

Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Saarland

Answers to the most frequently asked questions



Answers to the 40 most frequently asked questions about asylum seekers and refugees in Saarland

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1. Is there a difference between an asylum seeker and a refugee?

Yes!

Asylum applicants are people who are seeking protection from political persecution in accordance with Article 16a of the German Constitution (GG) (hereinafter referred to as asylum seekers) or international protection in accordance with the relevant EU directive. The granting of international protection leads either to recognition of refugee status, as in the case of political persecution in accordance with Article 16a GG, or to the granting of subsidiary protection.

A foreigner is recognised as a 'refugee' if he/she is living outside of his/her country of origin due to fear of persecution on the grounds of his/her race, religion, nationality, political convictions or membership of a specific social group and where he/she is unable to or does not wish to accept the protection of the country of origin as a result of this fear. Where no other protection can be provided in the country, the key issue is whether persecution can be presumed, regardless of the perpetrator of this persecution – the state, state-supporting parties, organisations or non-governmental players.

Subsidiary protection is granted, for example, in general emergency situations such as civil wars and natural disasters.

In the case of recognised refugees and individuals granted subsidiary protection, the asylum proceedings have already been completed and those affected have been granted a right of residence. They receive a residence permit. By contrast, asylum seekers are still undergoing the approval process, i.e. a decision has not yet been made as to whether they can continue to reside in the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany. They are in possession of a temporary residence permit.

In many areas of life, this legal difference leads to different treatments, services and claims to accommodation, support, supplies and funding as established by law.

The legal distinction between asylum seekers and refugees is not always known by all members of the public. Often both terms are used synonymously. The different rights of residence have no role to play when it comes to non-governmental services e.g. in the voluntary sector.

2. What happens when an asylum application is approved or rejected?

The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees is a federal authority which makes decisions about asylum applications. If the application is approved, the applicant is 'recognised' and receives a residence permit, i.e. a right of residence, restricted to a period of three years. After this period, the request is reviewed again to assess whether there are continued grounds for recognition as an asylum seeker or refugee. If these grounds still exist, a permanent residence permit is issued. This is unlimited.

If the application for asylum is rejected, the parties concerned are issued with a notice of rejection from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The rejected applicant is then requested to leave Germany. Usually a months' notice is given but sometimes less.

The Foreign Citizens' Office is then required to check and implement measures to terminate the period of residence. If an applicant does not leave the country voluntarily, he/she will be threatened with deportation.

If departure or repatriation is not possible for legal or other reasons, the rejected applicant is issued with exceptional leave to remain. However exceptional leave to remain does not constitute a right of residence.

3. Why do so many refugees come to Germany?

Some 51.2 million people across the world are currently in the process of fleeing their homeland. This is the highest number since the end of the Second World War.

One third of the people seeking refuge are children and young people.

16.7 million of them are classed as refugees according to International Law, i.e. they are not residing in their country or in a neighbouring country.

The largest proportion of the total figure, around 33.3 million people are fleeing within their own country or to a neighbouring country.

Initially people generally flee to a neighbouring country and then travel to Europe where they hope to be able to obtain appropriate protection and a secure livelihood until they can return to their homeland again.

4. Are there any special intake programmes in addition to the option of asylum?

Germany is one of the EU countries which accepts 500 refugees each year as part of the **United Nations Resettlement Programme**. Only those, who have fled their homeland and then had to flee their first country of refuge due to a current crisis or war, can be admitted. They are provided with a residence and work permit and benefits under the German Social Code II (Hartz IV) or Social Code XII (social welfare) and are given the opportunity to take part in an integration course.

Up to 20,000 Syrian refugees may seek refuge in Germany in accordance with **federal government quotas**. They will also be provided with a residence permit, work permit and, if applicable, benefits in accordance with Social Codes II and XII.

Syrian refugees can also seek refuge with relatives already living in Germany as part of the **Saarland State Intake Directive**.

5. How are the asylum seekers and refugees distributed across the German Federal states?

The '**Königstein Formula**' (Agreement between the German Federal states determining the ratio of contribution to Federal expenditure) regulates how many asylum seekers a state is required to accept. This intake quota is re-assessed each year, which currently stands at 1.22% for Saarland.

