

No one flees without a reason! Communal reception for all!

Many refugees are currently arriving from Ukraine also in Freiburg. Providing them and other refugees with adequate care and accommodation is currently a challenge. Broad support from civil society and voluntary groups are working hard to improve the situation. In fact, there are deficiencies on all sides: In the provision of information at arrivals, in mental and medical care, housing and accommodation, food and catering, and in other areas.

The refugees are mainly accommodated in the initial reception centre (LEA) in Freiburg, which currently houses about 1,000 people, including 350 children (as of the end of March 2022). The Freiburg Regional Council (Regierungspräsidium Freiburg), which is responsible for the LEA, issues the house rules there and has the full authority to design them. There are no statutory minimum standards. The current overload in the reception is particularly noticeable in the camp.

The LEA is not a place to arrive

For those who have been observing the LEA for years, this comes as no surprise. The LEA is not designed to enable refugees to arrive safely. Unlawful restrictions on fundamental rights have been ascertained by an independent legal opinion and most recently by a ruling of the Mannheim Administrative Court.

The abuses are the result of the tightening of asylum and migration policies in recent years.

It is to be celebrated that Ukrainian refugees will be granted many rights through the activation of the EU Mass Influx Directive, which were previously not a matter of course for refugees in Germany - immediate work permits and the possibility to look for a flat on their own.

Apparently, it is possible to meet refugees not only with deterrence, if it fits the political agenda. At the same time, sheer racism is revealed in the form of a division into "right" and "wrong" refugees. Members of the Ukrainian Roma minority, about 20% of whom do not have valid papers, as well as third-country nationals fleeing Ukraine, do not receive the same treatment.

Structural problems in the LEA

It is currently very clear how the "accommodation form LEA" prevents practical support and isolates refugees from the city society. Volunteers are forced to influence the situation from outside the camp because of the ban on visitors and access. Inside the LEA, the rooms that cannot be locked prevent any privacy. The ban on cooking does not allow for individual sustenance. For years, residents have described the canteen food as inadequate and unhealthy. Now many of the newly arrived children suffer from gastrointestinal problems. Residents report long waiting times in front of the LEA's hospital ward and the lack of hygiene articles. The lack of a sense of safety and the impossibility to lead a self-determined life in its most basic aspects lead to a high level of psychological stress and do not allow the refugees to rest after an exhausting flight.

Support the Open Letter

The war in Ukraine exacerbates the already existing problems in the camps. At the same time, the treatment of Ukrainian refugees shows that a different kind of reception is possible. This is an opportunity for a necessary change from the existing practices, especially in the LEA. Therefore, support the open letter to the regional council and the city of Freiburg. Let's demand together:

1. lockable rooms in the LEA
2. the immediate establishment of visiting hours
3. immediate installation of cooking facilities

Let us set an example: Instead of isolation and deterrence, the health and well-being of all refugees must finally become the measure of all things.