

## Problems experienced by integration course participants: requirement and usage of migration advice services

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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Kurzbericht / abridged report

### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Tissot, A., & Croisier, J. (2020). *Problems experienced by integration course participants: requirement and usage of migration advice services*. (BAMF-Brief Analysis, 3-2020). Nürnberg: Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF) Forschungszentrum Migration, Integration und Asyl (FZ). <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-77917-4>

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# BAMF Brief Analysis

Edition 03|2020 of the Brief Analyses by the Research Centre for Migration, Integration and Asylum at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees

3 | 2020

## Problems experienced by integration course participants

Requirement and usage of migration advice services

by Anna Tissot and Johannes Croisier

### AT A GLANCE

- Refugees who attend integration courses often experience problems which go beyond language acquisition. Overall, we can determine four categories of needs: 1) Help concerning communication and forms in administrative matters, 2) help searching for accommodation, 3) help in searching employment, 4) help with navigating the range of advice on offer.
- When problems are not solved and needs are not met, it can often have a negative impact on the language acquisition of refugee integration course participants during the courses. This manifests itself via distraction, problems concentrating and a loss of motivation and may encourage early withdrawing from integration courses.
- There is support and information available to refugee course participants from Youth Migration Services and Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants. It is still necessary, however, to increase the awareness, correct designation and usage of these most important nationwide services among refugee participants of integration courses.
- Three interaction practices between integration course providers and migration advice centres have proved to be relevant when considered in more depth. Along with the independent counselling by teachers and the employees of course providers, but also the overall lack of any interaction or the type of reference between the stakeholders, close cooperation between advice centres and integration course providers is most efficient.
- Further strengthening of cooperation between integration course providers and migration advice centres with their regular presentations in the integration courses and “local” offers seems to be central in order to deal professionally with the problems of refugee participants and therefore relieve some of the pressure on teachers and employees of the integration course providers..



In many cases, refugees have left their countries of origin on comparatively short notice and without comprehensive preparation. After arriving in Germany, they are sometimes confronted with major challenges for which they must rely on assistance. As is the case with other migrants, learning the German language is of high importance for refugees.

Studies analysing the needs of those seeking advice, including refugees (e.g. Scheible/Böhm 2018; Worbs et al. 2016; Brandt et al. 2015), agree that the greatest need for assistance lies in the realm of improving German language skills as well as in assistance regarding contacts and forms. The advice centres are stretched to their limit when it comes to matters regarding the search for employment and accommodation, legal questions (such as the recognition of diplomas and degrees as well as residency law) and referrals in the case of psychological problems. The studies cited clearly demonstrate that there is a need for advice services in different areas of life which goes beyond language acquisition. They also conclude that, while the benefits of migration advice services are high, there is still room for improvement in terms of awareness, the correct designation of advice services and its usage.

Against this background, this brief analysis deals with the individual and institutional aspects when refugees learn German and face other (non-linguistic) problems. We will identify the needs of refugee course participants and analyse their influence on participation in the integration courses. Additionally, we will pursue the issue of whether and how the integration course participants concerned use the migration advice services on an individual level. At an institutional level, in contrast, we will investigate the interaction practices between migration advice services and integration courses.

The analyses presented are based on two types of datasets. On the one hand, we draw on qualitative interviews (Tissot et al. 2019, p. 19-20). We conducted twenty-one interviews starting in early May and ending in late August 2018 using various techniques: problem-centred interviews with integration course participants, assisted by interpreters, and expert interviews with representatives of the integration course providers as well as with teachers.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, we carried out statistical analyses on the basis of the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey (Kroh et al. 2018)

using the data of 4,328 respondents in the survey year 2016 and of 5,544 respondents in the survey year 2017, who had arrived between early January 2013 and late December 2016 and applied for asylum in Germany. This brief analysis, however, focuses on both those integration course participants who are currently participating in an integration course as well as those who already have completed the integration course. Based on this data, it is not possible to carry out differentiated analyses for different types of integration courses.

## Integration courses and central services provided by Youth Migration Services and Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants

Learning the German language is important in order to find one's bearings in new surroundings. The nationwide integration course system constitutes the key integration measure in the area of language teaching since its introduction in 2005 (see Box 1). In November 2015, the integration courses opened up for asylum seekers from countries of origin with good prospects of remaining in Germany.<sup>2</sup> What this means is that the number of new course participants was especially high in 2016 and 2017 and reached yearly figures of up to 340,000 (2016). In 2018, the number of entitlements to attend an integration course issued declined for the first time since 2015, but remained at a high level (BAMF 2018a, BAMF 2019a).

