



The Research was carried out within **AMIR project** (*A peer Mentoring and Capacity Building Integration Strategy to Ensure TCN Inclusion at Regional and Local Level*) that is funded by the AMIF program of the European Commission and aims to promote the **social and economic integration of Third-Country Nationals (TCNs)** through innovative **local and regional strategies**, supported by a transnational partnership network.

## Pathways to Integration: Employment, Housing, and Financial Literacy Among Third-Country Nationals

This report aims to provide critical qualitative insights into the integration experiences of third-country nationals (TCNs), emphasizing the perspectives of migrant associations and local communities. It focuses on key areas such as employment integration, housing, and financial literacy, which are essential components of successful integration. By exploring these dimensions, the report seeks to inform and enhance policies and practices that support the effective integration of TCNs into society.

### Analysis of Migrant Population (TCN) in the country

This report aims to provide critical qualitative insights into the integration experiences of third-country nationals (TCNs), emphasizing the perspectives of migrant associations and local communities. It focuses on key areas such as employment integration, housing, and financial literacy, which are essential components of successful integration. By exploring these dimensions, the report seeks to inform and enhance policies and practices that support the effective integration of TCNs into society.

In December 31, 2023, Germany hosted approximately 13.9 million foreign nationals. Among these, 5,113,875 were citizens of other European Union (EU) member states, indicating that the remaining 8.78 million were third-country nationals (TCNs), i.e., individuals from non-EU countries.<sup>1</sup> At the end of 2023, Germany had issued approximately 5.7 million residence permits to non-EU citizens.<sup>2</sup> The primary countries of origin were Turkey, Syria, and Afghanistan. Notably, significant numbers also originated from Syria and Ukraine, reflecting recent geopolitical events. In 2023, Germany recorded 1,133,700 entries of third-country nationals, a decrease of 41.3% compared to the previous year.<sup>3</sup> As for employment of TCN, EU Blue Card holders came from India (33.000), Russia (10.000) and Turkey (8000).<sup>4</sup>

A total of 1,932,509 individuals moved to Germany in 2023, while 1,269,545 left the country. The significant decrease in net immigration is primarily attributed to a reduction in the number of refugees from Ukraine. In 2022, over 1.1 million Ukrainian refugees arrived in Germany due to the ongoing Russian war. However, in 2023, this figure dropped to approximately 276,000. Consequently, immigration of foreign nationals decreased by 29.8%, while emigration rose

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/BerichtsreihenMigrationIntegration/Freizuegigkeitsmonitoring/freizuegigkeitsmonitoring-jahresbericht-2023.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=6&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/BerichtsreihenMigrationIntegration/Freizuegigkeitsmonitoring/freizuegigkeitsmonitoring-jahresbericht-2023.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=6&utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>2</sup> Eurostat [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence\\_permits\\_-\\_statistics\\_on\\_stock\\_of\\_permits\\_at\\_the\\_end\\_of\\_the\\_year](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Residence_permits_-_statistics_on_stock_of_permits_at_the_end_of_the_year)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4&utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.germany-visa.org/news/419000-labour-migrants-were-working-in-germany-at-the-end-of-2023/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.germany-visa.org/news/419000-labour-migrants-were-working-in-germany-at-the-end-of-2023/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



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Gender distribution among immigrants is nearly balanced, with men comprising 49.7% and women 50.3%.<sup>7</sup>

In December 31, 2024, Germany's foreign population was approximately 14,061,640 individuals, reflecting a modest increase from 13,895,865 at the end of 2023.<sup>8</sup> The leading countries of origin for third-country nationals in Germany as of December 31, 2024, were Turkey (1,544,480 individuals), Ukraine (1,334,005) and Syria (975,060), Afghanistan (442,020) and Russian Federation (302,315).<sup>9</sup> Geographically, immigrants are predominantly concentrated in urban areas. For instance, Offenbach has the highest proportion, with 43% of its population being immigrants, followed by Pforzheim (39%), Heilbronn (37%), Frankfurt (36%), and Ingolstadt (33%).<sup>10</sup> These urban centers often provide more employment opportunities and established migrant communities, making them attractive destinations for newcomers.

