



SOVRANO MILITARE ORDINE OSPEDALIERO
DI SAN GIOVANNI DI GERUSALEMME DI RODI E DI MALTA

**Statement for the Global Forum on Migration and Development, Berlin,
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**Roundtable Session 3.2:
“Strengthening cooperation – Enabling Civil Society Contributions in
Migrant Integration”**

Historic Context / Background

The Order of Malta’s mission to uphold human dignity and care for people in need has, in the past and present, translated into assisting and supporting refugees, internally displaced persons and migrants around the globe. In the context of host countries, this has evolved into extensive assistance of migrants upon arrival and in the process of their integration into the host-society. The Order of Malta’s global network develops and implements projects in many countries. In this document we shall focus on the 27 year long experience with refugees and migrants in Germany.

Germany serves as one of the most prevailing examples of a host-country in today’s time as never in its history have more people sought asylum in Germany than in the last two years. In 2015, more than 470,000 and in 2016 more than 745,000 people sought Asylum. The Order of Malta in Germany was at the forefront and provided assistance, medical care, food and housing to more than 54,000 people in the 160 facilities in the country, over several months at the peak of the influx (in 2015), being able to source from expertise gained in the past during similar influxes of migration. Assistance is also provided regularly to the migrants residing permanently in the communities. Every year, for example, 10.000 people are medically assisted by the programme Maltese Migrants Medicine.

Since the foundation of Malteser Werke in 1989- the migrant and refugee specialized entity of the Order of Malta - as a result of the influx of late resettlers into Germany after the fall of the UDSSR, the assistance to migrants and refugees has been a central focus of the activities of the Order of Malta in Germany with an emphasis on integrating them into civil society. To date, it has supported over 1 million people from more than 75 countries on behalf of states and local authorities, through its 40 care facilities. Thus it is evident that, as an organization, the Order of Malta has gained extensive experience in what refugees and migrants

require in the process of integration and what society and governments should do in order to better manage the process.

Current efforts

Integration is a key component in preserving social equilibrium as well as society's acceptance of multiculturalism. However, in light of recent the rising refugee and migrant influx into Germany, the negative sentiment towards foreigners has increased, in part also due to the dispersion of false accusations and disinformation from populist players. In response to the growing volume of misinformation, Malteser Germany has decided to publish the first Malteser Migration Report, a factual and objective report that analyses the current situation concerning the refugee and migrant influx from a historic, legal and societal perspective, while at the same time incorporating real stories from refugees and migrants and showcasing best-practice initiatives and programs by Malteser in Germany and other governmental and non-governmental organizations. The report is produced jointly with the Walter Eucken Institute, a renowned German socio-economic ThinkTank, which also advises the Federal Government. The aim is to publish the report on a regular basis to assess the most recent developments, review past efforts and provide facts, creating a source of reliable and factual information. The findings of the report will be disseminated next September through a range of media, including online and social media as well as more traditional media. Aim is to both shape the public debate and to inform relevant decision-makers.

Future Aim

Beyond its current activities, the Order of Malta aims to provide its expertise in integration matters to governments and other organizations, in Germany and worldwide, while linking its activities more closely with the other Order of Malta associations globally (e.g. France), thus creating a closer network and the possibility to share expertise and best practices for the integration of migrants and refugees.

Recommendations (In response to questions from Roundtable Background Paper)

- 1) What roles and responsibilities do migrants themselves have in the integration process? How can authorities, civil society and employers further contribute to this?
- 2) What further good practices exist of successful strategic partnerships for integration and how do we know when the integrations efforts are successful?
- 3) What framework conditions need to be provided by the state that cannot otherwise be provided

1.) Promote and challenge

The core strategy of the Order of Malta in Germany with regards to integrating refugees and migrants into society rests on the principles of participation and exchange between equals. As a consequence, the Order assigns the responsibility of integration to both the migrants, society-at-large and to all other relevant stakeholders involved. On the one hand, the willingness to integrate needs to be promoted while, simultaneously, an environment and support system that allows integration has to be created. It is also crucial to be sensitive to cultural differences during the integration process.

A society with many volunteers shows a high level of human development and openness. In Germany, the large number of volunteers that are involved in helping refugees and migrants in various ways should receive particular attention. Malteser Germany has relied strongly on the support of volunteers. Recently, and in light of the refugee influx, Malteser Germany has created a program called “Integrationslotsen” (integration pilot), which provides training and expertise to volunteers, enabling them to better help refugees and migrants in the integration process. After the training, a volunteer can be assigned to a migrant to assist with daily challenges and to serve as a source of information and support. The program has been very successful and has received positive feedback from volunteers and other institutions, and is now available at more than 83 locations around the country. Moreover, it has been adopted by other organizations and local governments. The active involvement of civil society in the integration process also creates awareness for the needs of refugees and migrants while potentially allowing for the identification of further areas of actions in order to advance the process and to overcome possible fears and prejudices.

This initiative could be further developed and adopted in other host-countries.

2.) Promotion of best practices for integration nationally as well as globally

Malteser’s various integration programs are regularly reviewed and improved to ensure best practice, sourcing knowledge from universities, governmental bodies and other institutions. Knowledge and best practices are further shared with authorities and the business community, while also regularly disseminated through media, expert committees and professional networks. Governments, too, should work with organizations such as the Order of Malta on an equal footing and beyond the crisis situation that peaked in the last two years, sourcing more extensively from the expertise of organizations that are directly involved with the refugees and migrants through their work.

One of the programs initiated by the Order of Malta in Germany, “WERTvoller Raum”, is about conveying values and customs of the host-society to newly arrived

refugees and migrants in a specially designed multi-module course in the Malteser housing facilities. Here, the refugees and migrants receive information on how German society works with regard to democracy and human rights, but they are also provided with more basic information such as how Germans enjoy their leisure time, what national holidays exist and why everyone respects Sunday as a day of rest. These course so far have received very positive feedback by all participants involved.

There are also the national “Integrationskurse” organized by the government that include German language teaching and also have value and custom components. However, there have been issues with the quality of teaching on these state-run courses.

Another program by the Order of Malta in Germany addresses labour market integration. “First Steps” is offered in Malteser housing facilities to migrants and employees and provides consultation on how to enter the labour market, advice on how to structure and design a CV and what educational options are out there for further training.

3.) Creating favourable framework conditions for integration

The Order of Malta encourages governments to move from being purely reactive in light of the current refugee influx to being proactive in the integration efforts, creating a comprehensive plan in order to avoid a repeat of past shortcomings in this area and promote the positive aspects of migration. Instead of focusing primarily on restraining the influx of refugees into the host-country, governments should focus on how to create an environment that fosters the integration of the migrants in their country and highlight the advantages of opening the labor market to migrants.

Within a host country, the government needs to create favourable conditions for faster integration of the new members of society, which should include easier access to the labour market, improved options for education and language training and a swifter legal certainty for asylum seekers in regards to their asylum status. Concerning the entrance into the labour market, certain qualification such as degrees or prior professional experience that have been gained in home countries should be more readily accepted by the host countries’ institutions and regulations.

Overall, the state needs to be more aware of its responsibilities as a coordinator and moderator of, and investor in, the integration process, proactively designing a comprehensive integration plan that combines the above mentioned areas such as legal certainty and access to education and the labour market. However, it will be important to also include the possibility of measuring the success of such a plan over the course of time.