



# ENGLISH SUMMARY

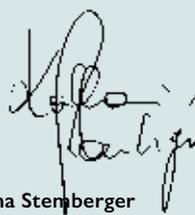
## PREFACE

*“Protection and the humane reception of refugees is a human right to which every person is entitled.”*

For decades the Integrationshaus has been both a symbol of and showcase for the humane reception and accommodation of refugees. We provide professional, thoughtful and empowering support to our residents, course participants and those seeking assistance on their pathway to a more independent life.

The year 2021 saw a particular focus on protecting refugee children. Constantly shifting COVID-19 measures, which included lockdowns and classroom closings, pushed unaccompanied minors and refugee families living at the Integrationshaus close to the edge. The situation was further complicated by appalling conditions in Afghanistan and the other armed conflicts that severely impacted the lives of some of our residents. These events demonstrated once more that refugees must not be abandoned when they reach their destinations. Given the adverse situations in which they often find themselves, they need our support and assistance in order to approach the future with a sense of optimism.

Effective humanitarian aid requires a massive effort on the part of all of us, ranging from the initial care we provide to finding appropriate care, support and accommodation for those in need as well as creating fair and humane conditions during the asylum process. That mission has been recognized as essential by the international community in declarations of human rights, and we at the Integrationshaus seek to fulfill those commitments every day. We are convinced that doing so should be understood as the normal way of doing things. At the same time, however, it remains a difficult task, and one that we will never abandon!



**Katharina Stemberger**  
Chair of the Executive Board

## EXECUTIVE BOARD OF INTEGRATIONSHAUS

### Providing benevolence to and solidarity with those in need of protection

The Executive Board of the Integrationshaus is composed of committed individuals who have long promoted our work as supporters and idea generators, lending their expertise and networks of contacts in untiring commitment to our mission.

#### Chairpersons of the Board

Katharina Stemberger, Chair

Wilhelm Resetarits, Honorary Chair, † April 2022

Georg Dimitz, Vice-Chair

Sepp Stranig, Vice-Chair

#### Members of the Board

Maximilian Eberl, Member

Andrea Eraslan-Weninger, Member (as of March 2022)

Đaneta Memišević, Member

Beatrix Neundlinger, Member

Werner Rosinak, Member

Christian Schmaus, Member

Terezija Stoitsits, Member

Marko Szucsich, Member

Based in the Vienna district of Leopoldstadt, the Integrationshaus is a center of excellence for the reception and integration of refugees and migrants. For the past 27 years, Integrationshaus has offered them our assistance with needs-based support in the fields of lodging and accommodation, psychosocial care, support and consulting as well as socio-pedagogical support, labor-market integration, education and educational guidance. A particular focus is on the needs of people requiring special care, such as those who have undergone trauma, single parents, and both accompanied and unaccompanied minors. The approach is to bring the expertise to bear in protecting refugees, promoting solidarity and mutual respect, diversity and human rights in a wide variety of languages.

With its holistic approach, the Integrationshaus is considered a pioneer on both the national and international level. Last year, for example, Integrationshaus projects were officially endorsed by the Vienna Social Fund (FSW), which provides wide-ranging social services on behalf of the City of Vienna. In the autumn of 2021 the Refugee Assistance Program of the FSW examined the adherence of the Integrationshaus to the agency's quality guidelines. In this audit we met every criterium of the guidelines with a score of 100%.

### Challenging circumstances

In 2021, there were more than 80 million refugees worldwide – more than ever before. This was caused not just by the COVID pandemic but also by the effects of climate change. Both crises further contributed to social inequity, resource scarcity and the perilous situation of people fleeing from war, persecution and hunger. The European political framework came under greater stress than ever before in attempting to create fair asylum processes and humane conditions for the acceptance of refugees. The year 2021 made increasingly evident the suffering and death of innocent victims as the result of militaristic and isolationist policies, such as the closure of national borders and the illegal rejection of legitimate refugees.

Unfortunately, the Austrian Federal Government failed to make necessary changes to its refugee policies. On the contrary: Despite the seizure of power by the Taliban in Afghanistan in 2021, the government failed to launch a humanitarian refugee admission program and continued to refuse to accept vulnerable people from the large refugee camps in Greece – existing comprehensive programs of care available in Austria notwithstanding.

*“It has become more important than ever to promote European admission mechanisms that guarantee those seeking protection access to a fair and sustainable asylum system. The fortification and externalization of EU borders as well as the illegal rejection of refugees must stop, and the principle of non-refoulement must be respected.”*

Martin Wurzenrainer und Alexandra Jachim  
CEOs of Integrationshaus

### Political efforts in 2021

In 2021 the Integrationshaus worked to secure humanitarian admission programs for refugees from Afghanistan and Syria as well as for equal treatment of people entitled to political asylum and those with subsidiary protection status. The Integrationshaus continues to witness inequities regarding family reunification and opportunities to achieve a secure existence as well as in the fields of refugee education, employment and accommodation. We are seeking the implementation of the recommendations of the Austrian Child Welfare Commission to provide adequate and sufficient accommodation for refugee orphans (unaccompanied minor refugees). But we are also working vehemently against the isolation of refugees and for the provision of impartial legal aid and better support systems for those who are vulnerable.

