	Post-2014 migrants with protection status;
G3	Medium-sized town Type C locality	High numbers of post-2014 migrants Language barriers; Acknowledgement of certificates; Women’s labor market integration;	Immigration stop; Language courses, including DeuFöV; IQ Network Special programs for women Internship programs	Jobcenter; Federal Labor Office; Private Companies; Non-profit service providers	Post-2014 migrants with protection status; women;



		Understanding the German Labor market	Support Service for employers Special Unit in the local JC		
G4	Small town, Type A locality	Language barriers; Acknowledgement of certificates; Lack of Public Transport; Understanding the German Labor market Women's labor market integration;	Language courses, including DeuFöV; IQ Network Internship programs Support by Employer's Organisation; Special programs for women Special Unit in the local JC	Local Jobcenter Pro-Migrant Groups Vocational School Local companies Non-profit service providers Pro-Migrant groups; Regional coordinator for integration	Post-2014 migrants with protection status; women;
G5	Medium-sized town, type B locality	Language barriers; Acknowledgement of certificates; Social climate; Understanding the German Labor market; Special obstacles for refugees with tolerated stay	Language courses, including DeuFöV; IQ Network; Intercultural training for employers; Program NAF; Special Unit in the local JC	Local Jobcenter Pro-Migrant Groups Non-profit service providers Pro-Migrant groups Local coordinator for integration	Post-2014 migrants with protection status; Refugees with tolerated stay
G6	Rural area, type B locality	Language barriers, cultural barriers, Social climate; Women's labor market integration.	Language courses, counselling of service provider for all integration obstacles (housing, child care etc.) while looking for a job; Special target group: women	Local Jobcenter, Non-profit service providers, pro-migrant groups.	Post-2014 migrants with work permit; women.

Table 2: Case-by-case summary of results/findings regarding the area of employment



5. Access to other resources and services

In this section, we turn to three topics that evolved as important during fieldwork: (1) access to language courses and conversation classes, (2) the role of neighborhood centers and social meeting places and (3) the COVID-Pandemic as cross-sectional challenge.

5.1. Language classes and conversation classes

Since 2005, language classes are one core element of German integration policy (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007). The so-called “integration classes” (**Integrationskurse**) are an offer to most migrants in Germany, and some groups are even obliged to participate (level A1 to B1). For refugees with a certain protection status, the classes are free of charge if participants start within the first year after protection was granted (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2016). Eligible to integration courses are refugees with asylum status, asylum seekers with “good perspectives to stay”, asylum seekers with good prospects for labor market integration who have entered Germany before August 2019, people with tolerated stay after § 60a Abs. 2 Satz 3 AufenthG and people with residence permit. The program excludes asylum seekers during the procedure (except for asylum seekers with good perspectives to stay), a share of people with tolerated stay as well as people with unclear identity. Integration courses are funded by the BAMF and implemented on the local level by education providers. *Jobcenters* and, in some cases, local administrations (G-5-3) support coordination on the local level. Integration courses comprise language classes (600 UE) and “cultural integration classes” (Orientierungskurs) (100 UE). They offer language courses up to B1 level.

Given the restriction of eligible persons for the federally funded integration courses, **several Länder apply their own language programs for refugees** that are not covered by the national programs (e.g., Landessprachprogramm in Saxony and Sprachkursförderrichtlinie in Saxony-Anhalt). Conversation classes and tuitions by volunteers are another pillar of language training. These initiatives meet shortcomings of differing quality and levels in language classes, or even substitute language courses if they do not exist, for example in rural areas (G-2-4a).

a) Main challenges/obstacles

A first obstacle to access language classes is the differing **availability**. In small localities, there have not always been enough education providers, or eligible refugees to provide access to integration courses (G-4-15; G-2-4b, G-6-4). In the rural area of G-2, it took several months to provide language classes in a village where a considerable number of migrants was allocated. In the meantime, volunteers stepped in, organized a classroom and “shifts of teachers” to offer at least some language classes (G-2-4b). Due to the small number of migrants in rural areas, it might take months until the next level language course has enough participants (G-2-15) or the courses are not prepared to cover special needs such as child care. This presents an obstacle for the participation of parents.



There is a **lack of funding for language classes beyond “integration courses”** that would be open for people with **precarious residence status** or unidentified identities (G-5-9). If there is funding for such courses depends on the specific focus of the *Länder* level. The same is true for the funding of language **courses beyond B1**. However, entering university and starting vocational training requires language level of B2 or C1 (G-5-8; G-5-9; G-4-13). While integration classes **only target adults or youth**, language training for children is provided in the context of schooling or in kindergarten. The coordinator for education in G-1 points to serious problems that arise for children who do not go to kindergarten, because these children enter primary school without any German language knowledge (G-1-10).

Not only the availability of language courses was problematic in 2015/16, but also the **quality**. Several stakeholders pointed out that language training for migrants has become an *“industry since 2015”*, (G-5-3), and that the educational market was more and more entered by non-profit service providers that had not been active in the field of language training and did not have the competencies for language classes (G-1-8; G-5-3). In rural areas, more language classes are provided by municipal (adult) education centres (Volkshochschulen). In larger towns or cities, migrants can choose between different educational providers. As BAMF-funded language classes can start only with a certain number of participants, there are **competitions between education providers** to attract “customers” to their language classes. This negatively impacts the relationship between local stakeholders in the field of integration (G-3-3; G-1-10).

