

# EINFACH & FAIR LEBEN


EINE WELT NACHRICHTEN  
SACHSEN-ANHALT

**Nr. 42**

English Version



**eNSA**  
EINE WELT NETZWERK  
SACHSEN-ANHALT



**Please note:** This is the first English version of the biannual ENSA publication 'EINFACH & FAIR LEBEN'. It is published in a small print run because the contents of this special edition are also of interest to an international audience. Last but not least, the authors of the 'Perspectives' that have been kindly contributed should be given the opportunity to find their texts printed in their original form.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

4

1.1 Fair trade and migration -  
a special 'ENSA-Rundbrief' (newsletter)

8

1.2 International students in Mitteldeutschland -  
5 Perspectives on arrival and global justice

## 2 PERSPECTIVES

11

2.1 From Iran, Rasht to Jena:  
My Journey as a Foreign Student in Germany

15

2.2 A Journey of Hope and Challenges:  
My Scholarship Experience in Erfurt

18

2.3 A short view of an Nepali women  
who lived in Magdeburg

21

2.4 Arrival in Germany

24

2.5 The Perception and Lived Experience at the  
Job Market in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany

28

## 3 POSITION PAPER

„Skilled labour immigration“ in Saxony-Anhalt  
from a development policy perspective

## 1.1 Fair trade and migration - a special 'ENSA-Rundbrief' (newsletter)



The 42nd edition of the 'ENSA-Rundbrief', which is a newsletter published twice a year, makes it unique. It aims to give a voice to young migrants from the Global South, who have come to 'Mitteldeutschland' (this means the former GDR states of Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia). In doing so, we are living up to the headline of this regular publication, 'Eine Welt Nachrichten Sachsen-Anhalt', which can be translated as "One World News Saxony-Anhalt". Far too often, we, as privileged Central Europeans, presume to make judgements about the motives for migration on the one hand or about how to deal with racism on the other. The attempt to strengthen the perspective of people in the Global South in this way can only be seen as one of many steps towards reducing global injustice.

As ENSA, we are in favour of the fact that some of these steps must

also be taken by each individual person. In addition to a sensitive and open approach, this also includes our own consumer behaviour. That is why we regularly report on news from the Fair Trade movement, an important part of development policy. Injustices in global trade are one of the reasons for migration, for preventing people from realizing their potential and earning a living. So, what does Fair Trade do to improve these conditions?

Fair trade seeks solutions that ensure fair prices and decent work, respecting human and environmental rights, by establishing long-term trading relationships that cover the cost of living for producers. Producers are also supported by strengthening their organizational structures and improving infrastructure, for example in the areas of health and education.

At present, the system of global trade is primarily focused on the interests of multinational corporations, mostly based in the countries of the Global North. The enforcement of their profit interests is inevitably at the expense of those at the beginning of the supply chain, the producers in the countries of the Global South. Moreover, these mechanisms of exploitation affect the

group of migrant workers in Central Europe. Take, for example, the precarious situation in Spanish or Italian agriculture, but also in care sector or meat processing in Germany. Here one often finds disenfranchised migrants who eke out a living under the most difficult working and living conditions. This under-recognised aspect is also a concern of Fair Trade, as demonstrated by the 'No Cap' initiative<sup>1</sup>, whose products support migrants suffering exploitation in southern Italy. These products can also be found in several Fair Trade shops.

The central aim of Fair Trade is to provide concrete support to producers, for example by paying fixed prices that are not subject to fluctuations on the world market. Initially, this mainly concerned agricultural products or handicrafts. Fair Trade has since expanded to include textiles and IT products too. Services, such as tourism, are also marketed 'fairly'. This already points to another dimension of Fair Trade, namely the potential to create prospects for a different, fairer global economy. This does not necessarily mean a breaching away from previous mechanisms of a (social?) market economy, but Fair Trade points out that human rights and environmental protection are goods that must be respected. The movement therefore advocates the implementation of social and environmental standards in existing global trade processes, for example by integrating them into legal standards or trade agreements.