### An organization prepares for the future

Due to the continued effects of COVID, we expanded our services in the fields of counseling, educational guidance and training with new digital formats, even as we continued to develop existing ones. We also worked to further digitize our administration and provide additional resources for further development.

In order to secure the best-possible care, counseling, education and accommodation for refugees over the past year, the Integrationshaus launched an internal process of organizational development. The focus was on the further development of the organization, its structures and employees as well as the modernization of all our processes.

*“We would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to all our partners, supporters and employees for the solidarity and trust they have placed in the Integrationshaus, as evidenced by their support in the form of voluntary service, employee commitment, financial and other donations to benefit our clients. Without this many-faceted support we could not have met the responsibilities and challenges of 2021 in a competent and goal-oriented manner.”*

### Employees committed to helping people

In 2021 the Integrationshaus employed 162 individuals who speak some 40 different languages. They bring their expertise to bear in many specialized fields as well as in our administration: as social workers, social-education specialists, psychologists, teachers and trainers but also as experts in IT, law and management.

#### The Team of Integrationshaus in Figures

We have a total of 162 employees, comprised of 144 (active) employees, 13 currently on sabbatical, educational or parental leave and 5 with free service contracts.

In addition, 12 persons on national service worked for us throughout 2021.

## Special Circumstance: The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a challenge to everyone at the Integrationshaus: clients, residents, course participants and employees alike. But even greater was the challenge it posed specifically to refugees, adding to the uncertainty, insecurity and existential fears created by their flight and the reorientation it required. Already facing a limited socio-economic environment, they were hit particularly hard by the social withdrawal imposed by lockdowns and other restrictive COVID-19 measures. Important programs that normally lend structure to the daily lives of refugees, such as course participation, were either impossible or available online only. In the absence of other restorative resources (e.g., sports facilities), some refugees found themselves in crisis situations and in need of greater psychosocial support.

The issue of vaccinations caused additional uncertainty, requiring intensive clarification, counseling and support. Important aids were provided in the form of information materials in multiple languages, additional counseling opportunities, and the staging of a special vaccination program at the Integrationshaus. This made it possible for the clients to be accompanied during the vaccination process, which helped relieve their fears and concerns. This was the first vaccination that many of them had ever received. The vaccination program was also made available to the clients of three other institutions.

At the beginning of the pandemic, the COVID-team examined existing legal frameworks, the requirements of various sponsors, and the measures being undertaken to combat the pandemic. It then analyzed the necessary changes and developed targets and guidelines for implementing them internally.

## Hybrid daily routines: working both online and offline

The Integrationshaus's specialists reacted to the challenge of alternating between offline and online work by creating new formats. The consulting services began offering a dual model to maintain the quality standards of the Integrationshaus, providing personal counseling in a digital format in order to meet the needs of our clients in an optimal manner. The employees also developed digital course formats for education and training, thus making possible the flexible transition from in-person courses to digital learning situations. For the most part, the transition between in-person and distance learning worked very well.

In the case of youth education guidance – which had been provided at schools – long phases of distance learning, and thus digitally provided guidance, meant that contact was sometimes completely broken off, especially with young people who were already at risk of exclusion. Transitioning repeatedly between in-person and distance learning adversely affected relationships and was especially difficult for vulnerable individuals.

The transition to digital models also offered the employees new work models. The Integrationshaus introduced home office arrangements in 2021, making the workday far more flexible.

## Facts and Figures about Austria's Asylum System

### Applications for asylum in Austria

By late 2020, 82.4 million people worldwide viewed flight as their only hope for survival. That figure was higher than ever before, and the trend continued in 2021. Despite isolationist Austrian and other European policies intended to deter asylum-seekers, the number of people seeking asylum in Austria rose sharply relative to the previous year. In all, 39,930 people applied for asylum in Austria last year; more than half of them from war-torn Syria and Afghanistan. Of the people seeking asylum in 2021, 85% were male and 15% female. Minors accounted for 30% of the total.

### Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum

The number of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum rose sharply in 2021 to a total of 5,605. Of those, 5,471 were male and 134 female; 286 were under the age of 14. By comparison, the 2020 total of unaccompanied minors seeking asylum was 1,467, of whom 108 were younger than 14. Most of them came from Syria or Afghanistan.