In order to achieve the objectives of the integration course, some refugee course participants require support when dealing with their problems as these often go beyond mere language acquisition. Furthermore, teachers and other employees of the integration course providers are presented with new and sometimes major challenges when the needs of refugees completing the integration courses are not met.

One can meet the needs of refugee integration course participants in different ways. In addition to informal channels (e.g. friends and acquaintances), there are various (sometimes low-threshold) advice services available for refugees at a federal, Länder and munic-

1 The references in the citations and other parts of the text contain the following abbreviations along with interview and paragraph numbers: TN stands for interviews with participants, TR for interviews with representatives of integration course providers and LK for interviews with teachers.

2 "Countries of origin with good prospects of remaining" include countries of origin with a high protection quota. Until 31 July 2019, this referred to the countries of Eritrea, Iraq, Iran, Somalia and Syria. Since 1 August 2019, this refers only to the countries of Eritrea and Syria.

## BOX 1: THE NATIONWIDE SYSTEM OF INTEGRATION COURSES

The legal basis for the courses is provided by Sections 43, 44 and 44a of the Residence Act [Aufenthaltsgesetz (AufenthG)] and the Ordinance on Integration Courses [Integrationskursverordnung (IntV)]. The aim of the integration courses, which consist of a language course and an orientation course, is to convey German language skills as well as knowledge of the legal system, culture and history of Germany so that participants are able to act independently and without the assistance of third parties in all matters of daily life (Section 43 subs. 2 of the Residence Act [AufenthG]). The most common type of course within the integration course system is the general integration course. There are also special courses for various target groups which may be offered depending on individual requirements. There are currently eight types of course: general integration courses; literacy courses; courses for parents, women and young adults; catch-up courses; intensive courses and courses for learning

an additional alphabet. The scope of the courses varies depending on type, from 400 (intensive course) to a maximum of 900 teaching units in special integration courses. Further, there is the option of repeating 300 teaching units in the language courses, if the desired language level was not achieved in the final exam known as “German test for immigrants” [Deutschtest für Zuwanderer]. The aim of the language course is for the students to achieve the language level B1 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for languages (CEFR). For those attending literacy courses, the language level A2 is formulated as the aim within the scope of maximum individual support. The 100-hour orientation course is the same for all types of course (with the exception of the intensive course, at 30 teaching units). The aim of the orientation course is to acquire knowledge of the legal system, history and culture of Germany in accordance with Section 43 subs. 3 Residence Act [AufenthG].

## BOX 2: CENTRAL MIGRATION ADVICE SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT: YOUTH MIGRATION SERVICES AND MIGRATION ADVICE SERVICES FOR ADULT IMMIGRANTS

The Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth coordinates the Youth Migration Services. These aim at individuals with an immigrant background aged between 12 and 27, but parents can also be advised on issues relating to their children’s education and career paths. The prerequisite for participation is the lawfulness of the individuals’ stay in Germany. The execution follows needs-oriented concepts such as advice from social education workers, also on an individual basis, and group services according to the professional case-management method. The Youth Migration Services are provided by youth social work stakeholders.

Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants, which were introduced in 2005, are advice services for immigrants over the age of 27.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the Youth Migration Services, they are coordinated under the remit of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community and were conceived by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees on the legal basis of Section 75 no. 2 and Section 45 no. 1 of the Residence Act [AufenthG]. The target groups of the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants are EU citizens (including ethnic Germans; Spätaussiedler) and third-country nationals who have the right to

remain as defined by Section 44 subs. 1 Residence Act [AufenthG] (residence status of at least one year). Since the changes to Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants as of 20 July 2016, applicants with good prospects of remaining in Germany may also make use of advice services. In addition, since 1 August 2019, those seeking advice who fulfil the criteria of the Aliens Employment Promotion Act [Ausländerbeschäftigungsförderungsgesetz] have also been able to do so. Along with referring those seeking advice to the appropriate integration courses and providing advice on questions relating to the courses (such as applications and childcare during the integration courses), the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants also provide advice on a wide spectrum of topics (such as questions on residency, securing a livelihood, employment, health, family, children’s school education) and coordinate with the relevant stakeholders in situ (e.g. job centres, immigration authorities). These are usually advice services for individual cases, such as with the Youth Migration Services, according to the case-management method and often conducted in the native language of those seeking advice. Six umbrella associations of the independent welfare [Freie Wohlfahrtspflege] and the Federation of Expellees provide these Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants.