6. How many asylum seekers came to Germany and Saarland in 2014? Which countries did they come from?

In 2014, almost 203,000 people applied for asylum across Germany and as many as 173,072 of them were first-time applicants. Close to 30,000 people re-submitted their application following rejection, so-called follow-up applications.

This represented an increase of 57.9% from 2013. The Federal Office is predicting a significant increase again in 2015.

In 2014, a total of 3,100 asylum seekers were accepted into Saarland. According to the predictions of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, these intake figures will increase again in 2015.

Most of those who came to Saarland were from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan, Serbia and Iraq.

7. How many asylum seekers were recognised in 2014?

The recognition rate in Saarland stands at approximately 70% and is therefore significantly higher than the average for Germany as a whole. This is due to the fact that Saarland has a higher level of Syrians with an entitlement to stay in the country.

8. How does the asylum procedure work?

The Federal Government is responsible for decisions in asylum proceedings. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) processes asylum applications. In Saarland, this federal authority is based at the site of the State Intake Facility in Lebach.

The asylum procedure is regulated in the Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG).

Detailed information about this is provided by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. A pamphlet (in German and English) and a video in several languages can be downloaded from the website of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

(<http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Videos/DE/BAMF/ablauf-asylverfahren.html?nn=1363224>).

9. Where are asylum seekers in Saarland housed initially?

Following their arrival, asylum seekers are initially taken to the State Reception Centre in Lebach where they remain for approximately 6-8 weeks. The State Reception Centre is located south of Dillinger Strasse, on the edge of a residential area in the town of Lebach. It contains an initial reception facility and collective accommodation.

There are currently 1,370 places available at present of which approximately 850 are based in the initial reception facility.

10. How long do they have to stay there?

Asylum seekers are required to spend up to six weeks or up to three months maximum at the initial reception facility while the asylum proceedings take place.

If the asylum proceedings continue past this period, asylum seekers are generally moved to collective accommodation. The state collective accommodation is based on the site of the State Reception Centre.

11. Is there sufficient intake capacity in Lebach?

In 2013, the State Reception Centre reached its limits due to high refugee levels. Since October 2013, asylum seekers have been housed in the towns and districts of Saarland. (The average stay at the State Reception Centre has fallen due to the high admission figures).

12. What happens at the State Reception Centre? What do the asylum seekers have to do?

During their initial interview at the State Reception Centre, personal data is recorded, from so-called master data to questions about specific illnesses, persons to whom they are attached and family relationships. This data serves as a basis for the subsequent allocation to the communities. At this point, the decision is made as to which district the asylum seekers will be subsequently allocated to or whether they will be allocated to Saarbrücken Regional Association/Saarbrücken State Capital.

Asylum seekers can submit their asylum application immediately 'on site'. The responsible Federal Office for Migration and Refugees has its office on the site of the State Reception Centre. A hearing takes place around 4 weeks after being admitted to Lebach and the decision on the asylum application is made.

Straight after this hearing and as part of the asylum procedure, the State Administration Department informs the municipalities as to when the individual in question can be expected to arrive at the specified residential address.

At the point of acceptance, the State Reception Centre informs people about the available advisory services provided by organisations on-site.

People can visit the support and advisory services provided by welfare organisations. The Diakonisches Werk charity association and the German Red Cross offer a range of social support services.

The facility provides a wide range of funding, support and leisure opportunities, in particular for children and school pupils. These have a positive impact on the overall lives of the children and young people. Many take advantage of the childcare offers provided on-site.

Adults also have the opportunity to learn the German language. The projects run by the Diakonisches Werk charity in Lebach include language assistance, among other things (three courses were offered in 2014).

13. Do asylum seekers in Lebach have to undergo health checks?

Foreigners residing at an initial reception facility or in communal accommodation (§ 62 Asylum Procedure Act) are obliged to undergo a medical examination, including an X-ray, to check for transmissible diseases (§ 62 AsylVfG). A doctor is present in Lebach for this purpose.

The examinations check for the presence of transmissible diseases (e.g. scabies) and exclude any possibility of tuberculosis in the respiratory system and infectious sexually transmitted diseases. Case-related examinations may also be carried out based on epidemiological data from the specific country of origin or where relevant indications are identified in the individual in question.

Vaccinations are also offered e.g. against diphtheria, tetanus and Hepatitis B. Asylum seekers from specific countries are vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella.

