



ARRIVAL CENTRES PROVIDE ALL NECESSARY SERVICES FOR THE ASYLUM PROCESS INCLUDING LABOUR MARKET SERVICES IN ONE BUILDING IN ORDER TO ENSURE QUICKER INTEGRATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS

## Integrated labour market services for asylum seekers in arrival centres

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### GERMANY

Following the 2015/16 refugee crisis, the German PES faced significant pressure to ensure a quick integration of asylum seekers. This was made more difficult by the lack of coordination between the different authorities, particularly in regards to the exchange of data.

As a result, arrival centres were set up to provide services for asylum seekers from all relevant authorities in one building. The aim was to speed up the integration process and create more efficient cooperation between authorities.

The PES work in these centres to ensure early intervention by informing asylum seekers of the options available to them concerning training, language courses, and work. By locating in these centres, the PES ensures it can reach all asylum seekers with a high probability of getting granted asylum at a very early stage. This enables the PES to collect necessary data on the applicants in order to provide appropriate support.

Name of the PES

German PES (German Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit – BA))

Scope of measure  
(a pilot project or a national reform)

National

When was the practice implemented?

Since 2016

What was the driver for introducing the practice?  
Was it internal or external?

Germany was a key destination country for asylum seekers during the 2015/16 refugee crisis. As a result, there was a projected rise in unemployment, with an additional 80 000 – 100 000 unemployed refugees in 2017. However, the transition of asylum seekers and refugees into the labour market was very slow, and – by former law – they had to wait 12 months until they could receive support from PES. This presented a huge challenge for the German PES and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF), responsible for asylum applications.

The various social services also had different IT systems, and data could not be easily migrated from one institution to another. It was also not known how much demand there was for language courses which are organised by BAMF. This made it difficult for the PES to access data on asylum seekers, and led to the idea of bringing all institutions closer to work together on the asylum process.

The German PES, together with BAMF, introduced a pilot project 'Every person has potential – labour market integration of asylum seekers (Early intervention)' 2014-15, which aimed to provide rapid support to assist with successful labour market integration that also considers asylum seekers' formal qualifications. The pilot was an important step towards the development of early integration procedures for asylum seekers, as it highlighted the need for language courses, qualification measures, and other structural requirements within the PES<sup>1</sup>. A key outcome of this pilot project was the legal establishment of 'early intervention'.

A change in the law was introduced so that asylum seekers, who are likely to remain, receive more immediate support and early access to training and language courses. This also required improved cooperation between the German PES and BAMF. As a result, arrival centres were set up as a way of integrating all services for asylum seekers in one building, creating a harmonious transition from the asylum process to the integration process.

1. Daumann, et al. (2016), 'Abschlussbericht Modellprojekt Early Intervention – Frühzeitige Arbeitsmarktintegration von Asylbewerbern und Asylbewerberinnen Ergebnisse der qualitativen Begleitforschung durch das IAB'. Internet: <http://doku.iab.de/forschungsbericht/2015/fb1015.pdf>. Last accessed: 19 June 2017.

Which organisation was involved in its implementation?

The key organisations involved in its implementation included the following:

- ▶ The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) (government authority) - main coordinator of the arrival centres, as they work on applications for asylum.
- ▶ A number of municipal services are provided in the arrival centres, including police, social services, health services, and housing.

Which groups were targeted by the practice?

The main target group are asylum seekers who are able to work. Priority is given to those who are most likely to remain in the country.

What were the practice's main objectives?

The main aim of the arrival centres is to provide a central entry point for the asylum procedure, where all services on the federal, state and municipal level, which are required by asylum seekers are located under one roof. This aim is to ease and speed up the integration process. All necessary steps for the asylum procedure are therefore carried out in the arrival centres. This also ensures more effective cooperation between the authorities involved.

As many asylum seekers and refugees prefer to earn money quickly to support their families in their home country, a phased approach of working first and then upskilling on the job is a feasible solution. The objective is to integrate people entitled to asylum who are able to work, to receive language courses, training, and work.

What activities were carried out?