Source: 2021 Asylum Statistics, Austrian Interior Ministry (<https://www.bmi.gv.at/301/Statistiken/start.aspx#jahr>)

## Asylum in Austria – opportunity or dead end?

Special challenges for refugees in Austria:

- Asylum-seekers have no access to the regular labor market until their application for asylum has been approved, which usually takes years.
- Asylum-seekers receiving basic federal-government support are not allowed to earn more than 110 euros per month without losing their benefits.
- Minor asylum-seekers have no right to schooling beyond the compulsory minimum. They are not entitled to the guaranteed minimum education for Austrians, which extends to age 18.
- Asylum-seekers receive health insurance but no other benefits from the Austrian social system.

Thus the Integrationshaus considers it as its responsibility to provide refugees with assistance, supporting them with the purposeful care, counseling, consulting, education and training that will help them regain control of their lives as quickly as possible.

## Accomplishments of the Integrationshaus in 2021

In 2021 4,490 people benefited from accommodation, counseling, education and training provided by the Integrationshaus.

### Residents

Individuals in psychosocial care	158
First Flat Residential Communities	70
Caravan Residential Communities 1 and 2	23
einewelt-wg Residential Community	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>259</b>

### Education

BAJU	36
Mama Lernt Deutsch – F.U.T.U.R.E.-Train	68
AK_Jug	27
JAWA <sup>Next 12</sup>	60
FAVoritIN	26
<b>Course participants total</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>In childcare/children of course participants</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>270</b>

### Kindergarten

<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>
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### Individuals in counseling

<b>Total</b>	<b>3,831</b>
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### Participants in voluntary training

<b>Total</b>	<b>113</b>
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## FINANCIAL REPORT

<b>SOURCES OF FUNDS 2021</b>		
	<b>Betrag</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Earmarked donations</b>		
e.g., psychological childcare, legal advice, etc.	296,794.30	
<b>Total earmarked donations</b>	<b>296,794.30</b>	<b>3.31</b>
<b>Non-earmarked donations*</b>	<b>1,256,886.33</b>	<b>14.02</b>
*The major share of non-earmarked donations was used in 2021 for psychosocial care. In addition, a donation reserve was established for 2022.		
<b>Total donations</b>	<b>1,553,680.63</b>	<b>17.33</b>
<b>Public subsidies and grants</b>		
AMS Wien – Public Employment Service	135,956.52	1.52
AK Wien – Chamber of Labour	123,507.63	1.38
BMSGPK – Federal Ministry of Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection	32,000.00	0.36
BMBWF – Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research	85,785.82	0.96
Bundeskanzleramt – Federal Chancellery - Women's Affairs	20,810.00	0.23
Interior Ministry Office of Civilian Service	51,665.09	0.58
ESF – European Social Fund	171,231.61	1.91
FSW – Vienna Social Fund	2,829,655.42	31.57
MA 11 – Vienna Municipal Department 11	1,533,313.53	17.11
MA 17 – Vienna Municipal Department 17	156,710.55	1.75
SMS – Social Ministry Services	1,727,068.83	19.27
waff – Vienna Employment Promotion Fund	425,074.43	4.74
<b>Total public subsidies and grants</b>	<b>7,292,779.43</b>	<b>81.38</b>
<b>Other income</b>		
Events	29,986.34	0.33
Other Income	86,041.81	0.96
<b>Total of other income</b>	<b>116,028.15</b>	<b>1.29</b>
<b>Release of donation reserves</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>Total sources of funds</b>	<b>8,962,488.21</b>	<b>100.00</b>

## ALLOCATION OF FUNDS 2021

### I. Total expenditure on purposes defined in the by-laws

Field	Personnel expenditure	Material expenditure	Total	%
Labor market, education, co-operation projects	841,573.59	162,790.32	1,004,363.91	11.21
Counseling Centre & independent legal advice	866,697.15	166,787.55	1,033,484.69	11.53
Educational counseling	1,541,407.87	187,964.29	1,729,372.17	19.30
Psycho-social care	1,301,705.76	888,227.51	2,189,933.28	24.43
Social-Pedagogics	1,653,725.74	416,390.59	2,070,116.33	23.10
Organisation of events (Refugee Ball, Lachen hilft!)	35,011.68	28,826.19	63,837.88	0.71
<b>Total expenditure on purposes defined in the by-laws</b>			<b>8.091.108,25</b>	<b>90,28</b>

### II. Fundraising

Fundraising	22,900.75	9,790.58	32,691.33	0.36
<b>Total funds raised</b>			<b>32,691.33</b>	<b>0.36</b>

### III. Administrative expenditure

General administration	268,570.31	136,178.24	404,748.55	4.52
Donation management	82,256.14	13,432.72	95,688.86	1.07
<b>Total administrative expenditure</b>			<b>500,437.40</b>	<b>5.59</b>

### IV. Unused, earmarked donations and subsidies

Allocation of donations reserve not yet used, not dedicated donations			338,251.23	3.77
<b>Total amount of donations and subsidies not yet used</b>			<b>338,251.23</b>	<b>3.77</b>
<b>Total fund allocation</b>			<b>8,962,488.22</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Responsible for fundraising are Mag. Alexandra Jachim, MAS (CEO) and Mag. Gabi Ecker (Fundraising).