These vaccinations are documented in vaccination certificates.

The results of the examinations are then shared with the State Administration Department which is responsible for housing the asylum seekers.

14. What happens after being housed at the State Reception Centre in Lebach?

An asylum seeker's place of residence in the community is regulated by the State Immigrant Admission Law (LAG). According to this law, "communities are required to accept asylum seekers and refugees allocated by the state". The number of inhabitants in the local authority should be taken into account as part of this.

15. What happens when the refugees from Lebach move to a municipality?

Following a hearing at the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees in Lebach, the individual in question is transferred to the allocated apartment in the community. Towns and communities are required to accept asylum seekers and refugees allocated by the state. An official from the State Administration Department takes the refugees there. It is stipulated that, in addition to an official from the local authorities, an asylum advisor or integration facilitator from the 'responsible' welfare organisation in the community can also be present. (If this is not possible, he/she will arrange a meeting with the new arrival as soon as possible).

After registering with the Residents' Registration Office, the relevant applications are submitted to the authorities responsible for providing services and benefits.

Asylum seekers and refugees are generally provided with a private residence. This can range from apartments for individuals to family properties.

The decision about the nature and size of the property lies with the local authorities which have to take account of social welfare regulations. This also depends on the situation concerning the local housing market.

The cost of housing for asylum seekers (as well as apartment size) must comply with the specifications which also apply to recipients of benefits in accordance with the German Social Code (SGB) II (Hartz IV) and SGB XII (social welfare). 45 m² is allocated to individuals plus an additional 15 m² for each additional person. Rental costs are based on the relevant table of appropriate accommodation costs for the SGB II /SGB XII categories which are based on regional housing costs. € 245 is considered appropriate for a single person household in Saarbrücken, for example, and € 266 in Neunkirchen.

Thanks to the openness of the people of Saarland and their readiness to provide private housing for refugees, most people can be housed in apartments and are therefore able to live within the community. This forms a good basis for integration.

16. What services are available to the asylum seekers?

Asylum seekers are provided with services in accordance with the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG). These services include everything required for day-to-day living and include basic services such as

- **food, accommodation, heating, clothing, health and body care**
- **consumer goods and durables in the household**

as well as a freely disposable financial benefit to cover everyday personal needs. Any essential medical care services are also provided in the case of illness, pregnancy or childbirth.

17. Do asylum seekers and refugees also receive financial support?

So long as they are based at the State Reception Centre, asylum seekers are provided with a freely spendable financial benefit ('pocket money') to cover their everyday personal requirements. Everything else is provided by the State Administration Department in the form of benefits in kind.

However, this all changes when they start to live in the community. The District Social Welfare offices and Regional Association for the Provision of Services take over responsibility in accordance with the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG). These services predominantly take the form of cash benefits.

Asylum seekers receive a sum of 359 euros per month for a single person; contributions for families are formed in accordance with German Social Code (SGB) II and SGB XII.

Recognised refugees are receive welfare benefits in accordance with SGB II (so-called Hartz IV benefits) or SGB XII (general social welfare) if they are not capable of work. An individual person receives a sum of **399 euros**.

Anyone who comes to Germany as a refugee through the official Federal Quota for Syrian refugees is also allocated the specified benefits in accordance with SGB II or SGB XII (social welfare).

In cases where refugees come to the state through the Saarland State Intake Directive for Syrian relatives, accommodation and maintenance (with the exception of health insurance cover) are to be covered by the relatives already living here or by third parties.

18. Can asylum seekers open a bank account?

In principle, asylum seekers can open a bank account. After applying for asylum, asylum seekers are issued with a certificate (§ 63 AsylVfG) containing personal details and a photo. This can be recognised as a document of identification. However, this situation may be handled differently by the different financial institutes.

The opening of a bank account by foreigners granted exceptional leave to remain (i.e. asylum seekers whose application for asylum has been declined) is more problematic. Their 'Certificate of Exceptional Leave to Remain' (certificate documenting suspension of deportation according to § 60a section 4a of the Residence Act) is generally not accepted as a document of identification.

Options for rectifying this situation are currently passing through the parliamentary channels. The Federal Ministry of Finance, the Federal Financial Supervisory Authority and Deutsche Sparkassen- and Giroverband have agreed that residence certificates (with a photo) will be recognised in the meantime.

