

## Working and acting together: Refugee integration and participation in the GRC

### Our guiding principles

The global refugee situation and increasing number of people seeking asylum and perspectives in Germany and Europe are posing a major challenge for society – and the tasks at a national, European and international level are not to be underestimated.

Helping refugees is one of the German Red Cross' (GRC) "common" tasks, meaning we take particular responsibility for them. Our organisation's involvement is based on the duties assigned in the Act Amending the Regulations on the German Red Cross (DRK-Gesetz), in conjunction with the legally binding principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. This obliges us

- to protect the life and health of refugees, and treat them with dignity. We must especially protect those most vulnerable – women, children and people at risk of discrimination.
- to ask solely about the refugees' individual need for aid, without judging their reasons for fleeing.

- to provide refugee aid using the entire organisation, extending beyond regional approaches.
- to refrain from co-operating with authorities where the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement's original method of operation is no longer assured, and to not participate in sanctions against refugees, e.g. deportations.

In addition to the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, the "Policy on Migration"<sup>1</sup>, passed in 2009, is an important basis for the Red Cross' worldwide efforts to support migrants and refugees.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/migration/migration-policy](http://www.ifrc.org/en/what-we-do/migration/migration-policy)



## What we do

Since 2014, the German Red Cross' (GRC) work has revolved around taking in and looking after refugees. Both now and in the future, the focus will be on integrating the refugees who have received a temporary residence in Germany.

The GRC understands refugee integration as a social process, which enables equal participation in economic, social, political and cultural life, and eliminates disadvantages and (structural) barriers.

Integration is not a case of unilateral adaptation to the culture of the host country, but rather constructive engagement with the host community, which includes helping to shape it. For this reason, the GRC consciously gears its services around refugees, while also involving them as active participants with a view to broadening intercultural horizons.

The following GRC services help directly with refugee integration:

- Accommodation and assistance in holding camps, reception centres and community for refugees

- Counselling on the asylum-seeking process and related social matters
- Migration counselling for adult migrants
- Psychotherapy counselling and treatment
- Helping with bringing families together through the tracing service
- General counselling and support services, such as family counselling centres, child day-care or debt counselling
- Voluntary social interaction with refugees
- Volunteer services for and with refugees
- Youth Red Cross projects and group services
- Numerous projects to help with active participation in society

## What we have agreed on

Integrating refugees into our community is currently a major task in all aspects of the GRC's welfare service.

This means for our organization:

- Integrating refugees is a task involving all areas of the GRC's welfare service. It is discussed on all of the organisation's relevant committees.
- All GRC executives use their political committees to assert the requirements established in this document.
- The GRC promotes and develops structures to actively involve refugees in the organisation.

The GRC welfare services are aimed at everyone, and that of course includes refugees. At the same time, refugees are also involved as active participants (broadening cultural horizons). Advanced training and qualification services as well as opportunities for active networking in person give staff members the necessary confidence.

This means for our organization:

- Needs-based training services are offered to professional and volunteer staff, or other providers' services are used.
- The GRC participates in existing networks, and initiates networking when the existing cooperation is insufficient.
- Specific projects with refugees are tied in with existing (regular) on-site services to ensure lasting effectiveness.



The outstanding commitment displayed by many volunteers as part of the refugee aid scheme is a great opportunity to develop and promote voluntary work at the GRC. This work also enables refugees to be included in the GRC's tasks, and thus encourages their integration and participation.

This means for our organization:

- The GRC provides qualified volunteer co-ordination, advises and supports volunteers, organises meetings, and ensures recognition.
- The GRC provides refugees with opportunities to get involved as volunteers.
- Volunteers are offered needs-based training and support.

## What we stand for

The GRC has passed the following core requirements for successfully integrating asylum-seekers and refugees:

- Recognising migration and integration as an opportunity for the entire community. Many refugees and asylum-seekers have a variety of experience, knowledge and strengths they want to use to build a new life and contribute to society. To ensure this happens, they need support and a clear sign that they and their skills are welcome, especially during the initial phase.
- Upholding good standards in accommodation to facilitate a safe, dignified arrival and ensure the refugees can come to terms with the traumas of their escape.
- Free access to language classes and an entitlement to use an interpreter or translator at the government's expense.
- Ensuring child welfare takes priority. In order to guarantee all children living in Germany have the right to education and to be who they want to be, the GRC campaigns for refugee children to attend day-care centres and participate in school classes as soon as they arrive in Germany.
- Functionally illiterate children require comprehensive language support to ensure they can access the education systems over the long term.
- Underage refugees who come to Germany without being accompanied by a parent or close relative must be housed at suitable facilities. In order to protect the wellbeing of these particularly vulnerable young people, the youth aid standards must be unconditionally upheld.
- Early access to the job market makes it easier for refugees and asylum-seekers to start a new, "normal" life, helps process negative experiences from their escape, and enables them to regain control of their lives.
- Ensuring appropriate medical care for asylum-seekers, and take into account the special needs of vulnerable persons.
- To ensure the intake process is as smooth as possible, refugees and volunteers need professional contacts. Relevant services must be adapted to actual needs, and be accessible wherever asylum-seekers and refugees live.

The GRC advocates for consistently promoting integration and participation as an ongoing, important issue in our community. Initiatives and projects therefore require long-term support and funding.

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