<sup>3</sup> Still known then as “initial migration advisory services”.

ipal level. The most frequently used advice services funded by the Federal Government within the context of (forced) migration are the Youth Migration Services and Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants (see Box 2).

## The needs of refugees in the context of integration courses

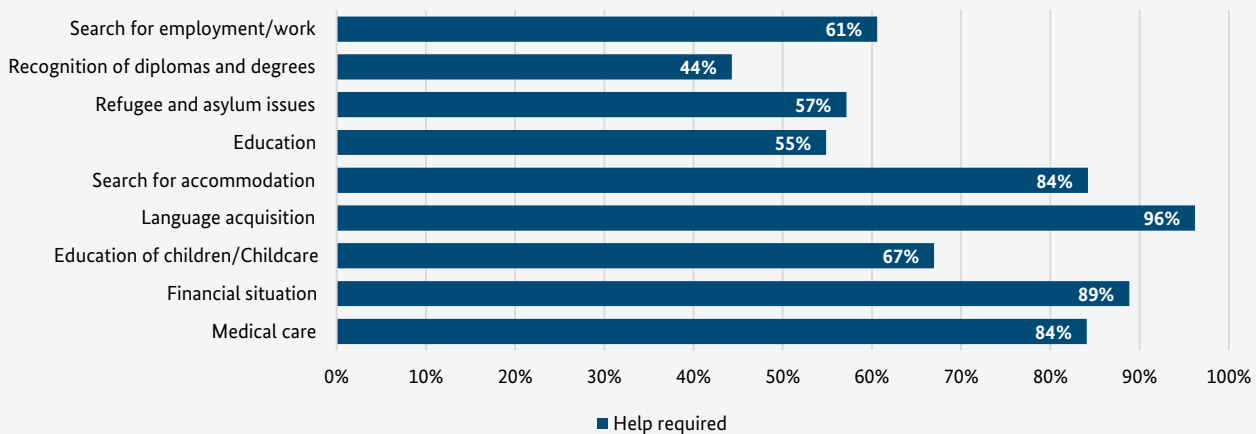
In 2016 and 2017, refugees in the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey were asked whether they had required or received help since arriving in Germany. The respondents could choose from the following three answer categories: 1. Help received, 2. No help

received, but required and 3. No help received and none required. A need for help is assumed if answers 1. or 2. are given. Figure 1 focuses solely on integration course participants.

Figure 1 shows how many current or former integration course participants have felt the need for help in the respective subject areas since their arrival in Germany, regardless of whether this need was met or not.<sup>4</sup> Figure 2 shows the requirements which were not met for the share of individuals from Figure 1 requiring

<sup>4</sup> In order to establish a sound relationship to Figure 2, we sorted the results according to Figure 2.

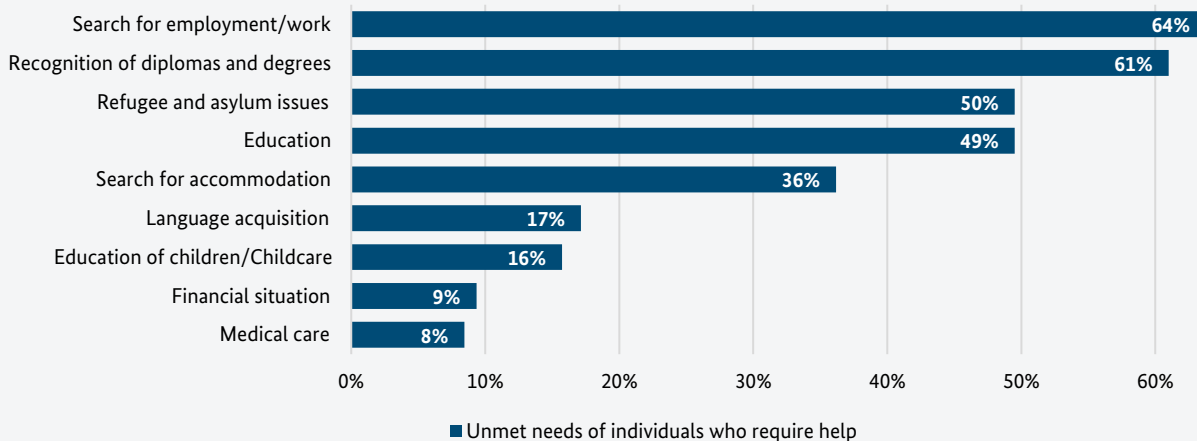
**Figure 1: The needs of integration course participants (in per cent)**



Source: Data and weighting in the 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys; n=2.718; Basis: Integration course participants, first-time respondents\*; for education/childcare: only integration course participants with children in their household under the age of 16.