Responsible for donation management are Mag. Alexandra Jachim, MAS, Mag. Martin Wurzenrainer (CEOs) and Mag. Susanne Lettner (Accounting).

The persons responsible for data protection are Mag. Lisa Alluri and external data protection officer, Dr. Werner Pilgermair.

### **Working together, we provide effective assistance to refugees.**

#### **Donors help**

Not all of the Integrationshaus projects are completely covered by public funding. Exceptions include legal-aid services, psychosocial care and special childcare projects. Yet these projects are particularly important in order to empower refugees to develop their capabilities as they attempt to establish themselves in a new setting. An especially important part of the financial and in-kind support the Integrationshaus receives stems from the often long-standing solidarity with refugees that private persons, companies and organizations have demonstrated. It is only with this assistance that the organization can maintain in the provided quality thus ensuring that the projects for asylum-seekers and migrants are sustainable in the long term. The loyal, reliable solidarity of numerous private donors has continued to support the Integrationshaus for many years.

*„We are very grateful to them!“ Gabi Ecker, Fundraising*

#### **Companies help**

The organization constantly strives to expand the cooperation with partners from the business world. Their contributions range from donations of cash, material and time to provision of know-how and long-term cooperation with individuals. We are particularly grateful to companies that support integration through their enduring commitment to sustainability.

*„We are grateful to all the companies that have supported us for many years!“ Christine Riegler, Corporate Partnerships*

#### **Special thanks to the following companies:**

- The weekly Vienna news magazine FALTER. The paper's committed editorial team outdid itself in 2021 with its Christmas campaign "Hilfe, Geschenke!" The initiative raised the astounding sum of 217,652 euros to benefit the Integrationshaus.
- The vineyard of Heike and Gernot Heinrich in cooperation with the grocery chain SPAR Austria. The exclusive marketing by INTERSPAR supermarkets of a special edition of Heinrich wines generated 40,000 euros for the Integrationshaus.
- The BILLA supermarket chain donated 10,000 euros.
- The Green Party in the Vienna district of Floridsdorf donated 2,500 euros it had raised at its Social Flea Market.
- The dm chain of retail stores donated 14,000 euros and made numerous donations in kind. The chain also supported an Integrationshaus project as part of their celebrations to mark the 45th anniversary of the company's founding.

#### **Special donations in kind during 2021:**

- IKEA donated kitchen units, chairs and other furniture as well as mattresses, bedding, towels, curtains and household items for a total donation worth around 26,000 euros.

- The Austrian football club Rapid Vienna donated clothing, backpacks, footballs and 150 tickets to a football match to support the sports activities of children and young people at the Integrationshaus.
- The shoe and furniture company Waldviertler Werkstätten donated 68 pairs of shoes to residents of the Integrationshaus.
- One of the founders of the Springboard Association, Michael Schaumann, personally delivered 10 laptop computers that were urgently needed by course participants enrolled in our distance learning programs.

#### **Giving Tuesday at the Bookstore**

On Giving Tuesday 2021, Walter Kettner, the owner of the Vienna bookstore "Bücher am Spitz", placed a donation box in the checkout area of his shop, encouraging customers to make donations to the Integrationshaus.

We are very grateful to all the companies and other organizations that took out advertisements in 2021 in the Integrationshaus newspaper, DIE GUTE ZEITUNG. With their assistance we were able to distribute the paper throughout Austria, thus raising the profile of the Integrationshaus nationwide.

#### **Events**

Integrationshaus events are essential in raising the profile and guaranteeing the continued existence of projects and approach to the work of Integrationshaus. The support from the venues, artists and audiences make a substantial contribution to the financing of important Integrationshaus projects. The venue sites have been adapted as necessary to the prevailing COVID-measures in force at the time.

Thus we have been able to stage almost all the events we planned:

- The 27<sup>th</sup> Vienna Refugee Ball as an online event featuring live concerts.
- The "Lachen Hilft!" Cabaret Gala on June 28<sup>th</sup> at Viktor Gernot's Prater Stage.
- The "Lachen Hilft!" Cabaret Gala on October 26<sup>th</sup> at Vienna's Stadtsaal.
- The Wine Auction in early November to benefit the Integrationshaus.

#### **The Integrationshaus has been awarded the Austrian Donation Seal of Approval.**

To qualify for the Seal of Approval an organization must be committed to transparency and undergo an annual audit to verify that funds donated to the organization are used prudently for the stated purpose. More information (in German) about the Seal of Approval can be found at the website [www.osgs.at](http://www.osgs.at).

### FOCUS ON PSYCHOSOCIAL CARE

#### Expansion of services and a new special focus on refugee care

The psychosocial care team is offering two new residential projects in Vienna for asylum-seekers, those already entitled to asylum and those with subsidiary protection status. The residence on Engerthstrasse offers housing for 110 persons (adults and families) and specializes in the accommodation and care of people in need of special care (those with mental and/or chronic illnesses). The project First Flat offers housing for 48 young adult males living in 10 residential communities throughout Vienna.