These fairer conditions for local economic activity also promote safe and self-determined forms of migration. Of course, people will migrate for a variety of reasons and everyone has a right to mobility. However, it is undeniable that the current reality of migration also reflects political failure. After all, anyone who is forced to leave their home due to threats or economic constraints is vulnerable to exploitation. The current global trade situation is therefore a cause of externally driven migration. For example, if a local producer in a country of the Global South is no longer able to sell his/her products at a price that is sufficient to cover their livelihood because the local market is flooded with cheap agricultural products from multinational corporations, poverty is imminent. This is where Fair Trade comes in. And even though armed conflicts are a major cause for flight and displacement, new Fair Trade initiatives, such as 'Conflictfood'<sup>2</sup>, which is particularly active in regions of acute crises, are trying to get involved.

Admittedly, the impact of Fair Trade is limited. Although the proportion of fairly trade products are increasing (according to a recent publication by Fairtrade Deutschland e. V.<sup>3</sup>, sales in Germany, for example, amounted by 2.6 billion euros per year), their influence is small compared to the dimensions of global trade. Moreover, Fair Trade is particularly effective when it is embedded in multidimensional development strategies. This is shown by a comparative study in comparing the effects of Fair

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1 <https://nocap.oeko-und-fair.de>

2 cf. <https://conflictfood.com/>

3 cf. <https://www.fairtrade-deutschland.de/service/presse/details/umsatz-mit-fairtrade-produkten-bei-26-mrd-euro-11802>

Trade with migration as an income strategy (cf. Nessel 2012: pp. 437). GEPA, the largest importer of Fair Trade food, also points out these connections<sup>4</sup>.

The positioning of the Fair Trade shops, the original and still important vehicle of Fair Trade, indicates that the movement acts as a political actor: „Fair Trade encompasses far more than just fair economic forms. The question of sustainability in all its forms is the subject of its interest. The perspective on migration is one way of broadening the range of fair trade issues. There are many different forms of migration and they are all part of the mosaic in answering the question of how we should best organize our world and our coexistence. It is therefore important that Fair Trade deals with the phenomenon of migration, arriving and setting off.“<sup>5</sup> (Tramer/Schröder 2018/20: 3).

We are therefore using this issue to take a look at the topic of labour migration from a development policy perspective and above all to give a voice to those affected. This work will be deepened and consolidated at a symposium that ENSA is planning for the coming year in collaboration with a number of partners. This aims to bring more perspectives than those available to us in this small publication, such as the various support structures, experts from administration, academia and civil society.

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Christopher Isensee



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4 cf. <https://www.gepa.de/home/tipps-themen/flucht-und-migration.html>

5 translated by Christopher Isensee

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## 1.2 International students in Mitteldeutschland - 5 Perspectives on arrival and global justice



Have you been to the campus of a German university (Hochschule) recently? If you speak with the students there, you will notice that many of them are „international students“ who completed their secondary education abroad. In fact, their numbers have been steadily growing for decades, and by the winter semester of 2022/2023<sup>1</sup>, they accounted for 13% of all students nationwide. However, most statistics are based not on where someone graduated from high school but rather on their nationality. These figures are even higher (16% for Germany), with Saxony-Anhalt showing a slightly higher proportion than other federal states.

To our own surprise, a closer look at the statistics reveals that less than a quarter of these students are nationals of other EU countries. Instead, they come from all over the world, with students from India, China, Turkey, and Syria leading the statistics.

Understanding this reality, however, requires more than just statistics; it calls for the voices of these - mostly young - people.

Their voices are seldom seen or heard, certainly outside universities and even within them. That's why, for this issue of our magazine, we reached out to STUBE Ost, a support program for students from the Global South studying in Saxony-Anhalt or Thuringia. This program is run by our esteemed colleagues at Diakonie Mitteldeutschland. We asked participants of STUBE to share their experiences.

We didn't expect much, as we were asking for unpaid contributions for a magazine published by a network that is unfamiliar to many of these students. Fortunately, we were proven wrong.

1 This figure refers to so-called Bildungsausländer, i.e. people with foreign school-leaving qualifications. More figures here: <https://mediendienst-integration.de/integration/hochschule.html> (in German).



We connected with five students and alumni, who share their stories and perspectives in the following pages.

As a reader, you will notice that these young people – as diverse as their voices are – do not conform to the dominant German expectations. They do not align with the expectation to constantly explain our own racism, to reject all notions of “integration,” or to agree with what we think is progressive. Nor do they meet the expectation of being simply „grateful” and pouring all their energy into „integration,” as many (mostly white) Germans expect of them. They form their own opinions and chart their own paths.