\* "First-time respondents" are respondents who took part in the IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey in 2016 or 2017 for the first time.

**Figure 2: Unmet needs of integration course participants (in per cent)**



Source: Data and weighting in the 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys; based on the respective share of respondents from Figure 1 who stated that they required help.

help. For example, 61 % of integration course participants stated that they required help in searching for employment. Of these 61 %, 64 % stated that this need has not been met. The results therefore show on the one hand in which areas integration course participants required the most help. On the other hand, they also emphasise areas in which the greatest unmet needs were to be found.

Most of the categories with a high level of need contain a comparatively high degree of needs which have already been met. The proportion of needs which have been met in the areas of “medical care” and “financial situation” is especially high. At 96 %, almost all integration course participants stated that they needed help learning German; a need which is not met in 17 % of the cases. Along with integration course participants just starting their courses, this could also apply to former participants who have already completed the integration course, but are not yet taking a further language course but which they consider necessary.

67 % of integration course participants with children under the age of 16 in their household state that they need help with education/childcare. The proportion of women who stated that their needs in this area had not yet been met is relatively low, at 75 % (figure not included). This could be due to a negative attitude to or lack of acceptance of children being cared for outside of the family. Further, integration course participants stated a great need for help searching for accommodation as well as a high level of needs not being met. This is only partly due to the free housing market, and mainly limited as a result of legal specifications (Baier/Siegert 2018).

Overall, the descriptive evaluations show that, distinguished by areas of life, the needs of refugee integration course participants are multifaceted and of varying intensity. The respondents state that basic needs in particular, such as financial situation and medical care, are largely met (similarly Scheible/Böhm 2018). There is a relatively high degree of unmet needs in the categories of education, refugee and asylum issues, recognition of diplomas and degrees and the search for employment. Here, between 49 % and 64 % of integration course participants with needs in these areas state that their needs are not met.

## Which problems do the integration course participants face?

An analysis of the interviews with respondents from all three survey groups (refugee integration course participants, teachers, representatives of integration course providers) as well as the evaluations of the 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys point to a variety of different problems for integration course participants for which the respondents consider additional advice and supervision necessary. In general, we summarise the problems into four categories of help and advice requirements:

1. Help with communication and forms, especially in administrative matters such as filling in (benefit) applications, understanding and responding to letters and telephone calls and sometimes accompaniment during appointments, regarding
  - childcare and children’s educational institutions (nursery, school)
  - insurance and contracts (health insurance, pension schemes, mobile phone contracts and tenancy agreements, but also broadcasting fees)
  - misfortunes (serious illness, death in the family)
2. Help searching for accommodation
3. Help searching for employment and in the application process
4. Help navigating the range of advice on offer via referrals to other bodies, such as debt advice services, legal advice services and psychological counselling

According to the observations of many teachers and employees of the integration course providers, dealing with forms and documents is a widespread challenge which refugee integration course participants see themselves confronted with:

*The [refugee participants] are helpless, they are helpless. They all have their letters which they can't read at all and they don't even understand what it's about. They cannot deal with that (...). [...] That's why they bring their letters to class and present them to you during the break (Interview 17, TR 4, paragraph 349).*

These difficulties are not only caused by a lack of understanding, but also by the inability to deal with or clarify certain matters independently, the integration course provider continues:



*The people themselves are not capable of calling somewhere to clarify a matter, are they? Why [someone] has sent a bill again [...], they cannot clear that up (Interview 17, TR 4, paragraph 336).*

This does not just involve telephone calls; the need for help particularly arises when refugee integration course participants have to fill in applications, to which another representative of an integration course provider refers:

*For example, an application for continued payment of unemployment benefits. Then the [refugee participants] come to us because they don't understand it, because it is difficult. And then we help them to fill it in (Interview 5, TR 1, paragraph 116).*