As of 1 January 2023, Germany's population included approximately 7.7 million third-country nationals, representing about 9.1% of the total population. By mid-2024, the number of asylum seekers, refugees, and those permitted to enter Germany reached approximately 3.5 million, an increase of 60,000 compared to 2023.<sup>11</sup>

In 2023, Germany issued approximately 69,000 EU Blue Cards to highly qualified non-EU workers, indicating a continued emphasis on attracting skilled labor. In March 2024, Germany implemented the new second stage Skilled Immigration Act, aiming to facilitate the immigration process for skilled workers from non-EU countries. This act introduced a points-based system and expanded opportunities for family reunification.<sup>12</sup>

## National Integration Policies and Integration Measures

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=4&utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/EN/Forschung/Migrationsberichte/migrationsbericht-2023-kurzfassung.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=4&utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>6</sup> This section is based on the country of origin or destination of the migrants, not on their nationality. Thus, for example, immigration from EU countries may also include third-country nationals who move to Germany from these countries. For migration of EU nationals to Germany, see the section on EU internal migration.

<sup>7</sup> [Statistisches Bundesamt](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>10</sup> [Statistisches Bundesamt](https://www.destatis.de/EN/Themes/Society-Environment/Population/Migration-Integration/Tables/nowcast-foreigner-citizenship-time-series.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>11</sup> [https://ewfrf.org/en/2024/10/06/4418/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://ewfrf.org/en/2024/10/06/4418/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>12</sup> [https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-residence/skilled-immigration-act?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.make-it-in-germany.com/en/visa-residence/skilled-immigration-act?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



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Germany's integration policies have evolved significantly over the decades, reflecting its transition into a multicultural society. The country adopted its first integration plan in 2007, aiming to facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of immigrants. Recent efforts have focused on enhancing employment and vocational training opportunities for newcomers.<sup>13</sup> The country has implemented various measures to facilitate the socio-economic inclusion of immigrants, with a particular focus on enhancing employment and vocational training opportunities. Recent development among others include:

- **Skilled Workers' Act (Fachkräfteeinwanderungsgesetz):** Enacted in July 2023, this law overhauled Germany's immigration system to attract skilled and educated workers. It introduced a points-based immigration system, expedited application processing, simplified the recognition of foreign qualifications, and lowered the minimum salary threshold for EU Blue Card holders. Additionally, it introduced a job seeker visa and facilitated industry transitions for immigrants.
- **Integration Courses Enhancement:** In November 2024, Germany adopted a new ordinance to make integration courses more effective and efficient. The revised courses are tailored to individual learning needs, considering participants' educational backgrounds and learning speeds. The government also secured funding to continue these courses in 2025, emphasizing the importance of imparting language skills and core values to immigrants.<sup>14</sup>
- **Support for Foreign Graduates:** In December 2023, Germany introduced initiatives to facilitate the transition of foreign graduates into the German labor market. The FIT Programme provides personalized support throughout international students' academic journeys, while the Profi Plus Programme assists foreign graduates in adapting their qualifications to meet German labor market requirements. Both programs are funded with €120 million through 2028.<sup>15</sup>
- **Integration through Vocational Training:** The "Integration through Training" initiative encourages young people with a migrant background to pursue vocational training within companies. It also motivates entrepreneurs with a migrant background to offer training opportunities, fostering a more inclusive workforce.<sup>16</sup>

As is seen from the information above, Germany's approach to migrant integration is multifaceted, involving national strategies, collaborative efforts across various institutional levels, and targeted measures in key sectors such as education, employment, health, and social inclusion. This comprehensive framework aims to facilitate the successful integration of international protection beneficiaries and other legal residents from third countries.

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<sup>13</sup> Governance of migrant integration in Germany at [https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-germany\\_de?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://migrant-integration.ec.europa.eu/country-governance/governance-migrant-integration-germany_de?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/EN/2024/11/kabinett-integrationskurse.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/pressemitteilungen/EN/2024/11/kabinett-integrationskurse.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>15</sup> [https://monitor.icef.com/2023/12/germany-announces-new-labour-force-integration-initiatives-for-foreign-students-and-graduates/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://monitor.icef.com/2023/12/germany-announces-new-labour-force-integration-initiatives-for-foreign-students-and-graduates/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)

<sup>16</sup> [https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/vocational-training-and-work.html?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/EN/Dossier/vocational-training-and-work.html?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



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- **National Level:** The Federal Government sets overarching integration policies and provides funding for various programs.
- **Regional (State) Level:** States implement federal policies, tailoring them to regional contexts and needs.
- **Local (Municipal) Level:** Local authorities and municipalities execute integration measures, often collaborating with non-governmental organizations and community groups to address specific local challenges.

