



Welcome to Football

Football as a means of integration

Many young refugees are now living in Germany without knowing if they will be able to stay here. In a time of fear and uncertainty, football often becomes an important part of their lives. Sport can bring a little fun back into their lives and connect them with mainstream society. Thanks to its enormous popularity, football also has outstanding social significance and is an especially powerful tool of integration. This power will increase even more if clubs in the Bundesliga (national league) and the second division develop their commitment still further and make it part of their agenda to help refugees gain access to sport and societal participation. This is where the programme **“Welcome to Football” of the German Children and Youth Foundation (DKJS) comes in, a programme that is sponsored by the DFL Foundation and the Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration:**

The programme “Welcome to Football”

- Sets an example for a welcoming culture towards refugees that is positive and sustainable.
- Enables young refugees of up to 27 years of age to gain access to sport through low-threshold opportunities and facilitates entry into organised club football.
- Provides not only football to young refugees but also opportunities in the fields of culture, education, qualification and networking, and hence possibilities of social integration and personal development.
- Is committed to the empowerment of refugees through their inclusion and qualification (e.g. as trainers).
- Supports the welcoming alliances from the start of the programme, not only financially, but also through active local support so that they continue to be viable after the initial financing phase.

Creating welcoming alliances

To achieve these goals, it is necessary to have a number of competent partners at the local level – this is why the programme “Welcome to Football” relies on **welcoming alliances** throughout Germany.

These alliances involve cooperation between

- a **Bundesliga or second division club** with
- one or more **amateur football clubs** and
- e.g. **civil society initiatives, organisations operating refugee shelters or agencies for youth support.**

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All the partners in a welcoming alliance must commit to working together for at least two years and must agree to common goals and a common approach.

Alliances have arisen in 23 locations: Augsburg, Berlin-Hertha, Berlin-Köpenick, Bochum, Brunswick, Bremen, Darmstadt, Dortmund, Düsseldorf, Freiburg, Fürth, Hamburg-Norderstedt, Hamburg-St. Pauli, Hanover, Ingolstadt, Leipzig, Leverkusen, Mainz, Nuremberg, Paderborn, Stuttgart and Wolfsburg.

Support

The individual welcoming alliances are given financial support of up to 20,000 euros to realise a variety of sporting and educational offers for young refugees up to 27 years of age; in addition, they receive free qualification and networking courses from the German Children and Youth Foundation.

- The **German Children and Youth Foundation (DKJS)** runs the programme, manages and monitors all operative processes and coordinates the collaboration of all participants. It provides local support to the welcoming alliances, inter alia through providing qualification and networking courses.
- The **DFL Foundation** provides financial support to the programme, coordinates the implementation of the programme at the national level together with the DKJS, and helps professional football clubs play an active role in welcoming alliances.
- The **Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration, Annette Widmann-Mauz**, is the project's patron and provides financial support to the programme.

What happens to the welcoming alliances when the programme ends?

From the start of the programme, the welcoming alliances are provided not only with financial support, but also with active local support so that they continue to be viable after the initial financing phase. In this regard, structures and processes are established or developed that enable the work to be continued on a sustainable basis. In particular, the alliances are given support in the area of communication.

More information is available at
www.dfl-stiftung.de/willkommen-im-fussball/

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