The differing quality of the courses has created (sometimes justified) **narratives among refugees** about “good” and “bad” language courses. Migrants refuse to participate in courses deemed “bad” and accept long waiting times, even up to years, until they start language courses (G-1-8). As the standard scheme of labor market integration by the local *Jobcenters* foresees language courses as the first step, such decision can result in one year of waiting without any other occupation.

Finally, the manifold language programs of the national level, *Länder* level and local level with their different foci, such as integration courses, profession-specific course, part-time and full-time language courses leads to **confusion and lack of understanding** among migrants and service providers (G-1-8; G-3-4, G-6-8). There is a lack of clear information about the structure of the language courses as well as on how they build on each other, so refugees often depend on support to decide which language level and course to attend (G-3-4).

b) Actors involved

Actors from various scales are involved in language courses. On the national level these are **responsible persons at BAMF** as they grant funding for education providers and approve post-2014 migrants’ applications to the language classes. The same scheme exists on **the Länder level** in the respective programs. Actors of these scales are in exchange with local coordinators at *Jobcenter* (G-1-8; G-3-8; G-3-9; G-4-8; G-5-8; G-5-8) and members of the local administration, such as coordinators for education (G-1-8) and coordinators for integration (G-5-3). **Tensions** arise between



the national scale and local scale **over the selection of education providers and the quality of the courses**. Actors from the local administration would wish to bring in their specific knowledge on the quality of local education providers (G-1-10; G-5-3).

In G-3, where great numbers of post-2014 migrants arrived in 2015, the local *Jobcenter* became eligible to grant access and assign persons to language courses locally, because local actors as well as BAMF were overstrained by the situation (G-3-9). Education providers in all localities play a key role in offering integration courses and other language classes (e.g. G-1-10). Among them are also **vocational schools and universities** with specific language programs as preparation courses (G-2-9; G-5-10; G-1-10a).

Pro-migrant groups and individual volunteers are important actors as their meeting places and social contacts give migrants the possibility to practice language in everyday life and get support in case the quality of the language class is not sufficient or if someone needs more explanation to acquire the language.

c) Policies, initiatives, and practices (what) that foster/hinder access

Beyond standard integration courses, local initiatives have been developed to support language acquisition, especially for those who are – for different reasons – not able to participate in the BAMF-courses. Due to the general lack of sufficient language courses in small localities, volunteers organized language courses (G-4-4a; G-2-4a, G-2-4b; G-5-4) and conversation programs, such as ‘**Sprachpaten**’ (matching between one volunteer and one post-2014 migrant in G-4-4a; G-1-10a) or **conversation cafés** (G-2-4b, G-4-4a; G-5-4). Especially conversation programs are also meant to provide **space of encounter** between locals and migrants (G-4-4; G-2-4).

Vocational schools and universities offer special **programs to gain relevant certificates to enter university** and start vocational training (B2 or C1) (G-1-10a; G-5-10; G-2-9). These programs are normally tied to a selection process considering final school exams or university degrees to include especially people who will actually be able to enter university (G-1-10a.) There are also programs by foundations that allow selected post-2014 migrants to attend language courses beyond B1 (G-3-4). One special focus are **language courses for women** that provide **childcare** (G4; G3; G1). These courses are organized locally and can be tied to programs for integration into work (G-3-10a; G-1-8). It is somehow irrational that while the initiators of these courses tend to complain about “traditional gender roles” in migrant families, these courses target only women and not parents.

Many of the local language classes are tied to programs for **integration into work**. Some of them have been initiated by local companies and offer extra language training at the workplace (G-4-13; G-4-12; G-4-12a). Other courses are attached to vocational schools, such as the SPRINT-Program in Lower Saxony (G-2-9). Again, there are special courses for women that include language training and a general preparation and orientation on the labor market (G-1-8; G-3-8; G-3-9).



Especially in rural places, there **is limited access to language classes due to long distances** to language schools. Depending on a special permit, it is allowed to take part in BAMF language classes in neighboring counties. But this is a **complex administrative procedure** that is not known to all public service providers, e.g., the *Jobcenter*. For example, in G-6, the *Jobcenter* employee was not sure whether this is a “legally grey area” (G-6-8) to recommend language classes in the neighboring counties or who would be responsible to issue these permits.

d) Specific target groups

Due to the importance of language in the national integration plan, migrants are the target of language courses. Within the group of migrants, special target groups are women (G-3; G-2), young people who want to enter university or start vocational training (G-1-10a, G-5-10), employed persons at the workplace and, in *Länder* programs and pro-migrant groups’ activities, those who are not eligible to the standard language courses. Nevertheless, in smaller localities not all types of courses are offered.

5.2. Neighborhood centres and social meeting places

Across all localities, neighborhood centers and social meeting places are attributed an **important role** in fostering integration and social cohesion (G-3-3; G-3-8; G-4-2; G-4-3; G-5-3). This is in line with the understanding on the national level that **integration happens locally** and through interaction of long-term residents and newly arrived persons (Deutsche Bundesregierung, 2007, p. 19)

In how far neighborhood centers and social meeting places work on the topic of migration and with migrants depends on the presence of migrants in the neighborhood as well as the general **experience with diversity** in a locality. The value that intercultural work is granted on the local political agenda differs between the case studies. In G-4, for example, the social meeting place that deals with intercultural affairs and encounter between locals and migrants works as the locality’s “*general agent for migrant affairs*” (G-4-4b) and is funded by the local administration. In G-1, the intercultural center fears to lose its building that is at provided by the local administration, because the topic of integration becomes less popular in the locality.