Integration measures encompass several key areas:

- **Education:** Language courses and educational support programs are provided to facilitate linguistic proficiency and academic integration.
- **Employment:** Initiatives aim to improve access to the labour market, including recognition of foreign qualifications and vocational training programs.
- **Health:** Efforts are made to ensure migrants have access to healthcare services, including mental health support.
- **Social Inclusion:** Programs promote community engagement and cultural exchange to foster social cohesion.

Financial allocations for integration have evolved in response to migration trends. For instance, in 2024, increased government spending on jobless benefits reached €29.7 billion, partly due to the influx of migrants.<sup>17</sup> This reflects the dynamic nature of funding, which adjusts to the socio-economic landscape and the needs of both migrants and host communities.

## Key Challenges in the Integration Process

● **Immigration Status:** Immigration status is a challenge for third-country nationals as it affects access to work, social services, legal security, and integration opportunities. Temporary or uncertain status creates instability, preventing migrants from fully contributing to their host society. Those with such status often face restrictions on employment, education, and social services, hindering integration. Asylum seekers, for example, may be unable to work initially or face job limitations even after approval, impeding financial independence. While the Skilled Workers' Immigration Act aims to attract professionals, bureaucratic barriers still restrict access to quality jobs. The lengthy process of obtaining permanent residence or asylum status creates uncertainty, delaying integration into the economy and society.

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<sup>17</sup> [https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/how-migration-germany-is-fuelling-election-debate-economy-2025-02-12/?utm\\_source=chatgpt.com](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/how-migration-germany-is-fuelling-election-debate-economy-2025-02-12/?utm_source=chatgpt.com)



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Migrants often experience inconsistencies in how immigration rules are applied, leading to confusion and administrative errors that negatively affect their status and integration.

- **Housing:** Housing remains a major challenge for non-EU immigrants in Germany due to high demand, discrimination, legal restrictions, and the limited availability of affordable housing. Women and families face particularly significant challenges in accessing the housing market. Limited savings and the difficulty of saving for housing expenses, along with high agency fees and inflated rental prices, create major obstacles to securing stable housing. The housing crisis is further worsened by a shortage of available properties and a general mistrust from landlords, who may be concerned about a potential decrease in property value when renting to migrants. The ongoing housing crisis in Germany, particularly in large cities like Berlin and Munich, means there is a limited supply of rental properties. This increases competition for available units, making it even harder for families, especially those from non-EU countries, to secure a home. Renting in Germany typically requires tenants to demonstrate their ability to pay rent consistently, often through proof of employment or a stable income. Migrants with uncertain immigration status or those who have not been in the country long enough may struggle to meet these requirements, reducing their chances of securing housing.

Non-EU nationals, especially those who are not yet fluent in German, may face difficulties communicating with landlords or understanding rental agreements. Landlords may use language proficiency as an excuse to discriminate, assuming that migrants won't be able to understand the terms of the lease or will be difficult to interact with. In some cases, landlords may hold cultural prejudices, believing that non-EU nationals might not respect the cultural norms of the community or the property itself. This leads to a reluctance to rent to migrants or families from certain countries. Thus, the issue of discrimination in the housing sector is particularly evident. Some landlords may be wary of renting to migrants, fearing that their properties could lose value or become harder to lease in the future.

Discrimination in housing for third-country nationals in Germany manifests through racial, ethnic, and economic biases, language barriers, and systemic exclusion from desirable neighborhoods. These discriminatory practices limit access to stable housing for migrants, particularly those with temporary status or uncertain immigration futures.