They are acutely aware of their often challenging starting position within the global power system and the obstacles they face upon arriving in Europe, Germany, or Central Germany – but they refuse to give up. Their awareness of global inequality and its colonial roots is combined with an understanding of the privilege that studying in Europe offers on the global job market. And it is often paired with an appreciation for the positive aspects of life in Germany.

Does this autonomy irritate Europeans, because it stems from their privilege, particularly in the white middle and upper classes, to ignore or deny these positive aspects?

Meanwhile, everyone else has always been forced to navigate between what is just, what is convenient, and what is feasible. A recurring phrase in the reports in this volume is this: studying in Germany is „a dream come true.”

What does this mean for „global justice,” „decolonization,” and „solida-

rity,” the guiding principles of our work as ENSA?

Again, we should avoid jumping to conclusions. In a position paper also published in this volume, we argue that promoting educational migration is one way to reduce inequalities in power and wealth by investing in the training of future professionals. Experience shows that these individuals later build cultural, intellectual, economic, and political bridges (often referred to as „brain gain”). They contribute either indirectly through substantial remittances or directly through their work upon returning to their home societies. In contrast, the competition for already trained professionals shifts the costs of education entirely to the home countries. This positive view of educational migration aligns with the long-established concept of the „triple win” often discussed in international migration and development discourse: the idea that migration, under the right circumstances, benefits the migrants themselves, their home societies, and the host regions. Therefore, the growing number of international students and their many positive experiences presented in this magazine are indeed a good sign.

However, this optimistic image must be placed in a larger context.

First, measures like enabling study opportunities cannot compensate for the many destructive consequences of Europe’s and Germany’s policies and imperial lifestyles. These are evident in the architecture of global trade, which heavily relies on cheap, exploited labor and resources from the Global South, alongside the technological and cultural dominance of the Global North. This is evident in selfish foreign

policies, as repeatedly demonstrated in anti-refugee „deals“ with authoritarian regimes, arms exports, and more. Positive developments, like investments in education, are often overshadowed many times over by these policies.

Second, Germany's agenda for educational migration is, at least partly, shaped by Eurocentric expectations. This happens when the idea of „brain gain“ overshadows individuals' self-determination, and we try to mold migrants – in this case, students – into agents of the change we desire. This is even more evident in debates about „international students,“ dominated by questions about how they can fill our labor shortages, how we can „keep“ them, and how we can compete for the „best minds,“ often laced with racist undertones about the „character“ of certain „nationalities.“ Instead, we hope this magazine provides more insight into what they, the students, want.

This exploitation-focused logic highlights a third point: the global competition for „skilled labor“ is deeply and obviously classist. The overwhelming majority of people in the populations from which the authors of this magazine come have no access to higher education. At the same time, educational migration is almost exclusively available for higher education. Opportunities for exchange in non-academic sectors are minimal, even for apprentices and workers in Germany, let alone for the economically and politically marginalized in the Global South.

Lastly, all the authors have faced challenges living in Germany.

They have encountered structural and everyday racism – one author notes

that it was in Germany where she first became aware of discrimination based on skin color. They have spent considerable energy, time, and money navigating bureaucratic procedures. They have learned to adapt to a foreign language and culture and have also faced isolation during the pandemic. Some write that they started „from scratch“ here, despite years of careers and high qualifications.

In many cases, they found support in their struggles, which is wonderful – but we should pay particular attention to instances where they were left alone and learn from them. Our „open society“ will remain under pressure for the foreseeable future. The best, most empathetic, and indeed most logical response to this is to open up further and do so better.

As you read the stories in this magazine, you will encounter resilient people from around the world who have overcome many challenges to be here and who aim to contribute to our shared world. They are aware of the importance of diverse and inclusive spaces, „strong institutional frameworks and ethical leadership,“ and they advocate for these principles. I hope this makes us humble.

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Niels Kropp



# 2 PERSPECTIVES

## 2.1 From Iran, Rasht to Jena: My Journey as a Foreign Student in Germany



### Introduction

Hello, my name is Saeedeh Rakhshan-noghlebari, and I hail from the vibrant city of Rasht in Iran. I am currently in my third semester studying Molecular Life Sciences at Friedrich Schiller University (FSU) Jena, located in the beautiful state of Thuringia, Germany. In this contribution, I aim to share my personal experiences and reflections on moving to and living in Jena, Thuringia, navigating the academic and cultural landscape here, and discussing how these experiences tie into the broader theme of global justice.