Still, in all case studies, social meeting places and neighborhood centers reacted to some extent to the arrival of post-2014 migrants through creating **new programs and activities** for this group, but there exist obstacles to access and to ensure the existence of these institutions.



a) Main challenges/obstacles

A first problem to access social meeting places is the large distance in most of the rural areas, combined with the problematic of **poor public transport**. As post-2014 migrants must get a German driving license (and a car) before being able to use individual transport, this is a serious issue in rural areas and migrants simply do not reach the meeting places, especially in winter times when it is too cold to ride 20km by bicycle (G-2-4; G-2-4a; G-2-4b; G-2-15). In G-6, there are less established migrant meeting places, so many refugees go to the nearby larger city to meet with a migrant community (G-6-4). Opportunities to meet with locals are social institutions, such as sports clubs. Especially local football clubs immediately opened up to asylum seeking migrants and their children, and many of them profited from their new members who were young at age and many of them talented and compassionate soccer players. However, other social institutions proved to be less open, on the one hand due to a rather exclusive habitus, on the one hand by hard rules for access which could not be met by the post 2014 migrants, such as **German citizenship** in some *Schützenvereinen* (rifle associations) (G-2-4b). Other institutions might be open for post-2014 migrants to join, but still turn out to be less welcoming places **where conservative, right-wing tendencies** make it hard for newcomers to become part of the group (G-2-4b).

Encounters between long-term residents and post-2014 migrants in neighborhood centers are not always free of conflict. One interviewee in G-3 recounts how existing **vulnerable groups**, in her case older, less affluent people **felt excluded** from the place as new programs were developed for post-2014 migrants in 2015/16 (G-3-10a). Similar stories came up regarding education, social services and meeting places for **established migrant groups**, such as people with a Turkish background and people from the former Soviet Union (G-3-3; G-3-8; G-3-10b). There have also been **conflicts between volunteers and refugees** in social meeting places that result from different expectations to each other. Examples are reservations of German feminists against migrant women who wear headscarves in a cooking club (G-4-4) or disappointment of politically left refugee supporters because of the lacking “ideological standpoint” of refugees: *“I can say that in some political groups, people were disappointed that refugees were not all left-wing, progressive communist people, but just normal humans who like to wear white sneakers and who care about fashion”* (G-2-4:6).

Further, the **political neglect of the topic of migration** creates obstacles for intercultural meeting places to exist, such as in the case of G-1 where the center fears to lose its building (G-1-4a). On a larger scale, most of the social meeting places and neighborhood centers rely on **temporary funding** only. They work on project basis and there is constant staff fluctuation towards the end of the funding period. This results in a loss of contact, and sometimes even in the loss of a whole migrant community if the speaker of their mother tongue disappears (G-1-10; G-3-10). Constant funding for neighborhood institutions and social meeting centers do not exist across the case studies.

In the contested political climate in G-1, social meeting places of left-wing activists and migrants also experience **threats and right-wing violence** (G-1-4a; G-1-7). This restricts the scope of their work and makes them risky places where people are afraid to go to.



b) Actors involved

Important actors to ensure access to social meeting places are in the first places **fundors**. This involves funding from EU scale (mostly ESF), national programs, *Länder* programs, funding from local administrations and from foundations and the private sector. Funding programs often impact to a considerable extent which topics and target groups are worked on in the social meeting places (see below).

MOs, NGOs and non-profit service providers are the most common providers of social meeting places and neighborhood institutions. They also engage in coordination and support of **volunteers** (all localities). In this sense, **churches** also play an important role, as they offer volunteers rooms in their buildings in several localities (G-4-4; G-5-4; G-3-10b). Thus, weekly church services are points of contact for Christian migrants (G-4-4; G-5-8).

Formal education institutions, such as universities (G-1-10; G-1-10a, G-5-10), schools (G-2-9), kindergartens (G-3-10) also provide spaces of encounter between locals and migrants. However, in the last years of the COVID-pandemic, possibilities of encounter between adults, both students and parents, have been restricted (G-3-10).

c) Policies, initiatives, and practices that foster/hinder access

Across all localities, neighborhood centers and social institutions **adjusted their programs** to the growing number of post-2014 migrants. This touched different topics, such as the establishment of migrant counselling (G-3-10; G-3-10b) or the enlargement of existing counselling services to other social meeting places (G-2-4a), intercultural cafés to create encounter (G-4-4; G-3-10; G-2-4) and social activities and counselling in “new” languages (e.g. arabic and kurdisch) or with interpreters that speak these languages (e.g., G-1-10; G-3-10; G-3-10a; G-4-10). The adjustment to the new target groups was fostered by the availability of **funding for refugee integration** on EU level, national and Länder level. Current funding schemes highly impact the agenda and programs of the social meeting places (G-3-10; G-1-10; G-1-4a).

Other meeting places also developed initiatives to include post-2014 migrants. In some localities, **sports clubs** were welcoming post-2014 migrants, especially children, with extra courses (G-5-8, G-5-4) and reduced membership fees (G-4-4; G-2-4b). **Youth Clubs** are important places for post-2014 migrants, not necessarily through new programs but through awareness of young refugee’s situation and general support (all localities). Migrant Organizations – if existing in the locality - also provide considerable support for integration through translating, showing newcomers around and granting access to social networks (G-3-6).

Individual volunteers and pro-migrant groups bring the topic of **migration to places that are not necessarily in touch with post-2014 migrants** through using their rooms. Churches (G-4-4a, G-5-4);



cultural institutions (G-2-4b) and universities (G-5-10; G-1-10a) and the people present become confronted with migration-related topics and post-2014 migrants.