In addition to help with communication and forms, many refugee integration course participants as well as teachers and employees of the integration course providers perceive the search for accommodation as a core problem:

*Well, I have one [refugee] participant who views apartments every day. Not one or two; several. Every day. He has no chance. There are no apartments in [this city] (Interview 7, LK 4, paragraph 92).*

Especially in cities with narrow housing markets, finding accommodation is very time-consuming due to the high demand and increasing rents and the procedure becomes even more difficult for benefit recipients, as a teacher who was interviewed explains:

*Then the [refugee participant] needs an offer for accommodation from the landlord and has to go to the job centre with the note. The job centre has to accept this offer, so say: "Yes, we will pay the costs of the rent". Then the [participant] has to return with the note. Honestly, they [the refugee participants] are busy with that and not with learning adjective endings. Unfortunately (Interview 7, LK 4, paragraph 94).*

The search for accommodation is very demanding for the integration course participants and takes up a lot of time and mental energy. Therefore, many refugee integration course participants experience a great need for support in this area. Further needs for support exist in the search for employment and the application process.

Some teachers point out that, in their experience, refugees seeking advice are not familiar enough with the existing system of advice services to find the appro-

priate service for their specific requirements independently. One representative of an integration course provider gives the following example in this context:

*It is often the case [for refugee participants] that there are, yes, financial problems which arise; they don't pay something. [...] So they constantly need help and advice because they cannot find their way around at all in this system (Interview 17, TR 4, paragraph 42).*

For this reason, guidance in the counselling landscape as well as referrals to other bodies represent the last category of need for help.

## How do these problems affect participation in the integration courses?

The analysis of the qualitative material shows a trend, for refugee integration course participants who experience multifaceted problems, towards the majority of their time and energy being taken up by solving problems and less by learning German. The above-mentioned representative of an integration course provider goes into greater detail by using an example of the difficulties faced by many refugee integration course participants and points out that they are often more preoccupied with clearing up these matters than with focussing on the integration course lessons:

*Many have no apartment (...). They have problems with the authorities, have to go somewhere numerous times because they simply don't understand what kind of documents they have to submit where. [T]hen they have no health insurance because they haven't submitted [certain documents] (...) and just dealing with all of the bureaucracy in the first place. That someone has to go to the education office with the [refugee participants] (...). [They] have so much on their plates (Interview 22, TR 7, paragraph 15).*

In order to solve the above-mentioned challenges, they require help in the areas of explanatory, translation and orientation services. In this context, employees of integration course providers and teachers also point out that failing to deal with such problems not only distracts from language acquisition and causes concentration difficulties as well as a loss of motivation, but may also result in early leaving from integration courses. It is therefore important for the integration course providers to offer support via the advice services so as not to lose the integration course

participants, but intercept them (Interview 3, LK 2 paragraph 332).

It becomes clear that the consequences of the problems mentioned above overshadow other integration needs such as language acquisition, not least because the refugee integration course participants “feel very overwhelmed, for example, by the search for accommodation or the letters which they receive (...) and are, without a doubt, unable to focus on German lessons” (Interview 2, LK 1, paragraph 363). In most cases, the refugees’ integration course participants unsolved problems therefore have a negative impact on their language acquisition in integration courses.

Nevertheless, not all problems the integration course participants face are of same severity. Those integration course participants who are able to follow the lessons without problems and demonstrate good language progress usually require fewer support services and, if they do, it is more likely to be in the field of searching employment and application processes. In contrast, other integration course participants are subject to problems with serious consequences which may either lead to potential traumatic experiences or reinforce these experiences. For instance, a representative of another integration course provider who was interviewed remembers an unexpected death in the family of one course participant. Working through this misfortune required professional counselling services for dealing with bereavement, such as arranging a bereavement counsellor and a family support worker, which was successfully arranged with the help of the integration course provider in this case (Interview 22, TR 7, paragraph 18-21).