19. Do our local authorities receive state support when it comes to the supply of housing?

Asylum seekers and refugees are generally housed in private residences. The local authorities responsible for housing them are also responsible for acquiring and providing suitable accommodation. This has worked well to date. Citizens of the state remain willing to provide accommodation.

To avoid 'bottlenecks' and expand on the offer, the Saarland State Government provided towns, local authorities and municipality-owned companies with 5 million euros to create additional accommodation at the start of 2015.

Funding is provided to accommodation investment, maintenance and purchasing measures which are subject to minimum rental controls for a period of 10 years to accommodate asylum seekers or provide social housing. Funding is provided, for example, for the fitting out of municipal accommodation, the purchasing of housing (especially vacant properties) by towns and local authorities and the furnishing of living space.

In the case of buildings not owned by the municipalities, funding can be provided if the living space is rented out to the municipality at a rental price in line with social benefits. The funding provided equates to 50% or maximum 50,000 euros per measure. Measures must be instigated by 31.12.2015 at the latest and completed by 31.12.2016 at the latest.

20. How does the state help the local authorities beyond this?

The state reimburses the districts and Saarbrücken Regional Association for any benefits provided to asylum seekers and their spouses or registered partners and any under-age children living with them (§ 3 section 1 State Immigrant Admission Law) in accordance with the terms of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act.

21. Are all of the individuals accepted in Lebach assigned to the communities?

In cases where the asylum application is expected to be rejected due to being clearly unfounded, the individual in question is not allocated. This applies in particular those from 'safe countries of origin'.

Attempts are also made to avoid the allocation of so-called Dublin III cases. These are individuals who have entered Germany via a different EU country or who have already submitted an application for asylum there.

22. Are asylum seekers and refugees looked after in the communities?

The care and support provided to asylum seekers and refugees starts at the State Reception Centre in Lebach.

The state funds several advice and support services provided by the Caritas organisation, the Diakonisches Werk charity association in the Saar region and the German Red Cross. In addition to social support, these services also include providing assistance with the asylum procedure and psychological issues.

Immediate personal contact with the asylum seekers enables important data and information to be

collected which can then be used as a basis to aid further care and integration in the communities.

There are various full-time migrations services which operate in communities. Asylum advisors and integration facilitators make contact soon after arrival. They accompany the new arrivals on visits to the authorities, help them find their way around their new environment and start to introduce the first stages of integration as soon as a residence permit has been issued. These services are all interlinked with one another and work with the communities, other migration centres and other social services. Since the start of 2015, the state has been funding 14 jobs (9 integration facilitators and 5 asylum advisors) to cope with increased demand.

See here for a graph of how the advisory structure for migration services in Saarland is coordinated http://www.saarland.de/dokumente/thema_soziales/Beratungsstruktur_im_Saarland_Schaubild.pdf

23. Is there also voluntary support available to asylum seekers and refugees? How does the state support voluntary work for refugees?

When allocation to the communities first began in October 2013, the population of Saarland proved prepared to offer plenty of assistance. Many people from Saarland, associations, clubs, churches and other organisations declared that they were happy to offer help and support. This wave of assistance has given rise to various networks for refugees and asylum seekers across Saarland. Volunteers in Saarland offer a wide range of assistance such as guidance services, language development and support with settling in and finding their way around the community. This is just one example of the high level of civil commitment, social warmth and welcoming culture on offer.

The State Government emphatically welcomes the commitment of the local population. These voluntary services help asylum seekers and refugees as well as reducing much of the pressure on our municipalities and migration departments in completing their work.

With a special fund of 200,000 euros in 2015, the state is also promoting the development and expansion of refugee networks and the intercultural opening of associations.

In addition to the events which serve to promote voluntary work and interaction, there should also be training and qualifications for voluntary work, coverage of transport and interpreting costs, if required, and inclusion and support of coordinators.

Collaboration with the municipalities and welfare organisations is of particular significance. The project funding guidelines can be read here and the appropriate application form downloaded: <http://www.saarland.de/123186.htm>

24. Whom should I contact if I want to help?

There are numerous contact partners and sources of information. There are often voluntary organisations in the towns and communities which present their work via the media or Internet and advertise for collaboration and support.