In G-3, the arrival of post-2014 migrants in the place raised awareness for the importance of neighborhood institutions for social cohesion. To stabilize their work, a **continuing funding** for the next five years is foreseen (G-3-3).

d) Specific target groups

Generally, social meeting places and neighborhood institutions are open for everyone, and since 2015 many programs especially target post-2014 migrants. In some cases, the meeting places started with the reception of post-2014 migrants and expanded to all people (e.g., a charity store in G-6 during the corona pandemic). Still, when looking into the programs of the meeting places, besides conversation classes, programs tend to be for **children, youth or women**. They have different themes, such as sewing cafés for women (G-2-4b; G-3-15), media workshops for women and teenage girls (G-1-7; G-5-7) or leisure programs for children. G-3 is the only locality where a group for **male migrants** is about to be established (G-3-10b). The program is a reaction to a clustering of problems amongst post-2014 migrants, especially alcohol and drug abuse, gambling addiction and personal issues due to the loss of the social role as a bread winner. Although serious issues for migrant men were named across localities, especially the problem to find a new social role, find a wife and found a family, G-3 is the only place where this turned into a special program.

5.3. The COVID-Pandemic as cross-sectional challenge

Since March 2020, the COVID-pandemic has changed private and working life in many ways. Across localities, the pandemic was mentioned by our interviewees as harshly impacting their work, sometimes even as destroying everything that has been achieved before (G-3-15; G-1-10). In the following, we outline the effects of the pandemic on integration and present the strategies local stakeholders have developed to cope with the situation.

Effects of the pandemic on integration

“And then, Corona came. People were back at home. And as long as people are at home, it is not possible that integration happens. Everything that we had done so far was gone, I would say [...] Corona ruined everything we had done before.”
(Migrant counseling in G-3:4).



The quote of this interviewee from a migrant counselling and neighborhood center in G-3 aptly describes the effects and threats for social cohesion that the pandemic and thereto related social distancing brought about. The pandemic negatively impacted/impacts the life of post-2014 migrants in many ways:

Due to the unstable economic situation, many post-2014 migrants **lost their jobs**. This is especially true for unskilled workers and people who entered the company recently (which affects most of the post-2014 migrants), because they were the first to be fired (G-4 -15; G-3-10a; G-3-15). Internships programs stopped as soon as people were sent to home office; in nursing institutions, only general staff was allowed (G-3-8; G-3-10a). People who did not have a job before the pandemic face big problems: *“For those, who did not have a job before the pandemic, it is like on the Titanic, those who did not get a lifeboat. The whole system broke down.”* (G-3-9: 13). Interviewees observe a general loss of motivation and confidence on migrants’ side during the pandemic and also among members of non-profit service providers as things do not seem to get any better (G-3-10a).

Along with schools and universities, **German language classes** were closed in the beginning of the pandemic. Some education providers managed to move their courses to digital classrooms, however online courses were less effective, and many people stayed behind (G-3-9). In smaller localities, education providers did not offer any online classes. As there are no other providers in the locality, many migrants did not have the possibility to attend any German classes for at least one year (G-2-4; G-4-15). Thus, parents were confronted with home schooling of their children which made it less likely that they themselves attend the language classes, especially if there is only one laptop in the family (G-3-9, G-6-1).

The pandemic has further **slowed down administrative processes** and made it **hard to reach institutions**. Administrations were closed, it was prohibited to enter official buildings and the employees were sent to home office, sometimes without the possibility to forward their phone calls or access the servers of the administration (G-5-15; G-1-4; G-1-4a; G-4-15). However, time limits for legal procedures, such as termination of residence permit, continued to run and it was not clear how migrants should handle this. Until today, most public services are only available after request and with **appointment**. Some services have intensified their **phone counselling** which the administration experiences as very efficient (G-1-8). This also applies to local officials:

“I was surprised myself, because last year I had a lot of new cases and I thought, ‘How am I going to do that?’ I’ve never seen them in person. And of course it’s nicer to meet them in person. But yes, it was ok.” (G-6-8)

But for migrants this creates **serious problems**, as talking via phone makes it more difficult to understand and for data security reasons, third persons, e.g., pro-migrant groups and volunteers, are not allowed to call on some else’s behalf (G-1-4). In some places, immigration authorities fail to provide basic services until today. Especially **processes of naturalization do not happen** since more than two years (G-5-15; G-5-7; G-2-4; G-4-4).



The pandemic led to a **retreat in the closest private spaces**. With the closing of social meeting places and social distancing, volunteers have lost contact to migrants (G-6-4; G-2-4; G-2-4a; G-4-4). Older volunteers who are the majority in small towns and rural areas did completely stop their work:

“But then Corona came. And this destroyed so much for people. Suddenly, there was fear to meet someone in his flat. [...] We are a place where many old people live, they had been involved in support. But then they were scared to become ill. Our group started to fall apart. Our well-organized group stopped working because we could not meet anymore.” (Older volunteer in G-2:7).

Also among post-2014 migrants, interviewees observed the **retreat in ethnic communities** and families (G-3-15; G-3-3). This resulted on a **loss of language** skills (G-1-10; G-3-10a) and a **general loss of contact**. Social workers recount that their role has changed from social worker and contact person to office manager (G-5-4a; G-5-4b). Spaces of encounter have been closed and it is hard to get people back (G-3-8). Even migrant counselling who had been important points of contact for all kinds of problems, had difficulties to reach clients, especially new clients (G-5-15; G-1-15). Employees of the counselling have lost insights into the community within the last two years (G-4-15). Due to the complete lack of serious encounter, relationships between locals and migrants have become worse and dissatisfaction over the other dominates (G-4-15; G-3-15). The pandemic has reinforced a general mistrust towards migrants. In G-2, locals call the police as they see some migrants gathering in the intercultural café in a pandemic summer (G-2-4). Right-wing groups made migrants responsible for the pandemic (G-5-15; G-5-8).