### Steps to Studying in Jena

The path to studying in Jena was challenging but rewarding. It began with researching universities that offered programs aligned with my academic goals. The University of Jena caught my

attention for its renowned Molecular Life Sciences program. After deciding on Jena, I embarked on the application process, which involved gathering and submitting various documents, such as academic transcripts and language proficiency certificates. Upon being accepted by the university, I then faced the task of applying for a student visa, which required additional paperwork and an interview at the German embassy in Iran.

### The Journey Begins

In July 2021, equipped with my acceptance letter and student visa, I set off for Germany.

Securing accommodation was a crucial step in my preparation for studying in Jena. I applied for student housing through Studierendenwerk Thüringen, ensuring I had a place to stay upon my arrival. This pre-arrangement significantly eased my initial transition. The dormitories in Jena offer various options, allowing students to choose according to their budget. I was fortunate to secure a spot in a university dormitory online before my arrival, which alleviated a major concern faced by many international students.

I shared a space with two roommates from India and Bangladesh, enriching our experience through cultural exchange. We shared common facilities like the toilet, bathroom, and kitchen, but I had my own private room with essentials like a bed, desk, and wardrobe. This setup offered a perfect blend of social interaction and personal privacy.

### Mentorship Program

One of the great supports offered to international students is the ability to request a mentor from the university. You can request a mentor from your own country, which in my case was particularly helpful as my mentor spoke my language. This mentor served not only as an academic guide but also as a practical helper in navigating various aspects of life in Germany. He was instrumental in aiding me with tasks such as opening a bank account, understanding and signing housing and university contracts, and generally settling into German life. You can request a mentor through the university website; their assistance is invaluable in navigating the often overwhelming administrative processes that international students face.

### Thoska Card Benefits

One of the most beneficial aspects of student life in Jena is obtaining the Thoska card. This card serves not only as an identity card but also as an all-access pass to public transportation throughout Thuringia. With the Thoska card, I could travel anywhere within the state for free, which was incredibly beneficial for both daily commutes and exploring the region. Additionally, the Thoska card allowed me to visit many places of interest in Thuringia for free

and receive discounts at various other sightseeing locations.

### Life in Jena

Living in Jena as a student offers a mixture of academic opportunities and cultural experiences. The city is accommodating with its array of shops, including ones tailored to Arab and Afghan communities, making it easier for international students like me to find familiar products and feel less like strangers.

### Digital Community and Support

There are numerous groups on Telegram where students organize events, exchange gifts, and support each other. These groups have been a crucial part of my social life here. Many local Germans also use Telegram to give away items they no longer need, which can be very helpful for students on a budget.

### Daily Routine

My days are typically filled with lectures, seminars, and group studies. Jena's vibrant cultural scene, featuring cafes, museums, and parks, provides a balanced lifestyle. I actively participate in various university clubs and attend cultural events, which have been instrumental in forming lasting friendships. Joining clubs such as the photography club, hiking group, or an academic society was a strategic move in building my social network.

### Personal Highlights: Inviting My Mother to Germany

One of the most heartwarming experiences was inviting my mother to visit Germany. The process involved writing

an informal invitation letter detailing the trip's purpose, providing proof of financial stability and her return to Iran, and making an appointment with the German Embassy in Iran to submit these documents and get a visa. This visit not only gave her insight into my life abroad but also brought immense comfort to me, significantly easing my feelings of homesickness.

### Navigating Jobs and Studies in Jena

Finding a job in Jena is straightforward with university resources. Job ads are posted on boards in faculty buildings and updated on the university's website and app. The annual job fair on campus is a great opportunity to connect with employers. Seasonal part-time jobs, especially in agriculture like weeding at Experiment Jena, provide practical experiences and financial support. These resources help students balance work with their academic schedules and engage with the local work culture.

### STUBE

#### Ost Diakonie Mitteldeutschland: Empowering International Students Through Local Internships

STUBE Ost Diakonie Mitteldeutschland specializes in supporting international students from developing countries by arranging internships within their home countries, which can be integrated into their theses or practical course units. This initiative includes financial support to cover necessary expenses, ensuring equitable participation for all students.