In most cases, coping with such problem situations requires support services. Along with the variety of different challenges, the analysis of the interviews also illustrates that refugee integration course participants approach the employees of integration course providers and, above all, teachers with their concerns. Although it is not explicitly included in the scope of their duties, teachers and other employees of integration course providers attempt to help those seeking advice, as for example in the following case:

*And that we also help if someone is really searching for employment (...) and that one says: “Okay, we will look and see if there’s an employer who needs someone (...)?” [...] That one can see what options there are? So if there are questions or problems. Letters of application, we support them in drawing up CVs and things like that (Interview 5, TR 1, paragraph 290).*

Although teachers provide direct help very frequently, it is sometimes necessary to refer those seeking advice to the right (advice) body. A referral of those seeking advice alone is not always productive; it is also necessary for the employee of the integration course provider to make initial contact with the other (advice) body (Interview 17, TR 4, paragraph 58). The pilot project “Learning and social support in integration courses” [Lern- und Sozialbegleitung im Integrationskurs] was launched to mitigate such requirements, providing for regulated cooperation with the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and Youth Migration Services. In this regard, the analysis of the qualitative interviews shows that this service has been well received by participants where it has been introduced. Participating integration course providers and teachers also emphasise the very positive effect on participants who made use of this service from their point of view (for more information, see Tissot et al. 2019: 110).

## Awareness and usage of advice services

On a federal level, the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and Youth Migration Services are primarily envisaged for meeting the advice requirements resulting from such problems. Their target group also covers integration course participants, but is not restricted to this immigrant group only. Nevertheless, in the qualitative interviews the majority of the integration course participants stated that they knew neither the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants, the Youth Migration Services, nor comparable services (municipal, where applicable). Further, the qualitative interviews clearly demonstrate that the correct designations of the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and Youth Migration Services were far less commonly known to participants than the providers supplying them. As to the question of advice services in the area of migration and forced migration, one refugee integration course participant reported that her husband sought out certain organisations for help dealing with official letters – a sort of support, which could come under the remit of Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants. The respondent did not know, however, which specific service this was (Interview 10, TN 4, 249-252). This is how difficulties with designating and differentiating between the various services come to light; sometimes the correct designation for the providers is lacking. Other refugee integration course participants have commented, when asked, that they had not heard anything at all about the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants or



Youth Migration Services (under this designation), but that they have a need in this respect (Interview 8, TN 2, paragraph 268; Interview 9, TN 3, paragraph 302).

This is also confirmed by the quantitative evaluations from the 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey. Only 7 % of the refugees who are taking part or have taken part in an integration course know of Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and only 9 % know of other services, such as Youth Migration Services. For refugees who had not (yet) participated in integration courses at the time of the survey, the comparative values for awareness and usage of the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and Youth Migration Services was 4 % for each, and therefore even lower (see Table 1).

The collected data conveys the impression that limited awareness is accompanied by a lower level of use. During the 2017 survey, 1 % of refugees stated that they had used Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants. In the sub-group of respondents who were taking part or had taken part in an integration course, 2 % stated that they used Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants (each without table). These low values may also be the result of some respondents using the advice services but not associating them with the designation Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants or Youth Migration Services, or simply not remembering, which also corresponds to the qualitative analyses mentioned above and early studies on the use of Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and/or general advice services. The statistics on usage of Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants also point to this: In 2018, the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants counted a total of 305,097 cases. From the most common countries of origin for refugees, 4.7 % came from Afghanistan, 6.7 % from Iraq, 2.1 %

from Iran, 0.7 % from Pakistan and 30.3 % from Syria (BAMF 2019b).<sup>5</sup>

## Interaction between integration course providers and advice services

With regard to the institutional level, employees of the integration course providers and teachers point out partly different types of interaction between Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and Youth Migration Services in some interviews. It was possible to identify three different interaction practices of integration course providers in dealing with advice services in the analysis. Although the Youth Migration Services and Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants could be combined well with the integration courses, these services seem, in point of fact, to be even less intermeshed with the integration courses than would be expected.

The first identified practice in dealing with advice services is the **mere referral of those seeking advice to the appropriate (advice) services** by employees of the integration course provider. There is a similar procedure in advice practice, known as referral advice. It should be taken into account, however, that integration course providers are not professional referral advisers as the employees working there usually have neither the appropriate qualifications nor experience in migration advice services. One representative of an integration course provider who was interviewed

<sup>5</sup> No separate figures are collected on the countries of origin Eritrea, Nigeria or Somalia. These are therefore only some of the non-European refugee countries of origin, which were used in the statistics to approximate the number of refugees.

**Table 1: Degree of recognition of Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and other advice services depending on participation in an integration course (in per cent)\***

Integration course participants	Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants	Other services (for example Youth Migration Services)**
No	4	4
Yes	7	9
Number of cases	5,461	

Source: Data and weighting of the 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey.