Lastly, the Corona-pandemic has become the **dominating topic** in politics, society and media. It is hard to gain attention for other issues, and integration and migration have been lost as a topic in political debates (all localities). This is especially true in localities where Corona measures are contested (G-5, G-6). One interviewee from a pro-migrant group recounts how they protested against the Corona measure of locking migrants up in shared accommodations. It was impossible to make this point without being seen as a right-wing protester who generally rejects all COVID-measures (G-5-4). Also, volunteer groups changed their focus from refugee’s support to social support during the pandemic as this was seen as most necessary (G-5-4; G-6-4).

Working despite and with the pandemic

Local actors developed different strategies how to continue working despite the pandemic. One approach was to **digitize contact**. Volunteers created WhatsApp-groups to keep in touch (G-4-4a; G-2-4a) and migrant counselling was conducted as videoconference or via WhatsApp (G-4-15; G-1-15; G-2-15; G-5-15). Since 2020, the nationally founded Migration counselling service (MbE) has developed the digital counselling platform mbeon which is used in two of our localities (G-4; G-5). After the first complete lockdown, migrant counselling conducted their **work through the window** (G-3-15, G-5-10) and in the second year of the pandemic with appointment and **masks** (migrant counselling in all localities). In pandemic spring and summers, volunteers engaged in **outdoor**



activities, such as picnicks and walks to anyhow stay in touch (G-4-4a). Neighborhood centers also **supported the vaccination campaign** through approaching people personally and possibilities to get vaccinated in the center (G-3-10b).

However, the research also showed that public authorities proved to be **restrictive and inflexible** in the new situation. Until today (July 2022), the delay of service provision is explained by the pandemic. To some extent this can be explained by the transfer of people from all administrative units to the COVID-teams and thus lack of work force in other units. Still, in the third year of the pandemic this is troubling. This is even more true as **no common strategy or obligation how to ensure the delivering of services in pandemic times exists**. It is up to the personal engagement in how far social services were working in the last two years.

Considering the immense challenges we presented in this report, it is alarming how limited the scope of actions to mitigate the effects of the pandemic are. Until today, it remains an unsolved question how to put the effects of the illness in relation to other risks, such as social isolation, domestic violence, threats to social cohesion and individual problems in education and mental health. This concerns society as a whole, but especially vulnerable groups of which post-2014 migrants are part of.



CASE	WholeCOMM typology	Major obstacle(s)	Measure(s)	Actor(s) involved	Target group(s)
Language courses and conversation classes					
G-1	Type D locality	<p>(Insufficient) quality of language courses -> migrants prefer to wait for free courses of renowned providers</p> <p>Women attend language classes to lesser extent than men</p> <p>Integration courses only up to B1 level</p>	<p>Jobcenter persuades people to attend available courses to avoid waiting times</p> <p>Special courses with childcare</p> <p>Preparation programs for university, up to C1</p>	<p>Jobcenter</p> <p>Local coordinators for education and integration</p> <p>Pro-migrant groups,</p> <p>Local university; education providers</p>	<p>Post-2014 migrants;</p> <p>People willing to enter university</p> <p>Women</p>
G2	Type D locality	<p>Lack of language courses in rural area; denied access for people during asylum process</p> <p>Integration courses only up to B1 level</p>	<p>Volunteers offer language classes</p> <p>Vocational schools offer language classes</p>	<p>Volunteers and pro-migrant groups;</p> <p>Vocational school; education providers</p>	<p>Post-2014 migrants;</p> <p>Students at vocational school</p>
G3	Type C locality	<p>Sheer number of arriving migrants</p>	<p>Local JC grants access to courses (instead of BAMF)</p>	<p>Local Jobcenter;</p> <p>Non-profit service providers, education providers;</p>	<p>Post-2014 migrants,</p> <p>Women,</p>



		<p>(Insufficient) quality of language courses -> migrants prefer to wait for free courses of renowned providers</p> <p>Women attend language classes to lesser extent than men</p> <p>Integration courses only up to B1 level</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Extra language courses for women</p> <p>Language programs by local companies</p>	<p>Local companies</p>	<p>workers</p>
G4	Type A locality	<p>Women attend language classes to lesser extent than men</p> <p>Integration courses only up to B1 level</p> <p>Lack of language classes, denied access for people during asylum process</p>	<p>Special programs for women</p> <p>Language programs by local companies and Chamber of Crafts</p> <p>Volunteers offer conversation classes</p>	<p>Local Jobcenter;</p> <p>Non-profit service providers, education providers;</p> <p>Local companies</p> <p>Volunteers</p>	<p>Post-2014 migrants;</p> <p>Women</p> <p>Refugees who's access to standard language courses is denied</p>
G5	Type B locality	<p>(Insufficient) quality of language courses</p>	<p>Volunteers offer conversation classes</p>	<p>Local Jobcenter; local coordinator for integration;</p>	<p>Post-2014 migrants;</p> <p>People willing to enter university;</p>