In addition, STUBE Ost organizes monthly seminars and periodic conferences across Germany, offering platforms for students to network and share experiences. These events are fully sup-

ported logistically, including accommodations and meals, to remove financial barriers and promote inclusive engagement.

This comprehensive support system not only enhances the educational experiences of students but also significantly boosts their professional development, improving their resumes and expanding their professional networks.

### Global Justice from My Perspective

To me, global justice means creating a fair environment where people from all backgrounds have equal opportunities for education and professional development. My experiences in Jena, Germany, have profoundly shaped this perspective, with the city and its university welcoming international students and workers through scholarships, language support programs, and integration initiatives.

However, as an Iranian student, the process is challenging. Acquiring a German visa can take up to two years, requiring proof of language proficiency, financial stability, a motivation letter, a university registration letter, and a rental agreement. Even with all these documents, visa approval is not guaranteed. Sanctions on Iran further complicate and increase the cost of transferring funds for university registration.

Upon arrival, annual renewals for student visas and residence permits require updated financial and academic records. Effective communication with authorities often necessitates German proficiency, presenting a significant barrier. After graduation, finding housing is a major concern. Students must leave dormitories and find new accommoda-

tion despite facing unemployment and a lack of savings, necessitating months of planning and daily efforts to secure a place.

### Justice for Refugees

In my daily interactions, especially at the university and within various social groups, I meet individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. While I could navigate the visa process and invite my mother, many refugees from Iran in Germany might lack such support and face significant challenges. Refugees often live in camps with inadequate facilities, poor hygiene, and legal rights violations. They are not allowed to work and are often placed in impoverished areas with high crime rates. Additionally, refugees face significant racism.

In contrast, as a student visa holder, while we students also struggle with language and cultural adaptation, our challenges are generally more related to academic pressures, such as passing exams and renewing visas, and learning German to enhance job prospects after graduation.

### How Iranians View the Journey of a Student in Germany

In Iran, pursuing higher education in Germany is seen as a privilege and a significant opportunity. It is often regarded as a pathway to better career prospects and personal growth. Families and society place high expectations on students to excel academically, leveraging Germany's advanced educational resources and research facilities.

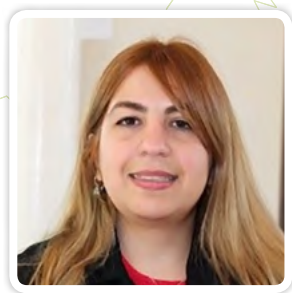
### Message to the Readers

As a foreign student in Jena, my journey has been filled with growth and learning. To other international students, my advice is to embrace new experiences and seek support when necessary. The community here is incredibly welcoming, offering numerous opportunities to flourish both academically and personally.

Upon my arrival at the University of Jena, I was included in a comprehensive welcoming program. The sessions provided guidance on selecting courses, using the university's digital platforms, and understanding academic regulations. We received resources about local sights, customs, and tips for securing part-time jobs. This introduction was crucial in smoothing my transition into university life.

I am grateful for this opportunity and hope my experiences can inspire others considering a similar path.

Thank you for joining me in this reflection on student life in Jena.



Saeedeh Rakhshannoghlebari

# 2 PERSPECTIVES

## 2.2 A Journey of Hope and Challenges:

### My Scholarship Experience in Erfurt



Winning the CSLA-DAAD scholarship<sup>1</sup> to pursue a master's degree at the Willy Brandt School of Public Policy in Erfurt was a dream come true. The anticipation and excitement of this opportunity were

overwhelming, promising a new chapter filled with academic growth and cultural exploration. However, the outbreak of COVID-19 postponed my scholarship for a year, testing my patience and resilience. When the green light finally came to start the process of moving to Germany, my enthusiasm was tempered by a visa delay, limited internet access due to a civil war in the northern part of Ethiopia, and missing a month of online classes. Yet, the journey from anticipation to realization has been a profound experience, intertwined with both hope and challenges.

Arriving in Germany on October 28, 2021, was a moment of triumph. The slightly cold October weather in Erfurt welcomed me, signaling the start of my new adventure. I moved into a shared flat with three students from Iran, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe, which provided an enriching exposure to diverse cultures and perspectives. One of the first tasks was registering at the city administration and Ausländerbehörde. As an Ethiopian, I was amazed by the efficiency and commitment of the German gover-

1 The Civil Society Leadership Awards (CSLA) are awarded by Open Society Foundations. Awardees can receive a scholarship by the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD), Germany's main funder of international exchange for students and scientists.



nment offices, which sparked a desire to develop strong institutional structures and ethical work systems back home.