Activities carried out include the following:

- ▶ The PES has an office in the arrival centres which asylum seekers can visit voluntarily. The PES can then intervene as early as possible to integrate them into the labour market.
- ▶ Other services provided by other authorities in the centres include medical examinations, recording of personal data and identity checks, and the application process for asylum.
- ▶ When refugees arrive at the PES service area in the arrival centres they are placed in groups of 10-15 people and provided with information on all services available and what support PES offers. At this point, the PES is simply informing them of the options available to them, and where the PES offices are located. Once asylum seekers and refugees visit the PES offices outside of the asylum centre, they can receive courses on labour market orientation, qualifications, and training, as well as undertake skills validation.
- ▶ An integrated refugee management process is used by the authorities in the centres to collect information on asylum seekers in a nationwide core data system.<sup>2</sup> This aims to streamline the process and improve cooperation. As a result, the PES already has some data on the asylum seekers. However, work is still being done to ensure that all institutions are using this core database. This data is then supplemented by PES when asylum seekers come to their desk. PES staff ask them questions regarding their previous work experience, skills, and qualifications, in order to build an initial profile and curriculum vitae.
- ▶ Experienced PES staff are selected to work in the arrival centres. They are provided with training on intercultural competences, as well as specific legal issues related to asylum seekers such as the law concerning foreigners.
- ▶ PES' work in arrival centres is continuously monitored by the federal PES in order to further develop services. One area for development is providing asylum seekers with language courses to facilitate integration. The PES is working with BAMF at the arrival centres to pilot a testing area where they verify asylum seekers' current language skills in German. This ensures BAMF and PES suggest appropriate language courses to asylum seekers.
- ▶ There are around 6 institutions on federal, state and local level represented in the arrival centres, which meet every morning to share experiences and issues they may have.

What resources and other relevant organisational aspects were involved?

The German PES provide around 200 persons of extra staff to work in the centres.

What were the source(s) of funding?

BAMF is the primary funder of the centres. Language courses are paid for by the federal government so that there is a standard system across all states.

2. BAMF (2016). Arrival centres. Internet: [http://www.bamf.de/EN/Fluechtlingsschutz/Ankunftscentren/ankunftscentren-node.html;jsessionid=AB589DCE75DF0288AD7EAD5AF7A3E0AB.2\\_cid368](http://www.bamf.de/EN/Fluechtlingsschutz/Ankunftscentren/ankunftscentren-node.html;jsessionid=AB589DCE75DF0288AD7EAD5AF7A3E0AB.2_cid368)

What were the outputs of the practice: people reached and products?

The outputs of the practice include the following:

- ▶ There are 24 arrival centres open nationwide.<sup>3</sup> There are approximately 5-10 trained PES personnel working in each centre. In total at the federal level, approximately two hundred staff members were trained to work in the centres.
- ▶ The practice of integrating all services for asylum seekers under one roof leads to a nearly 100% rate of voluntary contact between the PES and asylum seekers, as it is a requirement for them to visit the arrival centres in order to apply for asylum. There is also an agreement between the German PES and BAMF that every person granted asylum gets directed to the PES desk so that PES can reach as many as possible.
- ▶ When looking at the number of asylum seekers reached, the PES recognises the importance of looking at the total number of refugees who have come to Germany over time. This has significantly decreased since 2015/16, meaning that arrival centres have recently not been working at full capacity. This makes it difficult to compare data and evaluate how effective the centres have been, as the number of people who have benefitted from such services has varied over time due to external factors.

What outcomes have been identified?

The following outcomes have been identified:

- ▶ Daily meetings between the institutions located in the arrival centres have proven to be very effective in allowing them to learn from each other. The physical presence and proximity of these institutions has led to a cooperative environment where they are working together to better understand each other. All institutions provided very positive feedback to the German PES and are very satisfied with this proximity and being able to work so closely together.
- ▶ Asylum seekers are faced with a large amount of varying services when coming to a new country, and as a result many might not learn about the PES. Arrival centres have ensured the PES comes directly to asylum seekers and informs them of the options available at an early stage.

What are the lessons learnt and success factors?

Key factors for success and lessons learnt include the following:

- ▶ The physical proximity of the various institutions in the same building allows staff to interact and get to know each other, as well as better understand the purpose of each institution and their way of working. This leads to more effective cooperation between the authorities involved.
- ▶ It is important to connect with asylum seekers and start the integration process as early as possible, which can be achieved by conducting language training for asylum seekers in parallel to labour market orientation and skills validation. This ensures they do not have to wait a long time until they complete their training to begin the process of entering the labour market.
- ▶ Data collection is also important for validating qualifications and competences, and deciding which training courses are appropriate for each individual.

3. Internet: <http://www.bamf.de/DE/DasBAMF/Aufbau/Standorte/Ankunftscentren/ankunftscentren-node.html>



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