- **Labour Market and Skills:** In Germany, there are notable differences in the labor market participation and unemployment rates between third-country nationals (non-EU immigrants) and native-born individuals (Germans). Third-country nationals (non-EU immigrants) in Germany face higher unemployment rates, lower wages, and more barriers to accessing vocational training and education compared to native Germans. Their challenges include limited language skills, difficulties in having foreign qualifications recognized, temporary immigration status, and discrimination in the labor market. As a result, many non-EU nationals are overrepresented in low-skilled jobs with less job security. In contrast, native Germans generally experience higher employment rates, better wages, and greater access to career development opportunities, benefiting from stable immigration policies and support systems. Female



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Many non-EU nationals, especially those in temporary or low-skilled positions, experience exploitation through poor working conditions and low wages. They are often overrepresented in sectors like construction, agriculture, hospitality, and domestic work, where pay is low, and job security is minimal. Exploitation in the form of wage theft is not uncommon, with workers not being paid in full or on time. Migrants in particular may be reluctant to report such issues due to their vulnerable legal status, language barriers, or fear of retaliation.

### Best Practices Examples:

#### **THE KOMBI CAREER COUNSELLING PROJECT IS PART OF THE INTEGRATION THROUGH QUALIFICATION (IQ) NETWORK, AIMING TO ASSIST MIGRANTS IN RECOGNIZING AND LEVERAGING THEIR EXISTING SKILLS FOR THE GERMAN LABOUR MARKET**

**Objective:** to support the integration of individuals with foreign qualifications into the German labor market by providing career counseling and competency assessments, as part of the IQ (Integration through Qualification) network.

**Target group:** Migrants, Individuals with foreign qualifications, TCNs.

**Funding:** Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS)

#### **Key Practices:**

- competency assessment,
- qualification recognition,
- language training,
- job market guidance, to help individuals with foreign qualifications successfully integrate into the German workforce.
- tailored assistance to address challenges and offer further support.

#### **Impact:**

##### ***Short-Term Results:***

- Enhanced Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: Participants experienced improved acknowledgment of their qualifications in the German labor market.



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- Increased Job Readiness: The project helped prepare individuals for employment through tailored support and training.
- Language Skill Improvement: Participants improved their language skills, which are crucial for workplace integration.
- Access to Job Opportunities: The project facilitated connections to job opportunities for participants.

***Long-Term Results:***

- Sustained Employment and Career Advancement: Many participants achieved stable employment and progressed in their careers.
- Economic Integration: The project contributed to the economic integration of participants into German society.
- Social Inclusion: Participants reported greater social inclusion as they became active members of the workforce.
- Ongoing Contribution to the Labor Market: The project helped enhance the labor market by integrating skilled individuals.
- Sustained Skills Development: Continuous skills development was encouraged among participants, aiding their long-term employability.

**Lessons learned:**

Engaging employers was difficult as some were reluctant to recognize foreign qualifications. The project learned the importance of ongoing labor market research and cultural orientation to align services with industry needs.

Key lessons included:

- the need for holistic support,
- strong employer networks,
- long-term integration, highlighting the value of personalized assistance and employer partnerships for successful integration.

**Scalability:** Local adaptations may include:

- Adapting to Local Qualification Recognition,
- Aligning with Local Labor Market Needs,
- Compliance with Local Legal Frameworks.

**WOHNPROJEKT AUGSBURG**



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**Objective(s):** Promote social integration; Create Cooperative and Community-Oriented Housing; Support Sustainable Urban Development; Foster Cultural Exchange; Provide Support for Vulnerable Groups; Reduce Social Exclusion; achieve Long-Term Social Cohesion.

**Target group:** TCNs and vulnerable groups.

**Funding:** Municipal funding from the City of Augsburg; German federal and state (Bavarian) government programs, aimed at social housing, migration, and integration; EU grants; Partnerships with NGOs and Social Enterprises; church-related organizations (Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland (EKD)).

#### **Key Practices:**

- Transitional housing comprising 175 units with a maximum duration of six years.
- Comprehensive assessments by social services to identify eligible beneficiaries.
- Individualized support plans tailored to beneficiaries' needs. Individualized housing plans created with input from multidisciplinary teams.
- Regular monitoring and follow-ups to ensure progress toward autonomy.

#### **Impact:**

- Online guide with instructions and regulations <https://cms.integreat-app.de/pdf/f4d94b491a/Integreat%20-%20English%20-%20Living.pdf>
- Augsburg accommodates up to 1,256 asylum seekers across various temporary collective accommodations in 2024, including 12 state-administered facilities.
- Additionally, the Grand hotel Cosmopolis in Augsburg houses up to 60 individuals, including nine refugee families awaiting asylum processing.
- Enhanced collaboration between public and private housing sectors.