Joining my classes a month later posed significant challenges. Our cohort consisted of 52 students from 32 different countries, creating a highly diverse learning environment. Unfortunately, missing the initial month of classes made it difficult to catch up, as my peers had already formed bonds and acclimated to the coursework. The struggle to catch up academically was compounded by my initial feelings of isolation and the need to integrate into the student community.

Moving to Erfurt, I had not thoroughly researched the region's history, culture, or social dynamics. My knowledge was limited to notable figures like former Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel and Adolf Hitler. Growing up in Ethiopia, I had never experienced discrimination based on skin color and was not conscious of racial issues. However, subtle acts of racism soon became apparent. Shopkeepers followed me in stores, and some white individuals would leave their seats when I sat next to them on public transportation.

The most harrowing experience occurred when I fell ill and was admitted to the hospital. The treatment I received from some nurses was so disheartening that I considered quitting school and returning to Ethiopia. However, the support and encouragement from a few classmates helped me persevere through this difficult time.

My scholarship journey in Erfurt highlights several critical issues related to global justice. Firstly, the delay caused by COVID-19 and the civil war in Ethio-

pia underscores the importance of equitable access to education and opportunities, irrespective of geopolitical and socioeconomic challenges. Scholarships like the CSLA-DAAD are crucial in bridging these gaps, providing students from developing countries with the chance to further their education and contribute to global development.

The cultural and racial challenges I faced in Erfurt reflect the broader issues of racial discrimination and social justice. In a globalized world, it is imperative to promote inclusivity and diversity, ensuring that individuals from all backgrounds can thrive without fear of discrimination. My experiences emphasize the need for educational institutions to foster environments that are not only academically enriching but also culturally sensitive and supportive.

Furthermore, witnessing the efficiency of German government offices has reinforced my belief in the importance of strong institutional frameworks and ethical governance. These are fundamental principles of global justice, as they ensure that public services are delivered effectively and equitably, benefiting all members of society.

Despite the challenges, I had the exciting opportunity to join various seminars organized by STUBE, which allowed me to meet students from different countries. This experience provided me with valuable insights into various universities and cities around the world, broadening my horizons and deepening my understanding of global academic and cultural landscapes. These interactions were not only intellectually stimulating but also fostered a sense of international camaraderie and collaboration, enriching my educational journey.



Another thrilling opportunity was volunteering for an organization called Africa Partners Initiative (API). I was involved in preparing the Africa Gala Night Conference, which focused on the theme „Africa’s Democratic Governance and the Resurgence of Military Interventions: The Socio-Economic and Political Implications.“ Through this process, I gained profound knowledge and practical experience in organizing significant events and addressing critical issues facing Africa. This experience was immensely rewarding, as it allowed me to contribute meaningfully to discussions on Africa’s future, leveraging my skills and passion for the continent’s development.

Finally, I would like to offer some tips for new students planning to move to a new place. Deeply researching and understanding the environment, history, people, and overall context of your new location is crucial for a smooth transition. Being well-informed helps you anticipate challenges and embrace new experiences with confidence. Additionally, maintaining a strong bond with family and friends serves as a vital support system, providing resilience and bolstering mental health. This network of loved ones offers comfort and encouragement, helping you navigate the inevitable ups and downs of adapting to a new environment. By being prepared and staying connected, you can make the most of your new adventure.

My scholarship experience in Erfurt has been a journey of hope and challenges. It has taught me resilience and highlighted the importance of global justice in education, social inclusion, and governance. Despite the hurdles, this journey has been transformative, providing valuable lessons and inspiring

a commitment to contribute to a more just and equitable world. By sharing my story, I hope to shed light on the realities faced by international students and the significance of fostering global justice in all its forms.

