

Mutual Contributions and Benefits: Integrating Migrants in Host Societies

Special Event

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Your Eminence, distinguished Panelists, Excellencies, dear Friends,

One of the objectives of our event being to identify practical recommendations, allow me to share with you, as a contribution to our reflection and discussion, some good practices that the Order of Malta has established in Germany to improve the integration of refugees and migrants. Being responsible for more than 140 facilities with more than 44.000 Migrants and Refugees the Order has gained wide experience regarding this issue and has been playing an important role in the support of new arrivals. During the peak of the immigration Malteser Germany had about 5'000 volunteers active. An additional 2'500 volunteers joined on a spontaneous basis. Volunteers are a public expression with an impact on civil society, they are a message against defeatism.

- Following the first phase of emergency assistance, Malteser Germany created ***integration services*** to make migrants familiar with the German society and culture, such as religious tolerance, the role of women, the rule of law and the like. These units also generated a platform for Germans to meet individual migrants which in turn allowed for a totally different image of migration as opposed to fearing the influx of hundreds of thousands of foreigners.
- In the field of healthcare, the Order's the medical foundation "***Malteser Migranten Medizin***" provides free medical care for migrants, refugees and others who cannot afford medical insurance, in 18 cities across the country.
- Furthermore, during the high influxes in 2016, ***special medical services*** targeted against diseases that are typical for migrants were set up. This field of activity that up to now has not been systematically developed may, however, need to be strengthened in the future.
- Some 40 ***special units for unaccompanied minors*** help children overcome the traumata of life threatening experiences experienced during their journey.

Of particular interest among examples of a practical approach to support refugees in host countries is the innovative model of ***“Pilots for Integration”***.

- Looking for a long-term solution to help integrating refugees and migrants more easily into society, Malteser has begun to employ and train so-called ***Integration Guides*** which run over 80 groups spread across Germany with 30 to 50 volunteers and 1 employed coordinator per group.
- Integration Guides support migrants and refugees in overcoming challenges of daily life in their new host country, such as finding appropriate schools and childcare, learning German, making purchases, visiting doctors, communicating with governmental authorities, screening for job possibilities and simply being part of society
- Such interaction enables a both-sided exchange, giving refugees and migrants the possibility of being heard by having personal and familiar contacts, thereby safeguarding their dignity, and ensuring the participation of local communities. It also enables them to learn by experience what open society means, and be part of it, as illustrated by His Eminence earlier on.
- Furthermore, this kind of support by the civil society is transferable to governmental or institutional implementation in an engagement of private and public partnerships. Several German local and regional authorities have already adopted this approach to overcome language barriers with foreign-language speaking people.

I would like to conclude by referring to the now widely recognized special role of ***faith-based organizations*** and ***religious institutions*** in the protection and integration of migrants in host countries. Due to their local roots, they can be providers of both material and spiritual assistance. With its practical support, the Order of Malta therefore aims to combine a spiritual dimension so as to foster resilience and understanding between the different communities, such as by establishing a prayer room in every one of its facilities.

These are just a few examples of innovative actions that the Order of Malta has introduced within its worldwide humanitarian activities to support populations on the move and alleviate their suffering.

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