The municipal authorities also have plenty of appropriate information and contact details.

In the districts/ regional association and the state capital of Saarbrücken, there are 'contact partners' who can offer insight into voluntary organisations. Their contact details can be found in the flyer

'Integration and Volunteering':

<http://www.saarland.de/124613.htm>

The migration departments of the 'LIGA der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege' (Association of Saar Welfare Institutions) can also provide assistance. These departments support people during the asylum procedure and promote integration (see <http://www.saarland.de/123056.htm>).

Our Protestant and Catholic parish communities are already very active and would welcome your support.

You can find the contact details for the initiatives we are aware of on our website at:

<http://www.saarland.de/123184.htm>

25. What can I do? Where can I help?

There are many options for getting involved in volunteering.

It is particularly important to provide support around the time the person is due to arrive and ideally to be present 'on-site' at the time of arrival.

This initial contact is very important for creating a relationship of trust. While it may be difficult to communicate linguistically, it will be clear to the asylum seekers and refugees that they are welcome and 'cared for'. This conveys a sense of security and optimism. The people who come to us need guidance and support. They need assistance with finding their way around an unfamiliar environment and society.

A walk through the community would help to inform them about the most important supply structures and facilities e.g. shopping, kindergartens, schools, doctors, leisure activities, banks.

Attending doctor's appointments or meetings with the authorities is also much easier for refugees if a trusted person accompanies them there.

Support in learning German is important, especially for asylum seekers who have not yet had the chance to attend an integration course. Offers for children and young people are particularly significant, especially in the education sector and with access to associations and leisure offers.

The organisation of events with the local community and shared leisure opportunities create a feeling of welcome and social warmth.

Many other opportunities to get involved and help out result from the direct contact or information from other support workers.

26. Is there insurance cover for voluntary work for and with refugees?

The same regulations apply to public involvement in refugee work as in all other voluntary work.

Generally, volunteers are insured by the organisation – whether it be a sports association, cultural club, welfare association, fire service, etc.

Often volunteers only notice that there is no or limited insurance cover when a claim for damages is made as part of the project work. The state government has therefore introduced collective liability and accident insurance for voluntary work in Saarland. For more information, see <http://www.saarland.de/74583.htm>.

27. Are asylum seekers automatically covered by liability insurance?

In cases of claims for damages, asylum seekers and refugees – like all other individuals – are liable for all distrainable assets because they are required to provide compensation in accordance with the German Civil Code (BGB). Asylum seekers and refugees, like all other citizens in Saarland, are not obliged to take out private liability insurance. Exceptions to this include legally required insurance such as vehicle liability insurance. The state is not obliged to cover the cost of any damage caused by asylum seekers.

Since February 2015, the 'Landessportverband für das Saarland' (LSVS) State Sports Association has been offering insurance cover to asylum seekers and refugees undertaking sport as a member of a sports club affiliated with one of the professional associations of the LSVS. This takes the form of additional insurance cover as part of the ARAG sports insurance cover. Full insurance cover is provided in terms of accident, civil liability, legal expenses and health insurance. It also covers the insured person as a spectator or companion, in addition to attendance of social or other events held by the club. The insurance cover is activated on entering the sports premises and ends on leaving the premises and at the latest on completion of the event. The direct route from an event to the accommodation (return journey) is also included.

28. What housing is being sought for asylum seekers and refugees?

Affordable accommodation (based on the average rental price for the area) is being sought for asylum seekers and refugees to offer humane accommodation adapted to the particular needs of asylum seekers and refugees (e.g. suitable for families / disabled tenants).

29. Who rents the apartments?

This is dealt with in various ways in Saarland. The tenant can be a refugee or an asylum seeker or the municipality that is providing the accommodation.

The regulations applicable in your municipality can be sought from the city / municipal authorities. (<http://www.saarland.de/17709.htm>).

30. Who pays the rent?

The job centres are responsible in the case of recipients of the German Social Code (SGB) II benefits. In the remainder of cases, the Social Welfare Office is responsible.

31. How is medical care provided to asylum seekers and refugees?

Asylum seekers can receive treatment in cases of pain, acute illness or essential vaccinations through the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (§ 4 AsylbLG).

All services required to ensure good health are also provided (§ 6 AsylbLG).

