

Panel discussion “The Logistics of Refugee Migration”

17 April 2018, 6-8 PM
Kuehne Logistics University (KLU), Auditorium
Grosser Grassbrook 17, 20457 Hamburg, Germany

The challenging logistics of hosting tens of thousands new refugees in a city of 1.85 million

Ladies and gentlemen,

I am happy and honored to speak for the first time at the Kuehne Logistics University.

How did Hamburg cope with the task of housing and integrating tens of thousands of refugees since mid-2015?

I would like to tackle the issue with 6 short points.

1. The major challenges

Our main goal during the 2015-2016 crises was to prevent the homelessness of refugees – WITHOUT seriously impacting the life of Hamburg’s 1.85 million citizens.

In the shortest time, we built about 70 new refugee camps for tens of thousands of people, expanded kindergartens and school capacities. And we even began helping refugees find jobs. The major challenges were finding suitable places and additional staff and speeding up bureaucracy.

2. The city’s tactics and guidelines

These are the tactics and guidelines Hamburg used to master a logistical nightmare:

- We applied the legal possibility of section 246 National Building Code (§ 246 Baugesetzbuch). It is a special regulation that allowed us to build in times of crisis IN industrial and IN other non-residential areas.

We could therefore start immediately with the construction of temporary refugee housing units, although the development plan for a specific area envisaged a different use.

- Unlike the city state of Berlin, we did NOT use sport halls of schools for refugee accommodation.

- We bought or rented empty halls of Praktika und Max Bahr, two DIY (Do it Yourself) firms that had went bankrupt before the refugee crisis.
- We bought and rented thousands of containers for housing refugees in Lego-like modular architecture.
- We used “in-house” expertise:
 - o Hamburg-owned companies perform tenders, rent buildings for the city, coordinate construction projects and operate initial shelters and public housings.
 - o Hamburg has deliberately opted NOT to hire private firms to run initial shelters and public housings. Berlin did it and paid a high price, for example by having a number of ready-to-occupy-shelters EMPTY for months because firms were suing.

3. Aid organizations, Bundeswehr and civil society on board

When the number of refugees arriving in Hamburg started to be in the hundreds every day, we called aid organizations like the Red Cross and we called even the Bundeswehr to help us. They managed initial shelters, opened army facilities for the refugees and set up tent camps.

In addition, civil society groups and thousands of volunteers from all walks of life helped with food and clothing.

Volunteers also comforted refugees who had traumatic experiences while fleeing to Europe and, in many cases, during warfare in countries like Syria and Iraq.

Churches and mosques opened their doors and provided sleeping facilities for many until we could move the refugees to initial shelters.

The response to the crisis was society-wide; and we are grateful for the massive support we received. It was welcoming culture at its best.

4. Citizen participation and consensus-building

The City of Hamburg signed „Citizen Agreements“ with the NGO network „Hamburg for better Integration“ (HGI). HGI is represented in 14 neighborhoods.

The goal of the deal was to prevent a referendum on refugee shelters: We had planned high-quality housing sites for more than 1,000 refugees per unit; HGI wanted no more than 300 refugees per initial shelter or public housing.

Here are the main points of the deal with HGI, or the „3 X 300 formula“:

- By end of 2019, no more than 300 refugees live per unit in the most important, recently planned public housing sites.
- Every new refugee accommodation is built for a max of 300 refugees.
- Max 300 accommodation sites in all of Hamburg.

5. Other reasons why Hamburg has been resilient in coping with the task of housing and integrating about 35,000 refugees since mid-2015:

- 1- Germany has become a multi-cultural, tolerant and open society.
- 2- Good Governance is the rule in Hamburg. The city's main administrative and political leaders meet twice a month and take consensual decisions.

They secure that important projects cannot be prevented by nature protection, by not-in-my-backyard attitudes or by local economic interests.

Good governance also means transparency and public information, evaluation of our work and accountability.

- 3- Part of good governance has been that Hamburg's Senate set up the Central Coordination Unit for Refugees (ZKF) to reduce bureaucracy, and to enable quick decisions and implementation.
- 4- Last reason: The ongoing economic boom in Germany. Hamburg has been funding the housing and integration of refugees from budget surplus – and NOT with loans or budget cuts impacting the other citizen negatively.

Note that creating so many new housing sites and the delivery of numerous social services in a very short period has been extremely expensive.

6. Challenges ahead

The most important challenge ahead is now to succeed in integrating all newcomers in society and in daily life.

We also have to enable refugees to move as soon as possible from an initial shelter or public housing into normal, private dwellings.

Thank you.

Anselm Sprandel
Head of the Central Coordination Unit for Refugees
Hamburg, Germany
fluechtlingskoordinator@zkf.hamburg.de

More Info:

- Central Coordination Unit for Refugees, www.hamburg.de/zkf, www.twitter.com/ZKFHamburg and www.facebook.com/ZKF.Hamburg
- § 246 Baugesetzbuch, https://www.gesetze-im-internet.de/bbaug/___246.html
- fördern & wohnen AöR, <http://foerdernundwohnen.de/>
- Sprinkenhof GmbH, <http://www.sprinkenhof.de/>
- Full agreement with "Hamburg für Gute Integration" (HGI): <https://www.buergerschaft-hh.de/ParlDok/dokument/53721/konsens-mit-den-initiatoren-der-volksinitiative-%E2%80%9Ehamburg-f%C3%BCr-gute-integration%E2%80%9C.pdf>