The year 2021 was marked by rapid change. The continuing COVID-19 measures posed challenges in efforts to provide daily care to refugees. That became even more difficult when the province of Vienna, for all intents and purposes, halted the intake of refugees. That forced shift focus to family reunification and to the care of vulnerable people in particularly great need.

Like many other institutions providing basic accommodation for refugees, the Integrationshaus was unable to work at full capacity in 2021. That was due to quotas that were designed to spread refugees across the entire country, and Vienna was already at about 180% of its designated quota. Only in exceptional cases, e.g., as a result of family reunification, were refugees still being accepted in Vienna. On the other hand, there was a great demand for accommodation for people in need of intensive care. The multilingual team actively explored possibilities to provide accommodation for refugees in urgent need of professional care and expanded the availability of so-called "stability housing." These are accommodations for people who need particularly intensive care, such as those at risk for suicide.

The care of these clients required an adjustment of the entire care plan, including the provision of advanced training to employees. There was a special focus on the fears and insecurities of residents who required greater psychological support over and above the psychosocial care that the team was already providing. Given the rising number of residents with mental illness and the additional burdens posed by the continued pandemic, the need for psychological care was great in all age groups, from children to teenagers to adults.

The project "Bärenstark" (strong as a bear) was awarded the Austrian Child Protection Prize, confirming the vital importance of providing psychological care to children. The aim of the project is to help refugee children who have undergone traumatic experiences in their home country by making them more aware of their personal strengths, thus strengthening their social competence and empowering them to lead a self-determined and autonomous life. This was the fourth time the Integrationshaus had received the award. In addition, the Integrationshaus sought to help the rising number of refugees who had come to Austria for the purpose of family reunification. Unfortunately, these families lost their social benefits once their asylum was approved and were forced to move to other accommodation. Here financing is needed for continuing integration efforts that would support entire families as they seek to lead an independent life in a new environment.

Life in the First Flat Residential Communities was marked in 2021 by numerous departures following the granting of asylum rights (asylum, subsidiary protection status, residence permit plus). The total of 42 departures in 2021 was almost three times higher than the figure of the previous year. In part, this was caused by legal changes reflecting the political situation in Afghanistan. Because of the frequent coming and going in the residences, the social workers had to pay closer attention to the psychosocial needs of the residents to make their lives as satisfactory as possible.

#### Sponsored by:

FSW – Vienna Social Fund, Assisted Living and Refugee Assistance Program  
Bundeskazleramt – Federal Ministry of Women, Families and Youth  
BMSGPK – Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection  
AK Wien – Vienna Chamber of Labor

### The Accomplishments of Psychosocial Care in 2021

#### Residential Home

Residents: 158 (44 adult women, 46 adult men)

Children and teenagers: 68 (43 boys, 25 girls)

Residents in need of greater care: 39 (17 women, 21 men, 1 child)

Number of countries of origin: 18

Most frequent countries of origin: Russian Federation, Afghanistan, Syria

Asylum-seekers: 40 %

Approved for asylum: 22 %

Persons with subsidiary protection status: 20 %

Red-White-Red Card Plus: 5 %

Other: 13 %

Employees: 15 + 3 persons on national service

Languages spoken by the team: 19

#### First Flat Residential Communities

Residents: 70

Number of countries of origin: 8

Most frequent countries of origin: Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq

Asylum-seekers: 54 %

Approved for asylum: 9 %

Persons with subsidiary protection status: 21 %

Other: 16 %

Employees: 3 + 1 person on national service

Languages spoken by the team: 8

## FOCUS ON SOCIAL PEDAGOGY

### Between a safe harbor and a new beginning

In its program of social pedagogy, the Integrationshaus offers three residential communities for unaccompanied minor refugees as well as other children and young people who, for a variety of reasons, cannot live together with their families. In all, living accommodations and care are offered for 26 children and young people between the ages of three and 18. Pursuant to an Austrian law mandating “complete care” for children under the age of 18, care is provided at the behest of the Vienna Child and Youth Welfare Office and the Vienna Social Fund.

The year 2021 was marked by family reunifications and frequent coming and going in the residential communities. The professional care of children and young people whose families fled from their countries of origin to Austria and the release of young people into independent living created a turbulent year with many farewells and new beginnings. With the help of the Red Cross, two young people from our social-pedagogical residential communities were able to welcome their families to Austria in 2021 after many years of separation. In the months leading up to the successful reunification, the care-givers were closely involved in planning. They coordinated dates and deadlines, transferred documents, and provided care and support to the young persons involved. For the young people the period leading up to family reunification was a difficult time because of the many uncertainties and the enormous hopes and fears they harbored. The young people felt a deep sense of responsibility to their families. Thus close attention was paid to their psychological needs, and optimal support was provided with the help of a psychologist.