#### **Lessons learned:**

- Importance of Partnerships: Successful projects require strong cooperation with local authorities and private partners to ensure financial stability and navigate bureaucratic challenges.
- Adaptability to Legal Frameworks: Early discussions and flexibility in adapting to legal frameworks are crucial for smooth implementation.
- Sustainability through Participation: Involving residents in self-management and using participatory models ensures long-term sustainability.





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**Scalability:** can be adapted to other regions by adjusting to local legal frameworks, cultural contexts, resources, and housing conditions, with key adaptations including alignment with local regulations, financial models, and community-building approaches, while fostering partnerships with local stakeholders for successful implementation.

## **MIGRANET PLUS IN THE FUNDING PROGRAM IQ – INTEGRATION THROUGH QUALIFICATION**

**Objective:** to enhance the labor market integration of migrants and refugees in Germany by improving their qualifications, offering employment support, and facilitating access to job opportunities, as part of the broader IQ Network initiative to support migrant integration through qualification recognition, language support, and employment assistance.

**Target group:** TCNs, Refugees, Individuals with Foreign Qualification, Long-term unemployed Migrants, Low-skilled workers.

**Funding:** The Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (BMAS) and the European Union through the European Social Fund Plus (ESF Plus).

### **Key Practices:**

- Foreign Qualification Recognition
- Language support
- Job Placement and Training Programs
- Social Integration Services
- Personalized Guidance
- Partnerships with Employers and Stakeholders

### **Impact:**

Since this is an ongoing project, the expected impact is:

- Enhanced employability
- stronger social networks, improved integration into local communities, and enhanced opportunities for migrants to participate fully in society

### **Lessons learned:**

- Establishing strong cooperation with local authorities from the beginning is crucial to navigating bureaucratic and legal hurdles,
- Complex Legal Landscape



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- Evaluating the long-term social integration and outcomes of the project remains a challenge, requiring refined metrics and methods to capture the full impact of the initiative.

**Scalability:** It is adaptable to other regions or cities, but it requires adjustments to local legal frameworks, cultural contexts, and resources.

It is adaptable to other urban contexts. Success depends on strong public-private partnerships, robust data collection, and active community participation.

### **NEUSTART IM TEAM“ (NesT)**

**Objective(s):** Provide stable housing for refugees; Support integration through assistance with authorities, education, and employment; Foster community engagement; Offer mentorship; Promote long-term success.

**Target group:** ): TCNs, Refugees, Local communities.

**Funding:** Federal Ministry of the Interior and Home Affairs (BMI), the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration (IntB) and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) in cooperation with civil society partners and the UNHCR, the German Caritas Association, the Evangelical Church of Westphalia and the German Red Cross.

### **Key Practices:**

- Stable Housing Support
- Personalized Mentorship: Pair refugees with mentors who offer practical guidance and emotional support to help them navigate local bureaucracies, understand the job and education markets, and access social services.
- Community Engagement and Collaboration
- Ongoing Integration Support
- Financial Sustainability: Use community-based fundraising to ensure that the initiative remains financially sustainable, supporting long-term integration efforts for refugees.
- Results-Focused Approach: Monitor and measure outcomes related to improved refugee integration, enhanced self-sufficiency, and strengthened community cohesion, reflecting the active role of local residents in welcoming and supporting refugees.

### **Impact:**

- 2019–2021: 149 individuals formed 27 mentoring groups, supporting the resettlement of 118 refugees; 2022: Four additional mentoring groups facilitated the arrival of 21 refugees; 200 refugees were supported in 2023.



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**Lessons learned:**

- Community engagement is crucial.
- The initiative has faced challenges, including high participation requirements for mentoring groups, such as securing housing and financial commitments, which have limited the number of refugees assisted.

**Scalability:** By focusing on these core areas, the NesT model can be effectively adapted to different regions and countries, supporting refugee integration and fostering community cohesion.

