



Expert Commission  
on the Second Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government:  
**New ways of restructuring paid work and (unpaid) care work**

## Factsheet 10:

# Current challenge: Flight

## Gender equality and flight

Leaving one's home country, the flight with its various stops, and finally the arrival in another country are crucial transition phases in the life courses of refugees. Flight, migration and integration entail new challenges, not only for the migrants but also for the host communities - and also in terms of gender policy.

There are numerous reasons why people flee their home countries. These range from wars, armed conflicts and poverty to the threat of persecution or violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

Women generally flee for the same reasons as men but rather more often because of sexual and gender-related violence.

Many people also experience gender-related forms of violence and discrimination during their escape.

- » Projects and support programmes for refugees should therefore always entail gender and gender-related violence.

So far, male refugees have been integrating into the German labour market quicker than women and there are also more male refugees in employment.

The experience of flight itself is often accompanied by other crucial, and in terms of gender equality relevant, transition phases, e.g. separation from one's family or entering the labour market. To successfully integrate refugees in society it is thus essential to include a gender equality perspective as well.

## More knowledge and public communication

Refugees come from widely diverse economic, social and cultural backgrounds. This diversity often goes unnoticed by the public. Refugees are often depicted in a generalised and stereotyped manner. Research into the situations of women and men who have fled their countries can help dissipate generalisations and stereotyping. But improvement in the situation of refugees also requires the full processing of knowledge- and data-based statistics. Research can help explain the reasons for flight, integration expectations and educational backgrounds as well as the significance of sexual orientation and gender identity before, during and after fleeing.

So far, there is not sufficient research on this and interlacing with various social factors like gender, educational background, sexual orientation, age etc. does often not take place.

- » Data material and statistical knowledge should take into account these various factors.
- » Mainstreaming gender equality aspects of flight should take place in future reports.
- » Because of the high rate of traumatised refugees, studies must adhere to specific ethical standards.
- » The production of knowledge should include and support refugee and migrant self-organisation.

## **Protection in case of gender-related reasons for fleeing**

Flight can also be caused by persecution on the grounds of gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. Gender-related reasons for fleeing can be recognised as grounds for asylum either under national law, under Section 16a of the Basic Law (German constitution), or in line with international law, under the Geneva Convention on Refugees. When a person leaves a 'safe country of origin', i.e. a country legally deemed safe, it is assumed that there was no danger of persecution and the person concerned is subjected to a fast-track procedure. If this assumption cannot be refuted, the application for asylum is refused on the grounds of being 'manifestly unfounded'. This then complicates recognition for gender-related reasons.

A further limitation of the right to asylum is the so-called third country regulation. A person fleeing via a safe third country must submit the application for asylum in that country. All European Union countries, plus Norway and Switzerland, are classified as safe third countries.

- » Seriously traumatised refugees and persons with health issues caused by flight should be granted the same right to end their flight as minors have. The right to return such persons to the safe third country should not be applied.
- » In such cases, a right of residence on humanitarian grounds could be granted.

European regulations also stipulate that particularly vulnerable persons are to be identified and adequately provided for. This group includes, among others, minors, unaccompanied minors, people with disabilities or serious illness, older people, pregnant women, single parents with underage children, victims of human trafficking, people with psychological disorders and people who have suffered torture, rape or other forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence. The health of these persons should be restored, disadvantages compensated, and their special needs taken into consideration.

- » Comprehensive mechanisms are needed to determine the particular vulnerability of asylum seekers. The relevant European guidelines must be implemented.

## **Gender-oriented integration in the labour market**

It is helpful to include gender as an aspect in employment market-related language and integration courses. This can contribute to the elimination of gender stereotypes. Gender stereotypes affect men as well as women: Women are often advised to take up female-dominated occupations in care work and the low-skilled service sector, men are pointed towards male-dominated technology-related occupations. In order to make the career and training choices as gender-neutral as possible, the Expert Commission recommends:

- » The use of gender-competent training material that avoids gender stereotypes and raises awareness for existing gender stereotypes in the labour market.
- » Teaching vocational counsellors how to integrate gender-related aspects into vocational counselling.

Many refugees are forced to work in lower-skilled jobs or pursue a new career because many job qualifications and university degrees from their home countries are often not fully accepted or recognised.

Whether and the extent to which female refugees avail of such programmes and measures depends on a number of factors. These include the formal status of the asylum process, the prospects of remaining in the country, as well as the provision of childcare during course times.

Supportive offers and information only reach the target groups if they are easily accessible. Free translation services and guidance for and by refugees could contribute to achieving this. Consultations should take into account the family environment of a person as well as the specific issues that families being separated during their fleeing experience. Moreover, they should be open and targeted towards the person's wishes and potential.

## **Gender equality standards and protection against violence at reception centres**

A life free of violence is a basic prerequisite for a good start in the new life in Germany and for facilitating participation in society, access to the labour market and education. It is therefore crucial

that existing concepts for the protection against violence apply to all rooms, staff and procedures in reception centres and community accommodation and that regular controls ensure they are implemented.

- » Safe spaces offering at least a certain degree of privacy, e.g. specific women's rooms, and opportunities for exchange outside the family environment are just as important as translation offers and childcare.
- » Costs for medical treatment often constitute barriers. Covering the costs for medical treatment would be a major relief for many refugees.
- » A change of accommodation is often the only way of escaping a violent situation. This requires the option of suspending residence restrictions or fixed-abode regulation.
- » Construction measures for increased safety like lockable accommodation units and gender-separated sanitary facilities, child-friendly rooms, psycho-social assistance and care for children as well as support for youths should be universally guaranteed.
- » Discrimination against lesbian, gay, bi, trans\*, inter\* and queer (LGBTIQ\*) persons is particularly severe. Special attention should be given to such increased vulnerability in refugee facilities.

It is just as important to develop projects particularly targeting boys and men. They also have experiences with violence and fear for their family members left behind. Targeted projects for boys and men can have violence-preventing effects as well as added value in terms of gender equality. Taking each individual and their specific backgrounds and experiences seriously can prevent premature categorisation and discrimination.

### **Further reading:**

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Expert Commission on the Second Gender Equality Report of the German Federal Government (2017):  
New ways of restructuring paid work and (unpaid) care work. Expertise of the Second Gender Equality  
Report of the German Government. Available online at

[www.gleichstellungsbericht.de/gutachten2gleichstellungsbericht.pdf](http://www.gleichstellungsbericht.de/gutachten2gleichstellungsbericht.pdf)

- With regards to this factsheet, see in particular chapter D.III

### **Factsheet created by the Agency for the Second Gender Equality Report**

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