The reunification of families after many years of separation was very emotional, and not just for the families themselves. The case workers were also deeply moved at the moment of reunification because they experienced it as a reward for the efforts they had undertaken. Working together with their colleagues from the psychosocial care team, the social pedagogy case workers were able to provide accommodation for both of the reunited families at the Integrationshaus, which caused a great sense of relief on the part of the young people and their newly arrived family members. Family reunification will remain an important concern in 2022 as well.

In 2021 five of the young people were able to make the transition to independent living, either moving into a less intensive form of residential care or into homes of their own. Saying goodbye did not always come easy, even to the long-term employees. These young people had often spent many years in the care of our residential communities, which they considered their home. In most cases, contact to the young people was maintained and they continued to seek the aid and assistance even in their new environment. This is a testimony to the excellent work the team performs in establishing relationships and in building a sense of trust in the Integrationshaus as a safe harbor.

#### Sponsored by:

MA 11 – Vienna Municipal Department 11 – Youth and Family  
FSW – Vienna Social Fund  
AK Wien – Vienna Chamber of Labour

### The Accomplishments of Social Pedagogy in 2021

#### Caravan Residential Communities 1 and 2

Number of residents: 23 (21 boys, 2 girls)

Age of residents: 6 to 18

Number of countries of origin: 5

Most frequent countries of origin: Afghanistan, Syria

Employees: 15 + 2 persons on national service

Languages spoken by the team: 9

#### einewelt-wg Residential Community

Number of residents: 8 (4 boys, 4 girls)

Age of residents: 5 to 17

Number of countries of origin: 3

Countries of origin: Afghanistan, Iraq, Austria

Employees: 9 + 1 person on national service

Languages spoken by the team: 3

## FOCUS ON COUNSELING SERVICES

### **“Just when you think nothing can surprise you ...”**

The psychosocial counseling center and its affiliated legal-aid office provide counseling to those receiving basic care services in the following areas: livelihood security, mental health, employment, education and training, accommodation, the asylum process and right of residence as well as topics specific to women, young people and young adults. Important goals are to impart knowledge of the Austrian social system and promote autonomy.

In 2021 the prevailing COVID-19 measures, political turmoil in Afghanistan and the influx of people from other Austrian provinces after being granted asylum led to an unexpectedly high number of people in need of counseling and support. The multilingual team at the counseling center was able to provide optimal aid to refugees and asylum-seekers in Vienna but was pushed close to its limits in doing so. One unexpected development in 2021 was the large number of clients requiring the services of the psychosocial counseling center in Vienna after receiving a positive decision on their application for asylum in another province.

They found themselves still facing serious administrative hurdles. After being granted the right to asylum, these people have only four months in which they can still take advantage of counseling. This posed a major challenge to the counselors, who had relatively little time to explain complex issues to people, who often had little foreknowledge of the issues, to make them optimally prepared for living independently. At times the counseling center was at the limits of its capacity. While the multilingual team can deliver much of the necessary counseling in the native language of the client, in other cases they must work with interpreters. With the support of sponsors, the counseling center was able to expand the resources towards the end of the year, making it possible to meet an anticipated higher future demand with the care and attention it will require.

**Sponsored by:**  
FSW – Vienna Social Fund

### **Independent Legal Aid**

Before the collapse of the Afghan government in August 2021, Austria repeatedly rejected asylum requests from Afghan refugees because the security situation in their home country had allegedly improved. Many of them sought the assistance of the legal-aid service in order to submit applications to extend their stay in Austria or to request subsidiary protection status. Following the seizure of power by the Taliban, the need for legal aid to Afghan clients was even greater because those who had been denied asylum status now faced deportation. They were supported by the team in drafting new asylum applications and continued the support them during first-instance proceedings not covered by the Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services, which had assumed responsibility for providing basic care for asylum seekers, refugees and other vulnerable aliens in late 2020/early 2021.

In addition, services were provided to many other clients from countries such as Iraq and Somalia in applying for special protection (for humanitarian reasons) or for papers documenting their subsidiary protection status.

The establishment of the Federal Agency for Reception and Support Services (BBU) affected the entire system for providing legal aid to those in need of protection. A number of independent legal-aid organizations joined forces, forming a network to scrutinize changes in the legal situation of refugees and make necessary adjustments.

The goal of the legal aid service is to guarantee the rights of anyone in need of protection, whether they have been granted asylum status, subsidiary protection status or require other protection. The seizure of power by the Taliban demonstrated that government administrations and courts are often mistaken in assessing potential threats to refugees. Thus it is a worthwhile endeavor to offer support to anyone whose application for protection has been denied.