A visit to the doctor must be preceded by a visit to the local Social Welfare Office which will cover the cost of any medical treatment. The patient applies for and receives a certificate of eligibility which entitles him/her to visit a doctor. The Social Welfare Office can also issue a certificate of eligibility for the duration of one financial quarter. In cases of emergency, the required medical treatment can be provided without a certificate of eligibility.

On 18 June 2015, the Federal Government and States decided to make it easier for asylum seekers to obtain health care and to relieve the municipalities of the administrative responsibilities. Recognised refugees or those known as 'quota refugees' sent here via the Federal Programme, are provided with services as part of the statutory health insurance cover system as German Social Code (SGB) II recipients (or SGB XII recipients).

For those who come to Saarland via the Saarland State Intake Directive for Syrian Relatives, the cost of health care treatment is covered as part of the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act.

32. What offers are available to support traumatised refugees?

At the State Reception Centre in Lebach, the German Red Cross offers psychotherapy appointments and treatments and if required, contact with local doctors, psychotherapists and specialist clinics.

Wallerfangen is home to a specialist clinic for psychiatry, psychotherapy and psychosomatic treatment (St. Nikolaus Hospital) with both inpatient and daytime treatment places available. The hospital also has an outpost in Lebach. The day clinic offers daytime treatment places and an outpatient clinic.

Treatment is carried out by local psychotherapists.

33. Where can asylum seekers learn German?

Asylum seekers, whose asylum application proceedings are not yet complete as well as refused asylum seekers granted exceptional leave to remain cannot attend integration courses because participation requires a right of residence. Once right of residence has been granted, access to integration courses and 600 hours of language teaching is available. Integration courses are offered and run across the state. For more information about intergration courses in Saarland, see the official list of establishments from the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees:

<http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Integrationskurse/Kurstraeger/ListeKurstraeger/liste-der-zugelassenen-kurstraeger-pdf.html>

At present, German language lessons are predominantly given by volunteers. German language lessons are taught either in small groups or individually so that asylum seekers gain a basic level of knowledge of the language.

In future, learning the German language is to be approached in a new way for asylum seekers with the prospect of remaining in the country.

On 18 June 2015, the Federal Government and states decided to increase efforts to integrate asylum seekers which includes language development.

The Federal Government wants to make integration courses available to asylum seekers with a good chance of acceptance into the country (such as Syrian refugees at present). Before the right of residence has been recognised, a maximum of 300 hours of language modules from the intergration course can be attended. After recognition, this increases to a maximum of 600 hours.

There are also plans to create the 'Vocational Language Development' which usually takes place in connection with the integration courses.

34. Are asylum seekers allowed to work?

Asylum seekers are not permitted to work during their first three months in Germany but can accept a job after this period. In accordance with the so-called 'Priority Principle' which expires after a period of 15 months, they can only be considered for a position if nobody else from Germany or an EU state is available to take the post as a 'priority'. The International Placement Services of the Federal Employment Agency (ZAV) is the organisation which presides over these issues.

There is a special regulation governing vocational training, voluntary service, internships as part of academic education or EU-funded programmes: these can be accessed without ZAV assessment from the fourth month (for individuals with a temporary residence permit) or from the first day of the stay (for individuals with exceptional leave to remain).

From the 49th month of the stay, the need for approval from the employment services expires and a general employment permit can be issued for any form of work.

Anyone who comes to Germany as a refugee through an official federal quota for Syrian refugees is immediately issued a work permit and is not affected by the 'priority principle'.

35. Can asylum seekers be prepared for the workplace beforehand?

Asylum seekers wishing to seek work or training in Germany may receive advice from an employment agency during the asylum procedure in accordance with the terms of the German Labour Promotion legislation (SGB III). This enables asylum seekers to prepare for work at an early stage. From the third month of their stay in Germany, supporting services can be supplied by the employment agency in connection with the provision of work. These include services covering application costs, qualification measures and employer wage cost subsidies in accordance with SGB III.

In March 2015, preparations for the placement of asylum seekers on the employment market in Saarland began at the State Reception Centre in Lebach. In cases where a positive decision on the asylum application is expected and the applicants in question have valuable professional qualifications, the professional qualifications and knowledge of these asylum seekers should be identified as quickly as possible to enable these individuals to enter the workplace swiftly.

