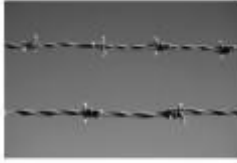


Editorial



Since the beginning of April 2015 until the last days more than 50.000 refugees arrived at the European borders and more than 1.750 died since the beginning of the year while trying to reach Europe via the Mediterranean Sea. European politicians meet in refugee crisis conferences and commiserate the death of so many refugees. The news all over Europe are full of reports on refugees and the quest for solutions. Amnesty International and others criticize the measures discussed in Europe as “a woefully inadequate and shameful response to the crisis in the Mediterranean that will fail to end the spiral of deaths at sea” and there are a number of [initiatives](#) who try to keep track of the [developments](#).

In Mayotte, an island near the Comores which became part of France in 2011, there are living according to media reports approximately 6000 minor refugees without relatives (https://presse.wdr.de/plounge/tv/das_erste/2015/04/20150423_weltspiegel.html). If the young refugees arrived with their parents, the adults get deported to their home countries and the young stay behind without their parents as they cannot be deported according to the law. Thus, the authorities of this department no. 101 of France and relief agencies have to cope with this situation, providing support, housing and food for the young refugees under limited resources and perspectives for the future. More and more minor refugees are arriving, many disappearing after arriving e.g. in Italy – some going further trying to find relatives in northern Europe but there are also clues that human trafficking plays a role in refugees vanishing after arriving in Europe.

In Germany, the Federal government as well as the Federal states debate ways to support the communal administrations in financing and coping with the rising numbers of refugees. Many refugee housings are being built at the moment, while social work enforces services of refugee support. The Federal states in Germany debate a new way of distributing young unaccompanied refugees between the different states so that the communes which are now receiving a huge number of minor refugees near immigrant routes can be unburdened. Up to now, minor refugees are being taken in custody by the youth welfare authorities in the respective city, where they have crossed the border or were found by authorities. There are also debates about the way 16 to 18 year old refugees are being dealt with as many communes use the asylum law instead of the child welfare law to deal with them (so that they are being treated as adults) whereas other (native) minors are being treated as minors until the age of 18 without exception. Refugees get a special deal of social benefits: only recognized refugees have a right to get welfare aid, asylum seekers get far less services and supplies.

Between endangerment, support and welcoming as human capital: Some right-wing groups try to use the development for politics of fear (not only in Germany) and there have been some attacks on refugees' housings. The Association of German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (Deutscher Industrie- und Handelskammertag, DIHK) talks of refugees as “reservoir of skilled labour force” ([DIE WELT, April 9th 2015](#)). In political debates there comes a notion of discriminating between “good/useful” and “useless” refugees when some positions point out that many of the arriving refugees are highly educated and bring a lot of resources that are needed in the labour market. This distinction opens up a highly problematic field of assigning acceptance as an economic refugee when useful for the labour market and negates

basic support for all refugees and migrants coming to Europe under heavy suffering. This shows the broad and diverse issues coming up in the context of the current developments in a small spot.

These are only some examples of social work and social policy issues around the support requirements of refugees in Germany and we assume that there are similar ones or other examples in our readers' countries.

Basically, the current developments confront the wealthy European states with the question of global justice and the connex between economic policy, development policy and social policy and the lack of national state-oriented policies. This becomes visible when e.g. [German courts stop refugee families with little children from being deported back to Italy](#) where they had been first registered. The deportation of the families back to the Schengen country where they were first registered would be the measure by the law according to the Dublin Agreement. But there are reports that in Italy they would be separated in the refugee housings and the children's wellbeing would be in danger. So the courts decide against the norms to secure human rights.

In the year 1990 the British movie "[The March](#)" showed refugees trying to come to Europe because of ecological and climate change-related problems (caused by the wealthy Northern/European states) in a future world and the harsh bulkheading of the European continent against refugees. The movie illustrated in a dramatic way the questions and challenges we are massively facing now: How much did and does Europe contribute to the basic problems that make people leave their home countries? What kind of solutions apart from bulkheading are to be found? Will the European countries stand together in finding solutions like a more just distribution of the refugees that are coming primarily to Italy, based on a joint understanding of responsibility for humanitarian needs? But beneath national and international political questions, there is also the question, what role social work is playing under the respective political conditions and judicial frameworks.

This issue no 14 of Socmag addresses the current developments from different countries' perspectives and invites also you as readers to contribute to these debates. Aische Westermann (Germany) debates critically the [Undermining of human rights of refugees in Germany at present](#). Magdalena Prusinowska (Poland) describes the situation of [Social work in refugee centres in Poland](#). Meike Schwarz from Doctors Without Borders reports about their experiences while [supporting people on the move](#) in the current situation with refugee work and the European refugee policy.

Beneath this focal theme, the SocMag Issue No 14 presents the following articles: An international group of PhD students who participated in last year's TISSA PhD pre-conference in Sofia describes their deliberations on the [political role of critical research in transforming societies](#) (Anna Lena Rademaker (Germany), Holly L. Gordon (UK), Júlia Wéber (Germany), Bernd Christmann (Germany), Gorana Panic and Maija Mänttári-van der Kuip (Finland)). Kyösti Urponen (Finland) discusses the pros and cons of [focusing social work under a perspective of political economy](#). Nic Brokenleg and Jesse D. Casper (USA) present two book reviews: [So Rich, So Poor: Why It's So Hard to End Poverty in America](#), by Peter B. Edelman and [Cut Adrift: Families in Insecure Times](#), by Marianne Cooper.

We wish you an interesting time reading and exploring – feel free to comment and debate or send us your reports so that the critical debate on social policy and social work continues!

Nadia Kutscher
Editor