



GEMEINSAM

GESTALTEN

MITTENDRIN

Geflüchtete  
Jugendliche  
stärken.

[Topic sheet 1/2018](#)

# Transition from school to work

The Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten programme to support young refugees

**Young refugees face the great challenge of integrating into German society. For many young people who only have a temporary suspension of deportation, their prospects of remaining in Germany depend on their academic and professional integration. On the threshold of becoming of age, they have a lot to deal with. They must become increasingly independent and at the same time manage the transition from school to work. What types of schools and entry qualifications are suitable for them? What are the experiences of young refugees making the transition from school to work?**

Since young people with experience as refugees come from different countries and have different educational requirements, integrating them into the German school and training system presents many players with a difficult task. Many young people have a low level of education from their countries of origin and do not have a school-leaving certificate. They learn German and attend qualification courses in order to be able to participate in the German education system.

However, traumatic experiences of flight and uncertain residence status make it difficult for young people to learn successfully. In view of these framework conditions, it is important to offer young refugees prospects for their future in Germany.

As part of the *Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten – Geflüchtete Jugendliche stärken* programme run by the German Children and Youth Foundation, educators and young people from the project location, the Weißenfels children's and young people's home, give insights into how young people transitioning into adulthood can successfully integrate into the German school and training system. They point out which support options are suitable for young people and what insights they can offer others.

# The Weißenfels children's and young people's home



There are currently 12 underage refugees from various nations living in the Weissenfels children's and young people's home. The majority of young people have a temporary suspension of deportation. Since their prospects of remaining in the country are linked to successful educational and professional integration, the issue of "transition from school to work" plays a major role.

One young person goes to an intermediate secondary school, another goes to a lower secondary school, and one attends *"productive learning"*.

**This form of learning is offered in the 8th and 9th school years to help pupils successfully enter the world of work. Pupils with major learning difficulties can obtain their school-leaving qualifications this way. The young people put some of what they are taught into practice to motivate them to perform better.**

Some young people make use of vocational training measures to build their future in Germany. These include the **preparatory vocational year (BVJ)** and the **entry qualification Plus Plus with additional language support (EQ++)**. EQ++ supports young people in starting their training after they have attended a preparatory vocational year (BVJ). The young people attend a vocational school two days a week and are part of a language development group. On the other days, they complete an internship lasting several months and improve their German skills and specialist knowledge. This can be followed by regular training at the company where the internship was completed.

## Legal framework conditions

- According to the child and youth welfare provisions of the German Social Security Book (SGB) VIII, municipalities ensure the accommodation, care, and support of young refugees.
- Child and youth welfare services are offered up until the age of majority. A ban on deportation may also not apply for young people with a temporary suspension of deportation.
- According to § 41 SGB VIII, youth welfare can continue to be requested for youths after they reach the age of majority in order to support personal development and an independent lifestyle.
- For youths with a temporary suspension of deportation and no prospects of remaining in the country, successful integration into the labour market is the only prospect for long-term residence under the "3+2 rule": if young people take up employment after successfully completing a three-year vocational training course, they receive a two-year residence permit under certain conditions.



**Bobo, 17 years old from Guinea. His application for asylum was rejected. He lives in Weißenfels with a temporary suspension of deportation. His dream is to become an electrician.**

Bobo has been attending the preparatory vocational year since February 2017. He likes the lessons there, but struggles with the German language. In December, he completed an internship at elektro Neitzsch GmbH in Weißenfels, which he enjoyed very much. An older employee looked after Bobo. Together, they disassembled an old electrical installation and made a new one.

*"He took an interest in me and asked a lot of questions about Africa. He even came to my accommodation once and wanted to see how I lived there. That made a big impression on me. He even offered to train me at the company later."*

Bobo also receives good support at school from a teacher who encourages him a lot. She researches information for him, offers him guidance, and gives him a certain measure of security. Bobo wants to improve his German, but unfortunately it is difficult to make friends with Germans in Weißenfels. He is highly motivated to graduate from school and then complete an apprenticeship.

# Challenges in the transition from school to work

*“The biggest challenge is the transition from school to the next stage. Some make the direct transition to training; for others it is also necessary to attend EQ+ or EQ ++ courses, where young people can acquire language skills within a short time. But are they sufficient to meet the requirements of training? I think this is a very big hurdle that still requires a lot of support.”*

Andrea Gatzmanga,  
Burgenlandkreis Youth Welfare Office

## Language barriers

A lack of language and technical skills make it difficult to attend regular school and vocational qualification courses. Young people are not admitted to examinations without sufficient language skills. At the same time, the preparatory vocational year (BVJ) cannot be repeated.