**INITIATIVE FÜR FLÜCHTLINGE AUGSBURG (IFFA) / EN. INITIATIVE FOR REFUGEES AUGSBURG  
IMPLEMENTED BY TCNs**

**Objective:** to provide diverse support for refugees and migrants by assisting with integration, language acquisition, and accommodation, organizing exchanges of experiences and information on various topics, offering seminars and webinars on integration and the labor market, promoting social participation, and implementing joint projects with national and international organizations.

**Target group:** Refugees, Migrants, TCNs

**Funding:** No funding

**Key Practices:**

- Finding housing
- Labor market integration
- Reducing Social isolation

Focus groups and workshops to address challenges like discrimination and build confidence.

**Impact:**

The initiative has supported over 300 families and 200 individuals through various forms of assistance, including help with:

- accommodation,
- document completion,
- interpreting,
- everyday needs,
- support for raising children and young people.
- More than 50 seminars and webinars on various topics were held to aid refugees' integration.

**Lessons learned:**



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- The lack of financial resources leads to the initiative achieving a performance that remains far below its potential. Since the initiative is not a legal entity, it is also not possible to receive direct financial support or to receive financial resources as part of a project.

**Scalability:** This project can be easily implemented in any region and country. The activities of this initiative have been met with positive approval in Germany, Europe and even in various places around the world. It is emphasized that this civil society movement, consisting of volunteers, represents a special example that deserves recognition.

### Voices of Migrants and local communities:

Focus groups were organized to gather insights from migrants, representatives of foreign communities, professionals involved in migrant reception and integration, and members of grassroots volunteer organizations supporting migrants. These discussions highlighted the key challenges encountered during the integration process, shared positive experiences, and identified potential solutions to enhance integration pathways.

#### Finding Stability through Career Guidance or

*"When I arrived in Germany, I had a degree in mechanical engineering, but I didn't know how to get my qualifications recognized. The process seemed overwhelming, and I felt lost. The Career Counselling program changed everything for me. They helped me understand the steps I needed to take, guided me through the paperwork, and even provided job interview coaching. Today, I am working in my field, and for the first time since leaving my country, I feel like I have a future." (Migrant Voice)*

#### Overcoming Housing Barriers

*"When my family and I arrived in Augsburg, we struggled to find an apartment because many landlords refused to rent to refugees. We stayed in a crowded shelter for months. Then we found WOHNPROJEKT Augsburg. They offered us a safe home in a shared housing project where we could live independently but still have support. My children now have stability, and we have made friends with German neighbors who have helped us integrate."(Migrant voice)*

*"That apartment was not allocated to someone because the person came from another country, had a different skin color or simply had a different name. A few years ago, a colleague of ours from Munich was looking for an apartment in Augsburg and was turned down. The landlord told him that he couldn't get the apartment because he was black." (Community representative/The officer)*

#### The Power of Community Sponsorship



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*"I was selected for the program, and a group of German volunteers supported me from the moment I arrived. They helped me find housing, enrol in language courses, and introduced me to their friends. Before, I was afraid I would be alone in a new country, but now I feel like I belong. My sponsors became like family to me, and I hope one day I can help newcomers the way they helped me." (Migrant Voice)*

### **Breaking Barriers in the Labor Market**

*"I had years of experience in IT, but my foreign qualifications were not immediately recognized in Germany. I had to start from scratch. Through this initiative, I received training on how to navigate the job market here. They also helped me improve my technical German skills. Now, I have a full-time job at a German tech company. I still face challenges, but I feel more confident about my future." (Migrant voice)*

### **Supporting Refugees Through Housing**

*"Many people in Germany don't realize how hard it is for refugees to find a decent place to live. When we started our project, we wanted to create an inclusive housing solution where Germans and migrants live together, share experiences, and support each other. It's not always easy – there are cultural differences – but I've seen friendships form, and I believe this kind of housing model helps integration happen naturally." (Community representative)*

### **Volunteering to Welcome Newcomers**

*"When I first signed up for the support program, I didn't know what to expect. Helping a refugee settle in seemed like a big responsibility. But it has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. The man we sponsored, has become a friend. Seeing how much he has achieved in just one year – learning German, finding a job – makes me proud. Integration isn't just about policies; it's about personal connections." (A Volunteer)*