36. Can asylum seekers undertake charity work?

Yes.

The Asylum Seekers Benefits Act expressly deals with this. Work opportunities should be provided at the State Reception Centre in Lebach, as far as possible, and subsequently in the municipalities or non-profit organisations. These should be activities which, without the work of the asylum seekers, would not take place, would not take place to the same extent or would take place at a different time.

This work provides refugees with opportunities for social contact with the local population. Their knowledge of German can also be improved. An allowance of 1.05 euros is paid for each hour of work completed and this strengthens the feeling of contributing to their own livelihood. Establishing a fixed daily routine and learning about working procedures in this different cultural setting helps to occupy the refugees while they are not allowed to work.

37. Can asylum seekers have their foreign professional qualifications recognised in Saarland?

Since 1 April 2012, there has been the possibility of having foreign vocational qualifications recognised for job requirements in Germany.

Since a residence permit is not required, asylum seekers can also submit an application. The Saarland 'Service Centre for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications' offers advice and supports applicants.

(<http://www.saar-is.de/standort-marketing/erschliessung-ausl-abschluesse/>)

When someone comes to Germany as an asylum seeker under difficult conditions, he/she may not have any written proof of their qualifications or work experience. Here, too, the law on recognition has a solution: professional expertise can be established via a so-called qualifications analysis. This means that asylum seekers have to show that they are qualified for the work in question through either work trial sessions or professional discussions.

In accordance with the Labour Promotion Act (SGB III) and basic benefits for jobseekers (SGB II or 'Hartz IV' law), the costs can be assumed by the labour authorities in individual cases if the pre-requisites are met.

38. Can children of asylum seekers attend a nursery? Is school attendance obligatory afterwards?

Children can attend a kindergarten or local school.

From the end of their first year of life, the children are entitled to a childcare place, just like all other children.

For children of school age, school attendance has been mandatory in Saarland since 2006.

Children of refugees are also provided with opportunities to learn the German language at an early age.

39. What integration programmes are available to the children of refugees at school?

Based on the immediate action programme offering education and support to children of refugees, the Saarland state government introduced fundamental measures to ensure the immediate integration of children and young people into the education system in December 2014.

Additional finances of a million euros were provided by the state government, for example to expand the existing language development programme.

The 'Learn German Early' programme focuses on the transition between childcare and primary school and is aimed at children with inadequate knowledge of German – regardless of their country of origin.

The 'Language Development at Secondary Level I' programme is aimed at students at the 63 community schools. Here, too, refugees are given additional support during grades 5 to 10.

During the current school year, an additional 25 teachers have been appointed, specialising in foreign languages and the subject 'German as a second language'. As part of its immediate action programme, the state government also promotes primary school initiatives such as voluntary projects which facilitate access to the social community for school pupils with a refugee background.

40. Who is classed as an unaccompanied underage refugee?

Unaccompanied minors are one of the groups which most require protection. These are children and young people aged between 13 and 18 years old who have travelled to Germany without their parents.

In accordance with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, these children and young people are entitled to be housed, looked after and provided for in their best interests.

The Youth Welfare Act (SGB VIII) stipulates that the Youth Welfare Office is entitled and obliged to take into custody any foreign children or young people who travel to Germany unaccompanied.

In Saarland, unaccompanied refugees who are underage are taken into custody by the State Youth Welfare Office. They are then transferred to two clearing houses in Völklingen and Dillingen where they are looked after and provided for. They attend school (usually vocational centres in Saarland) and are provided with additional support through the different language development programmes to allow them to learn German quickly and follow the lessons.

At the vocational training centres in Sulzbach, Merzig, Lebach and Homburg, special classes have been set up where unaccompanied refugees (and also accompanied refugees in Lebach) are taught. Most of the unaccompanied young people come from Afghanistan and are male. The Youth Welfare Office of Saarbrücken Regional Association is involved due to the route of entry (usually via France).

In 2014, 358 unaccompanied underage refugees travelled to Saarland, the youngest being just 13 years old. As the responsible department, the Saarland Ministry of Education has introduced various measures in schools to promote the German language.

German language development skills will be intensified in the future with afternoon sessions at various vocational training centres. Information about these language development measures can be found at: http://www.saarland.de/59844_128588.htm

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SAARLAND

Großes entsteht immer im Kleinen.