## Insights from the field

*“The transition from school to work is a major hurdle for young refugees. Mentors who provide advice and support are helpful in overcoming these challenges. Social networks are also important because they offer young people access to knowledge and experience to help with their decisions. It is also helpful if the training is structured in modules. Good and trusting cooperation between mentors, youth welfare offices, job centres, civil society groups, and companies is essential. The basis for this is a prosperous economy, because when workers are in demand, it is likewise easier for young refugees to find their place in society.”*

Rudolf Speth,  
political and social scientist  
at the Free University of Berlin

## Legal hurdles

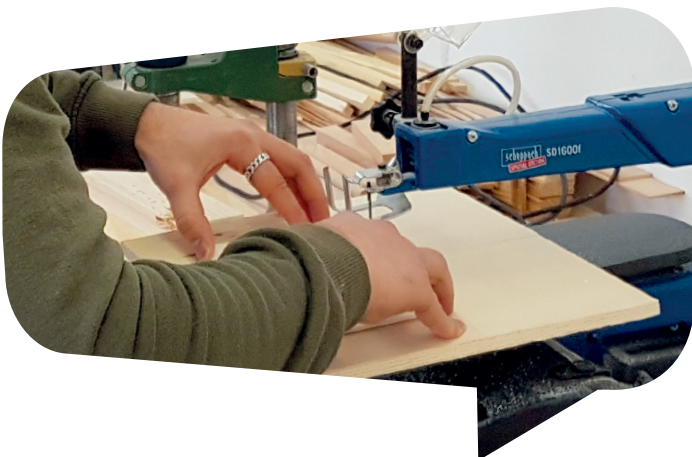
Integration into the school system is based on age, not on young people's intellectual abilities. Having their asylum application rejected makes it even more difficult to learn successfully and be motivated.

## Insufficient support

The personal assistance and financial support available for young people is often insufficient. Particularly during the qualification phase and during training, pedagogical and occupational support is indispensable. It takes time to familiarise newcomers with the German school and training system. In addition, there is a lack of guidance in the region, as well as limited mobility and lack of funding for public transport. Furthermore, traumatic experiences reduce young people's learning success and ability to concentrate.

**These five insights from the programme could also be important for other institutions working with refugees:**

1. In order for the transition from school to work to be successful, young people must be shown how school education and vocational training can offer prospects for staying in the country (see box on legal framework conditions). Young people thereby gain the strength and motivation to deal with this process and participate in society.
2. Joint learning in mixed classes promotes integration at school and helps young people to learn German.
3. The younger a refugee is, the easier it is for them to integrate at school.
4. The better their education in their country of origin was, the better their chances are of obtaining a school-leaving certificate in Germany.
5. Learning success depends on the social environment: the pressure to succeed and the individual motivation to learn are greater in a goal-oriented circle of friends who are eager to learn.





# The Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten programme to support young refugees

Young refugees have a right to participate. Yet, they can rarely exercise it. In response, the German Children and Youth Foundation and the Bertelsmann Foundation have jointly set up the program *Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten – Geflüchtete Jugendliche stärken (creating jointly right in the middle – empowering young refugees)*. The aim is to strengthen young people between the ages of 14 and 27 in order to develop their potential and to exercise their rights. Together with their municipal partners, youth workers at three locations will test methods for the promotion of empowerment and develop them further.



## Contact

Deutsche Kinder- und Jugendstiftung  
Dr. Çiçek Bacik, Programmleitung  
Gemeinsam Mittendrin Gestalten  
Tempelhofer Ufer 11 | 10963 Berlin

+49 30 25 76 76 – 839

cicek.bacik@dkjs.de

[www.dkjs.de/jugend-zukunft](http://www.dkjs.de/jugend-zukunft)

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## More on the subject:

Many other programmes deal with the key issues of academic support, vocational preparation, and integration and support for refugees.

### **Willkommen bei Freunden – Bündnisse für junge**

**Flüchtlinge** helps districts, towns, and communities to welcome and look after refugee children and young people. The aim is to enable young people with a history as refugees to exercise their basic right to education and participation, to receive the support and assistance to which they are entitled, and to have the opportunity to become actively involved in the community.

[www.willkommen-bei-freunden.de](http://www.willkommen-bei-freunden.de)

At student companies, children and young people become familiar with job profiles and acquire a wide range of skills that they benefit from at school and in their future working life. With its **Fachnetzwerk** network of specialists, the German Children and Youth Foundation (DKJS) advises and assists around 520 student companies involving more than 5,000 children and young people at all types of schools. [www.fachnetzwerk.net](http://www.fachnetzwerk.net)

At **o.camp – Fit für die nächste Klasse**, a total of 240 pupils who are at risk of having to repeat a year or failing their school exams spend their Easter holidays together each year at four camp sites in Hesse. Through a combination of learning workshops and practical project learning, they catch up on learning material in German, mathematics, or English in small groups and rediscover themselves by designing their own projects. The pupils learn in heterogeneous groups of refugees and young people who have grown up in Germany. [www.ocamp.de](http://www.ocamp.de)

Assessing professional skills in five minutes: informally qualified refugees can document how much experience they have in the key activities of eight (soon to be 30) occupations, choosing between six languages.

[www.meine-berufserfahrung.de](http://www.meine-berufserfahrung.de)

### **NETZWERK Unternehmen integrieren Flüchtlinge –**

this network supports companies of all sizes, in all industries and regions, that take on refugees as employees or volunteers.

[www.unternehmen-integrieren-fluechtlinge.de](http://www.unternehmen-integrieren-fluechtlinge.de)

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