### **Bridging the Gap in Employment**

*"At first, we were hesitant to hire employees with foreign qualifications because we weren't sure how they matched our standards. But after working with the initiative, we realized that many highly skilled migrants are an asset to our company. We've since hired several employees through the program, and they have brought fresh perspectives and dedication to their work." (Employer/Stakeholder)*

### **Building a Support Network**

*"Integration isn't just about learning the language – it's about feeling at home. We organize events where refugees and locals can meet, share meals, and support one another. I have seen how small gestures, like helping someone*



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*fill out a form or practicing German over coffee, make a big difference. Some of the people I've met through this initiative have become lifelong friends." (Community representative)*

## Common Themes and Lessons from the Testimonials

### 1. The Importance of Guidance and Counseling

*Programs like KomBI and MigraNet Plus help migrants understand job opportunities and gain recognition for their qualifications (Migrant voice)*

*Without career guidance, many skilled migrants would remain unemployed or in low-wage jobs. (Migrant voice)*

### 2. The Role of Housing in Integration

*WOHNPROJEKT Augsburg demonstrates how inclusive housing solutions can reduce homelessness and promote intercultural friendships. (Community representative)*

*Access to stable housing is a crucial first step in rebuilding lives. (Migrant voice)*

### 3. The Power of Community and Sponsorship

*Neustart im Team (NesT) shows that when locals take an active role in welcoming newcomers, integration is smoother and more successful. (Community representative)*

*Personal relationships and mentorship provide emotional and practical support. (A Volunteer)*

### 4. Employment as a Key Factor for Inclusion

*MigraNet Plus and employer engagement show that when companies are open to hiring migrants, they gain valuable talent. (Community representative)*

*Training programs that address language barriers and qualification recognition are essential.*

*(Migrant voice)*

### 5. Volunteering Strengthens Social Ties



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*Organizations like IFFA prove that integration is a two-way process. When locals and migrants engage with each other, trust and understanding grow. (Migrant voice)*

The voices of migrants and local community members highlight the successes and challenges of integration in Germany. While policies and programs provide the framework, personal connections, community support, and employment opportunities are what truly drive successful integration. These testimonials demonstrate that with the right support systems, migrants can contribute to and enrich their new communities, while local residents can play a vital role in fostering inclusivity.

## Concluding remarks

Germany's integration landscape underscores the effectiveness of comprehensive, multi-level strategies that merge policy frameworks with grassroots initiatives. Programs such as KomBI Career Counseling, WOHNPROJEKT Augsburg, MigraNet Plus, and NesT exemplify the pivotal roles of career guidance, inclusive housing, employer engagement, community sponsorship, and local volunteer efforts in facilitating integration.

Key Insights from Best Practices:

- *Tailored Career Support:* Customized career counseling, like that offered by KomBI, enhances employment opportunities and aids in the recognition of migrants' skills.
- *Affordable and Inclusive Housing:* Initiatives such as Wohnprojekt Augsburg demonstrate that accessible housing is fundamental for migrants' long-term stability and integration.
- *Community-Driven Initiatives:* Programs like NesT highlight how community sponsorship and volunteer involvement foster social cohesion and support networks for refugees.

Recommendations for Enhancing Policy Coherence:

- a) Simplify Qualification Recognition Processes: Streamlining the recognition of foreign qualifications can significantly improve employment rates among migrants.
- b) Expand Community Sponsorship Models: Broadening initiatives like NesT can enhance local engagement and provide robust support systems for refugees.
- c) Increase Funding for Integration Initiatives: Allocating more resources to language education, vocational training, and housing projects can address persistent gaps and promote comprehensive integration.

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### Legislation and Policy Documents

- **EU Blue Card Directive (2009/50/EC and 2021/1883)**  
Facilitates the entry and residence of highly qualified third-country nationals for work purposes in the EU.
- **Aufenthaltsgesetz (Residence Act):** This act regulates the entry, residence, and employment of foreigners in Germany.
- **Integrationskursverordnung (Integration Course Regulation):** This regulation outlines the implementation of integration courses for foreigners and ethnic German resettlers
- **Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz (Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act):** This act governs the provision of benefits to asylum seekers in Germany.
- **Berufsqualifikationsfeststellungsgesetz (Professional Qualifications Assessment Act):** This act facilitates the recognition of foreign professional qualifications.

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