

ACTIVITY REPORT

STORY OF A JOURNEY ACROSS EUROPE: FROM FIRST RECEPTION TO INTEGRATION OF MIGRANTS

A STUDY VISIT TO GERMANY

25-26 OCTOBER 2017 | MANNHEIM, GERMANY

The second study visit of the year of the SOLIDAR network took place in Mannheim, Germany, on 25th and 26th of October 2017. The 2-day event was organised together with SOLIDAR members Internationaler Bund (IB) und Institut für Sozialarbeit und Sozialpädagogik (ISS). The study visit brought together more than 20 members of the SOLIDAR Social Affairs Forum from 13 different countries.

Social Progress Lab: From first reception to integration of migrants

On the first day, the upcoming edition of the SOLIDAR-FEPS book project **Social Progress Lab: From first reception to integration of migrants** was presented by Hedwig Giusto, FEPS, and two of the researchers involved in the study. The volume is the second outcome of a research cooperation started in 2015 between SOLIDAR and FEPS on the topic of migration and integration. The official launch of the book will be on 27 November in Brussels.

The second volume of the **Social Progress Lab** keeps track and assesses the path that migrants follow after their entry into the EU, especially women and children. The project focuses on the three most common locations on their migration route: Greece, Italy and Germany.

During the previous SOLIDAR study visit in May 2017 to Thessaloniki, Greece, SOLIDAR members could experience the reception conditions for migrants and refugees in Greece. However, their journey is not over after having entered into the EU. They often move on to other countries where they face new challenges, such as lengthy bureaucratic procedures, discriminatory policies, but also (on a more positive note) the offer of labour access and integration measures. Hence, the study visit to Mannheim intended to showcase possible paths for integration.

The upcoming book also includes a photographic project which complements the assessment made by the authors with visual testimonies of the situations faced by migrants on their journeys across Europe. The SOLIDAR study visit in Mannheim was a great occasion to photo report on integration programmes for young asylum seekers, since we visited two related projects.

Study visit: IB Youth Migration Service in Mannheim

On 26 October, participants were introduced to Internationaler Bund (IB), co-organiser of the SOLIDAR study visit and member of the SOLIDAR network. IB is one of the largest service providers in youth, social and educational work in Germany. Today, the portfolio of IB ranges from

early childhood development to care for the elderly as well as from basic education to higher education. The expertise is clustered in the following three major sectors: Social Development Services, Education and Labour Market Services and International Cooperation. (Here you can find the presentation '[Internationaler Bund at a glance](#)')

After the introduction to IB's work, participants had the opportunity to visit two IB projects located in Mannheim: a residential group for unaccompanied (minor) refugees and language courses and youth migration services.

Project 1: Residential group for unaccompanied refugees



IB's **residential group** in Mannheim hosts a total of about 50 minor male refugees aged between 13 and 18 from - among others - Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Eritrea. Among the professional staff, the youths can count on the support of more than 30 educational and social workers 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Within the facilities they can find a wide range of services and commodities for enjoying their free time, studying, cooking, doing sports, contacting their families, praying and living all together.

Together with volunteers, the authorities involved and people living in the neighbourhood, the refugee residence is involved in making sure that immigrants are welcomed through activities and events, e.g. a common gardening project and by taking up a clear position on the integration of the young people. (Here you can find the [presentation by IB Baden](#)).

Project 2: Language courses and youth migration services

After a tour around the residential facilities, participants heard about the work of the **Youth Migration Service run by IB** in Mannheim. Since January 2017, it offers its services also to refugees and asylum seekers who are legally residing in Germany.

The IB Youth Migration Service in Mannheim is aimed at minor male refugees aged 13 or older, who show a high willingness and motivation for a life in Germany and also have the maturity to prepare slowly for a life in independence. Most of them attend school, professional training and are supported with inhouse trauma therapy and educational/career guidance

The Youth Migration Service provides individual support and counseling for young people with a migrant background who are no longer at full-time school age; it conducts group activities to improve equal opportunities and promotes the participation of young migrants in daily life. They furthermore offer support to parents with questions regarding education or job training for their children.



Individual support and counselling follow a “case management” approach, a specific process to manage every case individually, involving all relevant actors and institutions during 2-3 years. Based on the individual needs of the young person, support services and goals are planned and coordinated – the so-called “integration support plan” – and results are reviewed.

In Mannheim, the Youth Migration Service has an extensive network from which it obtains help structures as well as relevant and up-to-date information. It is involved in relevant specialist circles and works closely with numerous cooperation partners, schools, authorities, and language learning organisations. Participation is voluntary and free of charge. (Here you can find the presentation on [IB's youth migration services](#), in German)



Life-long learning and political education are tasks which concern IB both as an independent field of work and as a cross-sectional task in its educational work.

Within this framework, IB offers language courses that aim facilitating access to the labour market; to serve the political will to get integrated people; and to interact socially.

Integration courses in Mannheim are structured into two parts: language course and orientation course. The former includes 600 lessons for well achieving speaking and writing skills needed on an everyday basis. The final goal is to reach the B1 language level. The latter includes 100 lessons on the recent German socio-culture and history.

In the following discussion with participants it became clear that in order to facilitate migrants' access to the local labour market, not only high-quality language courses are necessary but also **early contacts with employers**, e.g. in the form

of trainings or job visits, internships etc. Furthermore, **language courses need to be tailored to the job a migrant is aiming for** - in the sense of teaching technical terms, occupational specificities - in order to give them the opportunity to access higher-quality jobs. In times of low birth rates and a lack of skilled workers (not only in Germany), **integration at eye level** of migrant workers is not only a **responsibility of our society** but also an **investment into our future**.

The SOLIDAR network will continue its work to develop common strategies for successful integration paths based on the experience of our members.