**The Independent Legal Aid is financed by donations and the RD Foundation Vienna**

### **The Accomplishments of Counseling Services in 2021**

#### **Counseling Center**

Number of clients: 1,098 (742 men, 345 women, 11 undetermined)

Total number of counseling contacts: 7,078

Employees: 10 + 2 persons on national service

Languages spoken by the team: 14

#### **Focus of counseling**

General social counseling and individual clarification of perspectives: 4,562

Counseling related to government and administration: 3,503

Counseling related to employment, education and training: 1,255

Counseling related to accommodation: 1,170

Counseling related to young people and young adults: 382

Counseling related to female-specific issues, including violence against women: 177

Counseling related to mental and other health problems: 958

#### **Independent Legal Aid for Refugees**

Number of clients: 467 (313 men, 154 women)

Family members (children): 342

Employees: 2

Accomplishments: 1,132

## FOCUS ON EDUCATION

### Education as the key to self-determination and societal participation

At the heart of the educational focus at the Integrationshaus is a program of measures to assist young people, young adults and women in gaining access to basic training and education, the labor market, and integration in general. A principal concern is acquisition of German-language skills. In addition, individual projects address other specific goals, such as gaining basic competencies, learning specialist terminology relevant to the labor market and other competencies related to specific occupations.

Despite last year's impediments to education posed by online schooling, FFP2 masks, PLEXIGLAS® partitions, frequent testing and vaccination requirements, COVID-19 sparked innovations that have become part of the educational processes and projects. Course participants demonstrated flexibility in switching between online and in-person learning. The real pressure on the clients last year stemmed largely from events in their countries of origin, such as the developments in Afghanistan. In some cases educational goals had to be set aside in order to provide support to the clients' families. The close cooperation with advisory bodies and with sponsors enabled the team to find individual solutions for course participants as they sought to become independent. This is illustrated by the case of one young participant who had completed the required years of compulsory education but was not permitted to work during his years of waiting for asylum. After making a job-application video in the training course AK\_Jug, he was able to submit it the moment he was granted access to the labor market and soon afterwards began an apprenticeship to become a painter.

The preparatory course for apprenticeships, JAWA<sup>Next 12</sup>, was particularly successful in 2021. A total of 90 % of the participants were able to find an internship, apprenticeship or other form of training or employment. Their new endeavors covered a wide variety of fields, ranging from upholstery and real-estate sales to outbound logistics and application development and coding.

JAWA<sup>Next 12</sup> demonstrated that altered course conditions during the pandemic also brought several advantages, including the expansion of digital course offerings and the possibility of working in small groups. Smaller group classes and independent phases of education and training, either in-person or online, made it possible to provide more individual support to participants than we had in the past.

#### Sponsored by:

ESF – European Social Fund  
BMBWF – Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research  
MA 17 – Municipal Department 17 – Integration and Diversity  
waff – Vienna Employment Promotion Fund  
AMS Wien – Austrian Public Employment Service  
AK Wien – Vienna Chamber of Labour  
AK Digifonds – Digitalization Fund of the Vienna Chamber of Labour  
FSW – Vienna Social Fund

### The Accomplishments of Education in 2021

#### Basic education for young people and young adults with a migration background (BAJU):

Number of participants: 36 (17 women, 19 men)  
Age: 16 to 24  
Employees: 3

#### MOM LEARNS GERMAN (MAMA LERNT DEUTSCH - F.U.T.U.R.E. - TRAIN)

Number of participants: 68  
Age: 25 to 55  
Children of course participants in child care: 53  
Employees: 7

#### Preparatory Course for Apprenticeships (JAWA<sup>Next 12</sup>)

Number of participants: 60 (27 women, 33 men)  
Age: 16 to 21  
Results: 96 completed internships, 44 apprenticeships, 4 jobs, 6 people in advanced training/college  
Employees: 7 + 2 persons on national service + 3 interns

#### Professional Terminology with labor market preparation for women (FAVoritIN)

Number of participants: 26  
Age: 19 to 50  
Employees: 4

#### Pre-Professional Training for Young People (AK\_Jug)

Number of participants: 27 (3 women, 24 men)  
Age: 17 to 26  
Employees: 3

## FOCUS ON EDUCATIONAL GUIDANCE

The youth-coaching project m.o.v.e. is the Integrationshaus's educational-guidance program. It is part of the Professional Assistance Network (NEBA) and supports young people from age 15 to 19. In some cases it can include young people up to the age of 24, helping them make the transition from an educational setting to a job or profession. For those under high-school age, counseling takes place directly at public schools. Older students receive counseling at select upper secondary schools in Vienna's 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 20th districts. Young people who are no longer in school come to the counseling centers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has escalated the problems facing a young person looking for work. As a result, many fear they have no chance of getting adequate preparation for an occupation or profession. When they're contemplating a transition from their school to a different training or education situation, many young people make what they consider to be a safe decision by lowering their expectations. Many decide to attend upper secondary school when they would really prefer to start an apprenticeship. But these schools can place excessive demands on some students, leading to a higher drop-out rate.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has continued, many young people have suffered from increased emotional stress, a development seen by our youth-coaching teams. Young people are now talking more frequently about their loss of motivation, their anxieties and even their thoughts of suicide. At the same time, there is a lack of psychosocial resources at their schools (e.g., school social work, school psychology). The youth coaches have thus faced an ever-rising need to intervene in crisis situations and help young people find specialized counseling and therapy.

