

Summer Conference 2023

Bürgerräume West, Bebelstraße 22, 70193 Stuttgart
July 15th, 2023 - 10:00 am to 17:30 pm

Published on July 5th, 2023| by the Refugee Council Baden-Wuerttemberg

We hereby cordially invite you to the Refugee Council's annual summer conference on Saturday, July 15th, 2023, in Stuttgart. We put together an exciting and diverse program. The key note speech will, amongst other things, explore the individual impact of racism and how to take action against racism. It will be followed by workshop sessions in which you can choose from the following five topics:

- criminalization of refugees at the external borders of the EU,
- the situation of refugees in Türkiye
- the recently introduced 'Chancenaufenthaltsrecht' (Opportunity Residence Act)
- racism in daily life
- and unequal treatment of refugees.

In between, there will be ample opportunities for networking and conversations.

The conference is free of charge and is primarily aimed at volunteers working with refugees. It is intended to be a safe space for all participants. Therefore, we ask all participants to read our [code of conduct](#) when registering and abide by it throughout the conference.

The conference is part of the project "Active for Integration", supported by the Ministry of Social Affairs, Health and Integration and made possible through state funds approved by the state parliament of Baden-Wuerttemberg. Co-funding is provided by the UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe (the German NGO tasked with raising funds for UNHCR) and the German Postcode Lottery.

PROGRAM

09:45 am: Registration and arrival

10:00 am.: Introductory remarks

10:15 am: Keynote speech: The impact of racism and the importance of combatting it

Racism manifests in different ways, and occurs everywhere: Sometimes it is subliminal and barely apparent. Other times, its blatant and intentional. Either emanation leaves a mark, causes pain, and sows distrust in the lives of those affected. It is important to understand what racism triggers in others, particularly as an individual who does not face racism themselves. This understanding, in turn, helps to combat, recognize, and address racism. It takes common strategies for action to do so.

The keynote will be followed by a Q&A.

Speaker: Vera Sompon (Sompon Socialservices Baden-Württemberg e.V.)

12:00 – 1:00 pm: Lunch

1:00 - 3:00 pm: Workshops (Session I)

Please choose one of the following four workshops. The ones on 'Flight as a Crime?', 'Refugees in Türkiye', and the 'Chancenaufenthaltsrecht (Opportunity Residence Act)' will be repeated in session II. However, workshop 4 on racism will only take place in session I. Instead, the workshop on unequal treatment will be offered in session II.

Workshop 1: Flight as a crime?

Unbeknownst to large parts of the general public, thousands of refugees in Italy and Greece are currently being sentenced to draconian prison terms of sometimes 100 years or more. Their trials last an average of 38 minutes and end with an average of 44 years in prison for the defendants. The crime is their escape, the official charge is construed as "aiding and abetting illegal border crossing" because they were steering an engine of a rubber dinghy or the wheel of a car.

The workshop will provide examples and give an overview of the current criminalization of refugees as well as civilian sea rescue operations, which is taking place in the context of increasingly hostile European policies. Moreover, it will leave room for debate and time to come up with possible actions to combat criminalization.

Speakers: Anne Noack (Seebrücke Schweiz) and Jürgen Weber (Seebrücke Baden-Württemberg)

Workshop 2: Refugees in Türkiye – Discrimination, a lack of prospects and the looming threat of deportation

About four million refugees live in Türkiye; the majority hailing from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq and Iran, all trying to build a new life. This is far from easy - access to work, housing and education is limited. The general economic and political situation is fuelling anti-immigrant sentiments.

During the presidential elections, for example, candidates boasted of plans to deport the 'unwelcome foreigners'. Those affected experience racism at all levels. Their residency status is volatile and can thus change at any time. The situation of internally displaced persons who were forced to flee the war in Turkey's Kurdish regions to the west of the country is equally precarious. The EU continues to adhere to its 2016 Turkey Agreement. Hence asylum seekers in Greece are rejected and deported back to Türkiye. The fact that deportation to their countries of origin is imminent there is disregarded within the European debate about protecting the EU's external borders. Accordingly, this workshop informs about the complex situation of the refugees in Türkiye.

Speaker: Amke Dietert (Amnesty International)

Workshop 3: The first six month of the Opportunity Residence Act- An Initial Stocktaking

At the end of last year, the Opportunity Residence Act (Chancenaufenthaltsrecht) came into force. With this law, the federal government wants to give foreigners who have been in

Germany for an extended period of time an opportunity to stay. After being in force for about six months, it is time for an initial stocktaking.

In the workshop, the various practical experiences are to be exchanged, current and future problems identified and possible solutions discussed. The prerequisites of the right of residence are presented, possible pitfalls are identified and practical tips are given on how this law can be used as effectively as possible in individual cases. There will also be room for exchange and questions to address topics exceeding the initial overview.

Speaker: Sebastian Röder (Refugee Council Baden-Württemberg)

Workshop 4: Taking a stand against racism

In this workshop we will talk about how we deal with racism in our daily life. It aims to address how to spot racism, how to become an ally, as well as provide room to critically evaluate our own thought patterns and actions. In addition, the workshop will also outline strategies on how to take action in order to combat racism.

Speaker: Vera Sompon (Sompon Socialservices Baden-Württemberg e.V.)

3:00 - 3:15 pm: Break

3:15 - 5:15 pm: Workshop Session II

Please choose a workshop from the following four. Workshops 1-3 will take place a second time. Workshop 5 on unequal treatment will only take place in workshop session II.

Workshop 1: Flight as a crime?

Workshop 2: Workshop 2: Refugees in Türkiye - Discrimination, a lack of prospects and the looming threat of deportation

Workshop 3: The first six month of the Opportunity Residence Act- An Initial Stocktaking

Workshop 5: Unequal treatment

The flow of refugees from Ukraine paints a vivid picture that not all refugees are treated equally. In the legal realm along, certain groups of Ukrainian refugees are afforded privileges that remain out of reach for most others such as third-country nationals fleeing from Ukraine and those undergoing the regular asylum process. Furthermore, the social and political acceptance vastly differs. Those who support refugees are keenly aware of this unequal treatment. Frustration, disappointment and resignation are on the rise. In this workshop, we want to exchange ideas, network and jointly analyze key areas of unequal treatment. We hope that the takeaways from this discussion will serve as food for thought for the Refugee Council's political work, and potentially lead to concrete measures that can be taken.

Facilitated by: Eylem Ög (Refugee Council Baden-Wuerttemberg), second person tbd