\* Question text: "Do you know of the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants" or "Do you know any other institutional advice services on migration and integration (for example Youth Migration Services)?" Possible answers: 1. "Yes, I have already used them", 2. "Yes, but I have not used them yet", 3. "No, I do not know of them". The table reflects the share of questions answered with "yes".

\*\* In the questionnaire of the 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Survey, the question relates to all other services and provides Youth Migration Services as an example.

remembers a case whom he referred to the appropriate body:

*I referred [one] participant with an autistic child directly to our colleagues at the youth welfare service so that she would somehow get help from there. So I say referral to the right [service], because there are so many services, the participants know that too, but it's too much, they can't do it (Interview 21, TR 6, paragraph 19).*

Generally, the integration course providers are encouraged to work with the networking stakeholders on the ground to promote the aims of the integration course according to the General Ancillary Conditions for the Implementation of Integration Courses [allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen zur Durchführung des Integrationskurses]. This also concerns the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants (BAMF 2018b, point 44). The federal associations of the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants have also drafted a model cooperation agreement for collaboration between Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and integration course providers. Nevertheless, by means of the qualitative interviews, we identified a lack of cooperation and sometimes even of reference as a further practice of the integration course providers in dealing with Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants and Youth Migration Services. Therefore, the question arises as to how the distinct needs of refugee integration course participants as they experience them during their attendance of integration courses can be met in these cases. Firstly, it can be assumed that some needs will continue to be neither apparent nor met. Secondly, the analyses make evident that various integration course providers are willing to help on their own initiative. Teachers and other employees of integration course providers put in unpaid work when handling the problems of integration course participants, i.e. **employees and teachers working for the integration course providers often provide advice themselves**, even though this is not part of their scope of tasks or training.

Many refugee integration course participants report that they ask their teachers for help with questions on living in Germany in general, usually during the break, as one refugee describes: "To have something explained" (Interview 9, TN 3, paragraph 224). While the refugee integration course participants appear grateful for the help, the teachers refer to the heavy workload involved:

*The [refugee integration course participants] all have their letters which they cannot read at all (...). And they don't know the system at all, they are helpless. That's why they bring their letters to class and present them to you during the break (...) as a teacher you can't deal with that. If you want to have a good lesson, that's demanding enough, isn't it? (Interview 17, TR 4, paragraph 349).*

It becomes clear that due to teachers' additional workload, the quality of the lessons can suffer and the time teachers spend providing help may not be available for language acquisition. The demand for help from refugee integration course participants does not only place a strain on lessons, however:

*[F]or example, one lecturer of a literacy course who is very committed (...) she just gave out her private phone number, then she constantly got WhatsApp messages and need[ed] a lot of time to take a step back (...) so the lecturer could hardly switch off (Interview 22, TR 7, paragraph 20).*

The teachers are subjected to an increased workload as well as to increased psychological stress, which can have negative long-term impacts on their health. The employees of integration course providers and teachers who were interviewed are in agreement in their desire for the need of a "permanent supervision (...) a permanent solution" (Interview 22, TR 7, paragraph 17) to meet those needs of refugee integration course participants, which go beyond language acquisition.

In accordance with the General Ancillary Conditions for the Implementation of Integration Courses [allgemeine Nebenbestimmungen zur Durchführung des Integrationskurses] (BAMF 2018a) and by implication, it has been possible to identify **close cooperation with corresponding migration advice services** as a third alternative. Among the integration course providers interviewed there were two which stated that they had "real contracts with the migration advice services" (Interview 16, TR 3, paragraph 34) and were therefore evidently effectively applying the ancillary conditions for integration course providers mentioned above as well as the model cooperation agreement of the federal associations of Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants. As a result of both parties' own initiative, the Youth Migration Service at place attends the integration courses of the provider on a weekly basis to help young adults with various problems, such as bureaucratic matters, locating internships for the eighth module of the youth integration course, support in the recognition of school diplomas and university

degrees and potentially any arising conflicts. This Youth Migration Service also organises excursions and other events concerning the topic of training and labour market inclusion (Interview 16, TR 3, paragraphs 293-296, 310). This practice therefore corresponds to the concept of a nationwide youth integration course (BAMF 2015).