		Lack of language classes, denied access for people during asylum process Integration courses only up to B1 level	Program NAF Plus, including language courses Program by the local university	Non-profit service providers, education providers; volunteers	Refugees who's access to standard language courses is denied
G6	Type B locality	No professional language classes in the town, only classes of volunteers No available language classes for women with child care throughout the county	Volunteers offer language classes several times a week Migrants go to language classes in the nearer city (30min by public transport)	Volunteers, Jobcenter of the county; (Non-profit service in the nearest city)	Post-2014 migrants, Refugees who's access to standard language courses is denied
Neighborhood centers and social meeting places					
G-1	Type D locality	Lack of funding, lack of political recognition of MOs; Lack of acknowledgement of right-wing attitudes as a threat; Poor funding	MOs established programs for post-2014 migrants; Raise awareness for right-wing tendencies; Application for ESF/national funding; Adjust/new programs for post-2014 migrants	NGOs, MOs, Pro-migrant groups; individual volunteers	Post-2014 migrants; Women; Children/Youths
G2	Type D Locality	Poor public transport; Conservative tendencies in some social meeting places;	Reduced membership fees for post-2014 migrants; Adjust /new programs for post-2014 migrants;	Pro-Migrant groups; sports clubs, Churches; NGOs; individual volunteers	Post-2014 migrants; Women; Children/ Youths



		Poor funding	Opening of Cultural Institutions and churches for migration-related topics; Application for ESF/national funding		
G3	Type C Locality	Conflicts between locals and post-2014 migrants; Poor funding	Adjust/new programs for post-2014 migrants; Application for ESF/national funding with support of local JC; Opening of Churches for migration-related topics; Administration assures funding for next 5 years;	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Churches; Local administration; Jobcenter	Post-2014 migrants; Women; Men; Children/ Youths
G4	Type A Locality	Poor public transport; Poor funding; Conflicts between locals and post-2014 migrants	Adjust/new programs for post-2014 migrants; Application for ESF/national funding; Opening of Churches for migration-related topics; Funding through local governance	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Churches; Local administration;	Post-2014 migrants; Women; Children/ Youths
G5	Type B locality	Conflicts between locals and post-2014 migrants; Poor funding	Adjust/new programs for post-2014 migrants; Application for ESF/national funding; Opening of Churches for migration-related topics;	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Churches; Local administration;	Post-2014 migrants; Women; Children/ Youths



G6	Type B locality	Lack of social meeting places (many social activities of migrants in nearest city); conflicting atmosphere due to right-wing protests	Volunteers provide their social services also to locals not only newcomers; volunteers engage in town council and different alliances for democracy	Volunteers, major, churches, non-profit service providers	Migrants, all locals
The Corona-Pandemic as a cross-sectional challenge					
G-1	Type D locality	Social distancing; Closing of education institutions and administrations; Enforcing prejudices against migrants; retreat to privacy; loss of jobs	Phone service in administrations; Pro-migrant groups offer activities depending on the pandemic situation; online language courses	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Local administration;	(Post-2014) migrants; volunteers
G2	Type D Locality	Social distancing; Closing of education institutions and administrations; No online language courses; Loss of jobs; Enforcing prejudices against migrants; retreat to privacy	Phone service in administrations; Pro-migrant groups offer activities depending on the pandemic situation; digitizing contacts	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Local administration;	(Post-2014) migrants; volunteers
G3	Type C Locality	Social distancing; Closing of education institutions and administrations;	Phone service in administrations; Pro-migrant groups offer activities depending on the	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Local administration;	(Post-2014) migrants; volunteers, locals



		Loss of jobs; Enforcing prejudices against migrants; retreat to privacy	pandemic situation; digitizing contacts; online language courses		
G4	Type A Locality	Social distancing; Closing of education institutions and administrations; no online language courses; loss of jobs Enforcing prejudices against migrants; retreat to privacy	Phone service in administrations; Pro-migrant groups offer activities depending on the pandemic situation; digitizing contacts	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Local administration;	(Post-2014) migrants; volunteer
G5	Type B locality	Social distancing; Closing of education institutions and administrations; no online language courses; loss of jobs Enforcing prejudices against migrants; retreat to privacy	Phone service in administrations; Pro-migrant groups offer activities depending on the pandemic situation; digitizing contacts; online language courses	Non-profit service providers; Individual volunteers, Local administration;	(Post-2014) migrants; volunteers
G6	Type B locality	Social distancing; No online language courses; Protests against covid measures of right-wing extremist, closing of many service-providers	Phone service of volunteer group, neighborhood service, outdoor counselling	Non-profit service providers; Volunteers, Local administration	(Post-2014) migrants; volunteers

6. Conclusion

This report has focused on post-2014 migrants' access to housing, the labor market, language classes and social meeting places in six case studies in Germany. The report investigated these essential spheres of daily life along obstacles and challenges, the actors involved, strategies to improve access to these services as well as specific target groups that these strategies address. The report also looked at the challenges that were created by the COVID-pandemic in the field of integration of post-2014 migrants. The conclusion sums the key findings in the five areas and compares findings across localities considering structural factors, the size of the locality, experience with diversity and the local political tradition. We observed **complex and diversified configurations in each locality** and actors from one field in a single locality may differ in their response to the arrival of post-2014 migrants. For example, some family-owned businesses in G-1 were extremely supportive towards refugees while others in the same locality were very sceptical. The reflections we present below present a description in an ideal-type style and should not be taken for granted as the only possible explanation for differences between localities.

For all fields it should be noted that integration is a **voluntary administrative task** of German municipalities that is not per se part of the municipal budget. Thus, the existence of programs depends on the active engagement of local actors to apply for funding from the *Länder* level, national level or from the EU. This finding is in line with previous research on integration policy making in German SMsTRAs (Günther et al., 2020). Obstacles to apply for funding from a higher level are lack of information, knowledge of funds and lacking resources (staff and time) to engage in the application process. This especially applies to small localities (ibid, p.23).