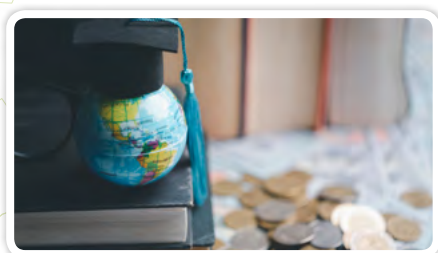
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Yodit Tamiru



# 2 PERSPECTIVES

## 2.3 A short view of an Nepali women who lived in Magdeburg



I am Muna KC Karki. I came to Germany in the year 2021 to study a masters in water engineering in Hochschule Magdeburg-Stendal. I am from Nepal and getting offers to study in Germany is a dream come true. I still remember the first day I landed in Berlin Airport, a completely different world, different faces and busy train station. I lived in Magdeburg for 3 years, a beautiful place, especially the Herrenkrug Hochschule area. I didn't do much research about Germany and I also realized in the beginning that I am alone and have to struggle. Although I was happy inside that I was studying the course that I wanted, all the stress from different sources - having a part time job, paying bills for the apartment, groceries etc. - was always and still is on my mind.

I got in touch with people from different countries in my course but due to COVID time, I couldn't become so

close to them. My life in Germany is like a blessing in some sense. I became sick in June 2021, 2 months after I came here. The first and main problem that I experience in Magdeburg is that most people speak only German and don't understand English. I was asked to bring a person who can speak German to get an appointment for an MRI. On that day I thought: Why can't I speak this language? Thankfully I found a doctor who can speak English and she became a hope for me at that time. I had surgery on my neck on 31st August and took tuberculosis medicine for 6 months. I am a student who just paid health insurance for 2 months and became sick. But I was surprised that my public health insurance paid all the fees throughout these health issues. After this phase of my life, I asked myself, what is life here? Am I German? Why am I getting the same facilities in a hospital as a German? Maybe they know the term "Global justice" here.

In my opinion, global justice is the equal distribution of anything important to individuals. Although I had trouble getting an appointment at first, I noticed the patients are being treated equally in the hospital of Magdeburg no matter where you come from or how you look or what your profession is.

The nurses tried really hard to make me understand by using a translator. We will have such good memorable moments if we get good responses from people. We might not get these in every case.

So, why do people migrate? Why do they live in their own country? Don't they love their own country? This is an emerging concern in the present context all over the world, including Europe. Some people like me who are from third world countries come to developed countries in search of education, job and good life. Some have to leave their country because of war and have no other options than becoming refugees.

I am from a third world country, which has no war and no opportunity for skilled manpower. Last year more than 660,000 people moved to other countries from my country in search of job opportunities, education or at least to fulfill basic needs.<sup>1</sup> I am serving as an example here. I have completed a bachelor in civil engineering in Nepal and also worked for a couple of years. I learned that the money that I was earning - without taking any leave - wasn't enough even for groceries to run my family. I am a licensed engineer in Nepal who struggled for about 17 years in education to earn that name and fame, but these things weren't enough. I came to Germany as I wanted to study for a specialised masters in water engineering. Now I realized that I have to start again from the bottom. There could be thousands of international students like me who came to chase their dreams and goals.