In contrast, the other integration course provider which also cooperates with a migration advice service is in close contact with the Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants:

*Another good thing about it is the cooperation with the [Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants] in this case, because they introduce themselves to each course and explain what they offer. (...) Quite a few people make use of it. (...) And it is a relief if you can say: "Please go there. The Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants have open office hours and they are also nearby" (Interview 17, TR 4, paragraphs 350-355).*

What both types of cooperation have in common is that the advice services are either conducted completely at the local integration course provider or are at least introduced to all participants during the integration courses and they are available to them locally. Refugee integration course participants are more likely to be aware and make use of migration advice services if they are introduced personally on the site of the integration course providers.

With regard to the efficiency of the interaction practices identified, referral of those seeking advice to advice centres by integration course providers is much less efficient when compared with closer cooperation with advice centres on the site of the integration course providers. The advice services provided by teachers and employees of the integration course providers themselves are also more efficient than referrals, however, not at least because those seeking advice overwhelmingly do not make it to the centres to which they are referred. Referrals to the correct centres can only be seen as a solution or as a possibility to meet the requirements in a small number of cases. A closer cooperation between migration advice services and integration course providers has not yet been expanded across the board, however, the result is that, in practice, mainly integration course teachers offset the need for help and advice. In order to relieve the burden on teachers, it would be an asset if those seeking advice could make use of migration advice services more frequently.

## Summary and conclusion

After arriving in Germany and while attending integration courses, refugees are often confronted with major problems which may involve various areas of life. The most important migration advice services for refugee integration course participants are the national Youth Migration Services and Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants, which are also designed to be combined with integration courses.

With this in mind, this brief analysis first identified the problems and needs of refugee integration course participants and their impact on participation in integration courses and language acquisition. Then, the question as to whether and how the migration advice services mentioned are used by the integration course participants concerned was pursued on an individual level. Thus, three characteristic types of interaction between integration courses and migration advice services on an institutional level were looked upon more closely.

In the qualitative interviews, respondents in the three target groups (refugee integration course participants, teachers and representatives of integration course providers) drew attention to the various problems of refugees, which can be summarised into four categories of needs: 1) Help with communication and forms in administrative matters, 2) help searching for accommodation, 3) help searching for employment, 4) help with navigating the range of advice on offer. In synergy with this, evaluations of the 2016 and 2017 IAB-BAMF-SOEP Refugee Surveys emphasize the needs relating to refugee and asylum questions, the search for employment and education. The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data material provides indications that awareness of migration advice services among refugee integration course participants is low and therefore confirms the findings already evident from other studies. Restricted awareness of the range of advice services on offer evidently contributes to an infrequent use of the services by the target group. It is for this reason that expansion of the awareness and usage of national Youth Migration Services and Migration Advice Services for Adult Immigrants should be the target, not least to promote the recognition value of these national services.

Increasing the awareness and usage of migration advice services seems to be the key to dealing with problems and meeting needs. Nevertheless, for the moment it would be helpful to establish information systems which are relevant to the target groups and contain the appropriate information, and then

to make these available across the board. The analysis of the interaction practices between integration courses and migration advice services furthermore shows that usage of the advice services by refugee integration course participants intensifies when there is institutional cooperation between providers of the integration courses and migration advice services. In contrast to mere referrals, the threshold is much lower for integration course providers due to the cooperation agreement and the associated regular presence of migration advice services which is involved. It appears that further expansion of such close cooperation

would be beneficial. This could be ensured via implementation of control measures for stronger cooperation between existing migration advice structures and services. This would establish better formalised access to the advice services which is not solely based on personal networks, but also embedded on an institutional level (Brandt et al. 2015: 8-9.). At the same time, this could also ease some of the burdens on teachers and employees of integration course providers, as there would be more time available for language acquisition in the integration course lessons.

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## IMPRINT

### Published by

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge  
Forschungszentrum Migration, Integration und Asyl  
90461 Nürnberg

### Version

05/2020

### Layout

Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge (BAMF)

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### Other language

[www.bamf.de/publikationen](http://www.bamf.de/publikationen)

### Suggested citation

Tissot, Anna/Croisier, Johannes (2020):  
Problems experienced by integration course participants.  
Requirement and usage of migration advice services.  
Issue 03|2020 of the Brief Analyses of the Migration, Integration  
and Asylum Research Centre at the Federal Office for Migration  
and Refugees, Nuremberg.

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