Comparing findings in the field of housing

A first difference between localities is the general **availability of housing**. This can be explained on the one hand by **structural factors**, namely the **demographic situation**. Locality G-1 differs significantly from the other case studies, because due to population shrinking, there is a considerable stock of free housing available which will intensify in the next years given the high average age of the population. In localities that see a **growth or stable number of inhabitants**, such as G-3, G-4 and G-5, the housing market is especially tight.

Case studies that are located in the **Eastern Part of Germany** tend to have **larger stocks of public housing**, partly those built during the GDR. This applies to G-1, G-5 and G-6 who still hold their public housing stock. In G-5, however, the growth of inhabitants has been so massive in the last decade that even these housing blocks are occupied.

Beside these structural factors, the shortage of housing can be explained by **changing housing patterns**, such as more single-person households, but also domestic migration to rural areas. This trend was fostered by the COVID-pandemic as remote working has become more common. The effects of this development were most apparent in G-2 and G-5. These are



scenic localities in a rural area and at the coast of the Baltic Sea. Wealthy urbanites and retirees enter the housing market and established a second home in the localities (G-2-13; G-5-3). As they can afford high rents, this worsened the housing situation also in places where housing has not been an issue five years ago.

Comparing the cases, it becomes apparent that the **size of the localities** affects the **ownership structures** of the housing market. In rural areas and small towns, the housing stock is mainly held by single private owners (G-2, G-4, G-6), while in the small town of G-1 (because of the GDR history) and the medium-sized towns public and private companies are the key actors on the housing market. We observe that **different ownership structures require different strategies** to improve post-2014 migrants' access to housing: In localities where most post-2014 migrants live in municipally owned buildings (G-1; G-5; G-6), local administrations have a say and can impact the housing situation of post-2014 migrants. In G-1 and G-3 for instance, neighbourhood conflicts are met by social workers of the municipally owned housing company. However, **public housing companies can also create obstacles** for post-2014 migrants as the restrictive housing policy in G-5 shows. In G-4 and G-2, a large share of housing is owned by single private persons. The challenge here is to convince the owners to rent out their flats to post-2014 migrants. This requires personal approaching of people and networking. In G-3, the housing stock where most of the post-2014 migrants live is owned by a private investor and local actors do not feel to have any influence on the situation.

Local **experience with diversity** does not serve well to explain differences between localities in the field of housing. While some actors indicate that existing migrant communities might be more willing to rent to other migrants (G-4-2; G-3-12a), it is not clear if this is the case or just a preconception of non-migrant actors about migrant behaviour. Across localities, regardless of the local experience with diversity, we find patterns of **racism and prejudice** against "the others". This is even worsened if people depend on social welfare and cannot pay themselves for their rent.

The **political tradition** does not explain access to housing in our case studies. The access to housing appears to be driven by demand and supply. Despite the conservative political tradition of G-1, it is the only locality in Saxony-Anhalt that offers decentral accommodation for refugees. Not because the political tradition cares so much about migrants, but because vacancy rates in the housing stock are extremely high. In localities with tight housing markets, problems are talked down by local policy makers who point to available housing in the locality regardless of the needs of a bigger family or the location of the housing unit (G-2-2; G-4-2; G-5-15). We observe this in localities with tight housing markets, regardless of policy makers' party affiliation. Volunteers and non-profit service providers are aware of structural problems that migrants face in all affected localities, especially racism. They try to support access to the housing market through their private networks and by accompanying migrants to appointments with potential landlords.



Comparing findings in the field of labor

Across the six cases, it is possible for post-2014 migrants to access the labor market – if they accept low paid and unskilled jobs with unpleasant working hours. Leaving these jobs and enter the skilled labor market is a challenge due the complicated (and often unpromising) processes **of recognition of professional qualifications**. However, as Germany needs skilled workers, there are national and *Länder* funded policies and programs aiming at facilitating these processes of recognition (IQ Network, DeuFöV; *Jobcenter*, NAF). Especially local *Jobcenters* actively support(ed) post-2014 migrant’s integration into the labor market through creating new units that target refugees. In all localities, local companies were disappointed over post-2014 migrants – in their view – too low level of skills and certificates and too slow integration into the labor market.

Regarding **structural factors**, the economic situation affects access to labour market, because a serious shortage of work force in **economically thriving** localities urges private actors to become more active. In G-3 and G-4, for example, where there is a considerable need of skilled workers, private companies and employers’ organizations have developed their own programs (G-4-12a; G-3-12) or enforce existing initiatives to support the modular qualification of post-2014 migrants. Big companies across localities (except for the rural areas (G-2; G-6)) with international teams who have the money, (wo)manpower and intercultural experience prove to be more able to integrate workers that speak other languages than German (G-1-12; G-3-12; G-4-13; G-56).

The **size of the locality** affects the availability of jobs, especially high and unskilled jobs. This is most apparent in the rural areas of G-2 and G-6, however as it is possible to commute to the next agglomeration this does not play out this much in G-6. Finding a job is thus more difficult in small localities as it is more difficult to ensure that jobs fit post-2014 migrants’ skills and expectations. We suppose this to be a reason why personal networks are deemed especially relevant for accessing the labour market in smaller localities. Thus, staff in local administrations (*Jobcenters*, immigration authorities) in small localities struggle to do a good job, because they do have only limited contact with migrant-related issues and no colleagues to ask which results in unsatisfying decisions (G-4-15; G-6-8).