School lockdowns and closures have often necessitated a transition to online or telephone counseling. This has made evident the growing differences in the digital competence of economically disadvantaged young people and those with better material resources. While mobile telephones are available to most young people, many of them lack competence in the use of desktop and laptop computers. These problems have been found in every type of school.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, many government agencies and other institutions that are relevant to young people have digitized various processes. These problems were faced, for example, by students seeking to register at an upper secondary school, particularly if the student was not completely fluent in German. The ability of the coaches to serve as an interface has played an important role in guaranteeing access to the education system the young people need.

### Facts of Educational Guidance in 2021

Age of clients: 14 to 21

Most frequent countries of origin: Austria, Syria, Serbia

Employees: 27

Languages spoken by the team: 15

#### Sponsored by:

ESF – European Social Fund



The Professional Assistance Network (NEBA) is an initiative of the Social Ministry Service

## VOLUNTEERS

### Relationships, Networking, Community – Even During COVID-19

Ever since the Integrationshaus was first founded in 1994, volunteer workers have provided help and advice to refugees and migrants as buddies, sponsors, mentors, education partners and tutors. They are supported by training events, tutoring sessions and reflection groups as well as by a central coordination center and the numerous Integrationshaus employees involved in projects on which the volunteers are working.

It is particularly difficult for refugees and migrants who have not yet gained a strong foothold in Austria to establish human relationships. Because government support payments are small, the clients suffer from poverty. At the same time they are excluded from many facets of Austrian society. Finding employment is impossible while an applicant's asylum request is being processed and still very difficult after asylum has been granted. Many extracurricular activities and opportunities are closed to refugees because of their lack of financial resources. In addition, there is a scarcity of suitable places for refugees to make contact with Austrian society.

#### 1:1 – Interpersonal Relationships

Volunteers can help refugees to overcome these obstacles. As buddies, mentors, education partners and tutors they can establish, build and maintain relationships, using their networking skills to offer the refugees other contacts and drawing on their own experience to help refugees participate in Austrian society.

#### Indispensable: Training for Volunteers

From the very beginning, volunteers are offered training to provide them with the tools they need in their volunteer activity. Five different programs offer purposeful training to prepare volunteers for their work with various groups of clients and their needs. There are preparatory programs for psychosocial care, for the apprenticeship project JAWA<sup>Next</sup> 12, for the basic education project BAJU and other education projects as well as for psychosocial care and social pedagogy. Whenever the pandemic permitted, training and reflection sessions were held at the Integrationshaus in order to promote cooperation and exchange among the participants. They were otherwise conducted online. In the final analysis, both settings were rated highly. The reflection sessions under professional guidance were also seen as a positive form of support.

#### Atelier VIA: A Meeting Place for Committed Volunteers

The name Atelier VIA stands for "Vernetzt, Ideenreich, Aktiv" (Networked, Imaginative, Active). It provides a meeting place for all of the Integrationshaus volunteers committed to the concerns of refugees. Atelier VIA services were further expanded in 2021. Exchange and counseling were promoted at information events, in reflection

groups and at theme nights, which were initiated and planned in part by our volunteer coordinator but also by the volunteers themselves. They included a lecture on the situation faced by refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos and an evening to mark the New Year's festival of Nowruz (Persian) and Newroz (Kurdish), which is celebrated by many refugees from Afghanistan and Iran and usually falls on March 21<sup>st</sup>.

A central focus of Atelier VIA was supporting the volunteers' project concepts. In September, for example, a mobile-phone photography workshop was staged in Vienna's Volksgarten. Open to the general public, it shared technical and artistic expertise with the participants and introduced them to new areas.

#### Sponsored by:

AK Wien – Vienna Chamber of Labor  
waff – Vienna Employment Promotion Fund  
MA 11 – Vienna Municipal Department 11 – Youth and Family  
MA 17 – Vienna Municipal Department 17 – Integration and Diversity  
BMSGPK – Federal Ministry for Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection  
AMS Wien – Austrian Public Employment Service  
BMBWF – Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research  
ESF – European Social Fund

### The Accomplishments of Volunteers in 2021

#### Volunteers

Number of volunteers: 180 (20 % of them male)

Age: 19 to 79

Languages: 33

Informational interviews with volunteers: 62

Information events and training evenings: 49

#### Training participants

Buddy Course Residential Home: 15

Basic Education for Young People (BAJU): 11

Mentoring for Young People (JAWA<sup>Next</sup>): 10

Buddy Training Basic Modules: 37

Buddy Training Individual Specialized Modules: 40

#### Atelier VIA

Evenings at Atelier VIA: 28



MOVING FORWARD

TOGETHER