Experience with diversity seems to impact post-2014 migrant’s access to the labour market. In G-1 and G-5, where migrants only started to be part of the society, prejudices against migrant workers prevail. This showed for example in matching events where hardly any employers attended (G-1-4a; G-5-8). In G-5, the local *Jobcenter* reacted to this by offering intercultural trainings for employers (G-5-8). A significant difference can be observed compared to localities G-3 and G-4 where international workers have been present since the arrival of so-called “guest workers” in the 1960s.

The local **political tradition** does not serve well to explain differences in access to the labour market. As people with protection status and subsidiary protection enter the “regular system” they are under the responsibility of local *Jobcenters*, just as German citizens are. They are



responsible to implement structured programs of labor market integration that involve language classes (integration course), internships and labor market integration measures. These structures programs reach many people as it is compulsory to participate when receiving social welfare. Still, there is critique that the structured programs keep people busy for years without giving them space to develop their own ideas resulting in dependency and loss of motivation (G-3-9). Across localities, special programs have been developed to improve female post-2014 migrants' integration into the labor market not least because there are plenty of funding schemes available.

The possibilities of refugees with other statuses (tolerated stay or legal prohibition of deportation) depends on the availability of funds from the Länder level, and of the engagement of single persons to apply for this funding. We could not find a relation between the political affiliation of actors and their willingness to apply for this funding. This finding is in line with previous research on refugee integration in German SMSTRAs that has shown that “local integration policies in general seem to be rather independent of the party-political composition of local governments” (Schammann et al., 2021, p. 2909).

Across localities, support of **volunteers and pro-migrant groups** in the field of access to labor market is strong. This concerns the application process as well as **private networks** to find internships and jobs. Also, in all localities, there are cases of **family-led businesses** who voluntarily engage in the support of “their” migrant employee, for example private language classes and social support. The role of the volunteers within the municipality differs due to the role of professional services. They occupy a more central position if there are less actors involved and less professional services available (see G-6).

Comparing findings in the field of Language courses and Conversation classes

In general, “integration courses” should offer a consistent supply with language courses across Germany for immigrants who are expected to stay in Germany up to language level B1. In practice however, the **quality and availability** of language courses differs between localities. First, this is related to the presence of education providers and migrants in a locality. In the **rural area** of G-2 and G-6, for example, there are only few (or none in G-6) language schools and **small numbers of post-2014 migrants**. To reach the required number to start a course can take some several months or even years. Thus, quality of the language classes is an issue across localities. In small localities this is due to the lack of qualified personal, in medium-sized towns non-profit service providers with little experience in language training engaged in the **new business field** of integration courses as the high numbers of “costumers” since 2015 and the secure payment by BAMF ensured revenues.

It differs between localities in how far migrants who are not eligible for integration courses (see 4.1) have access to other language programs. This is related to respective **Länder programs** and local initiatives. They seek to provide complementary offers to integration courses – be it **different target groups** (e.g., migrants with tolerated stay) or language levels



beyond B1 to **fill the gap** to preconditions to start vocational training or enter university. Besides differences between *Länder*, the availability of these courses also depends on **engagement of individuals** in private companies, administration, social institutions and civil society. Especially conversation classes and language support through volunteers is effective through its one-to-one approach. Engagement is especially strong where **established networks of civil society organisation** exist, such as in G-2 through the long history of environmental protests and in G-4 through churches.

Comparing findings in the field of social meeting places

Across localities, neighborhood institutions and social meeting places have created **new programs or adjusted their offer** to the arrival of post-2014 migrants. Besides seeing the need for a new focus, this is also due to the intensified **availability of funding schemes** for refugee integration on EU, national and *Länder* level since 2015. However, interviewees in all localities criticize project-based funding as this dictates the thematic focus in the social meeting places while, at the same time, works on short-term basis only. Most institutions mainly rely on project-funding. Support through local administrations plays only a minor role. The **lack of long-term funding** reduces the impact and sustainability of social meeting places in all localities.

Although social meeting places across all localities raise concern over **lacking political attention** to their work, the situation differs. In case studies where experience with migration exists since decades (G-3; G-4), the need to support social cohesion with regard to migrant-related diversity is part of local policy makers strategy. In G-1 where migrant-related diversity is not part of the collective history of the place, MOs and NGOs are still fighting to raise awareness – for the importance of their work and for the need to counter existing right-wing attitudes. Local funding is also a matter of the local financial situation. The highly indebted county of G-2 for example generally has only limited resources, and integration is not considered the most important issue.

Looking at the situation in the neighborhoods, the shifting focus on post-2015 migrants since 2015 provoked critique and **competition over resources between other vulnerable groups**. This involves other migrant groups, but also older, less wealthy people who feel neglected (G-5-15; G-6-2; G-3-6; G-3-10b) and negatively impacts social cohesion in the locality. To follow a whole of community approach, current funding schemes that are based on programs for specific target groups only should be replaced by more inclusive approaches to mitigate competition between vulnerable groups.

*Comparing findings on challenges related to impacts of the COVID-pandemic*

Comparing the impact of the COVID-pandemic it becomes clear that all localities have been **harshly affected** by the pandemic and the related rules of social distancing. However, how institutions were able to cope with this and to develop alternative offers and programs was and is still highly dependent on the individuals working there. It **was and continues to be a personal decision in how far and if at all people engage** in physical contact with others. This mostly concerns local administrations and non-profit service providers. There are **no consistent standards on how to organize remote working and distant contacts** with clients, let alone compulsory rules when to return to contacts. Across localities, there were committed persons who tried their best to do their work despite the pandemic. Others however completely closed down and it was impossible to address them. The numbers of immigration authorities who followed a closing-up strategy are alarmingly high, and it seemed as if this has **long-lasting negative impact on post-2014 migrant's integration**.

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