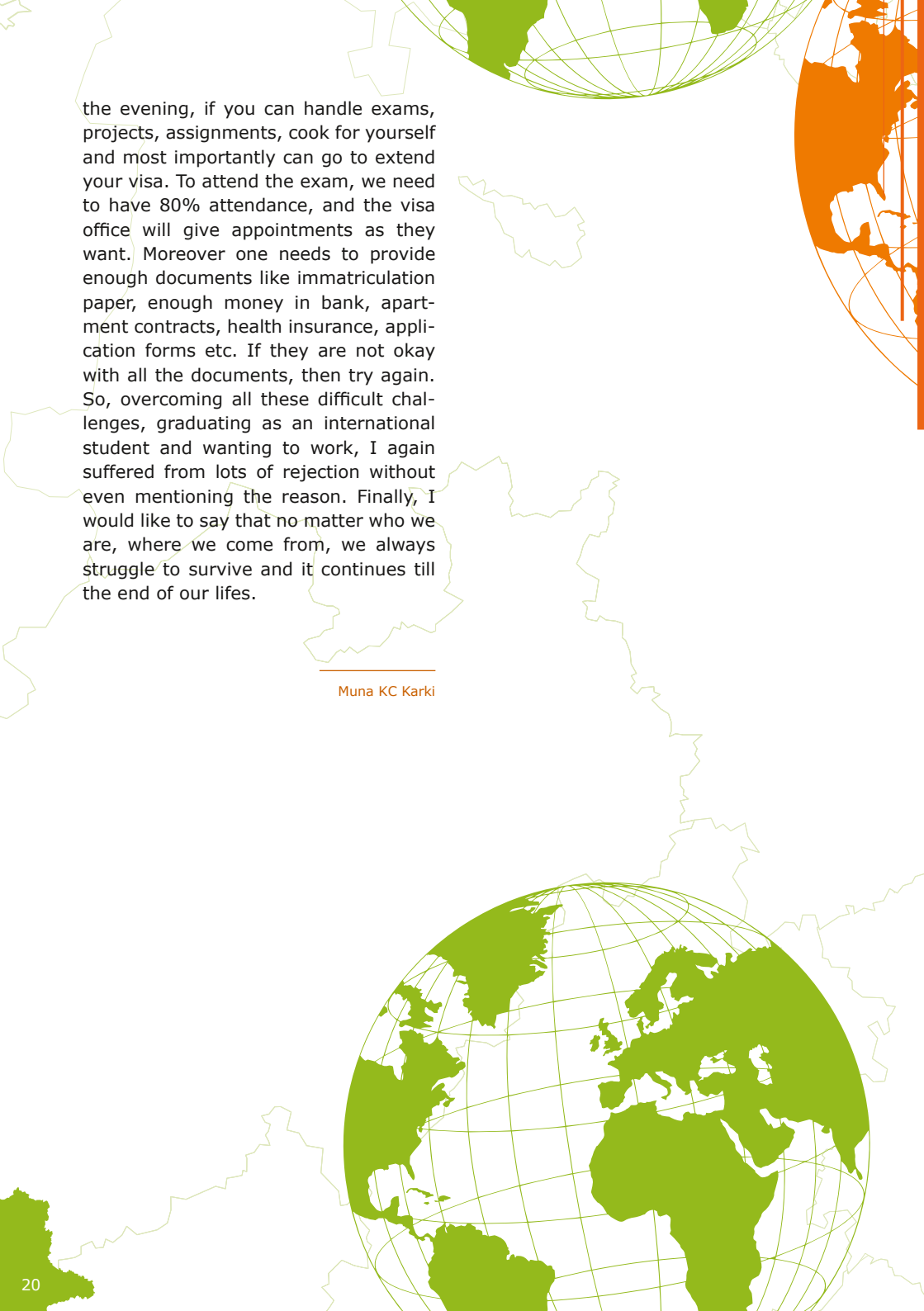
I am really not into politics and I don't know the recent migration politics of Germany but I go to some seminars and gatherings of German people too. As I listened to German people, I got to know that refugees and international people are getting money while at the same time they are not allowed to work and sustain themselves. They also added we are going to work 40 hours per week and pay high taxes. I am now in the middle thinking like, is global justice really happening in Germany? I worked as a student and even for a 'Hilfskraft' job I paid taxes and I felt bad about it as inflation is so high here these days.

I have recently graduated in April 2024 and am applying for a job according to my profession here now. My international master course was in English. Now the problem I am experiencing is to find a job as I am not proficient in German. I shared my problem with some of my friends and they told me that in Germany many employers give priority to German speakers more than anything. This is not just the problem of Germany but of most of the European countries. So what should the freshly graduated people do? Most of the people study to have a good job and secure life. Darwin says "Existence is to struggle" which is of course true. But in my point of view, an international student or immigrant really struggles more because they have started from zero again.

Is it really easy to study in Germany? One of my friends asked me. I replied, yes, of course if you can take class in the morning and work a part time job in

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1 For further information: <https://kathmandupost.com/money/2023/06/09/everyone-seems-to-be-leaving-the-country>



the evening, if you can handle exams, projects, assignments, cook for yourself and most importantly can go to extend your visa. To attend the exam, we need to have 80% attendance, and the visa office will give appointments as they want. Moreover one needs to provide enough documents like immatriculation paper, enough money in bank, apartment contracts, health insurance, application forms etc. If they are not okay with all the documents, then try again. So, overcoming all these difficult challenges, graduating as an international student and wanting to work, I again suffered from lots of rejection without even mentioning the reason. Finally, I would like to say that no matter who we are, where we come from, we always struggle to survive and it continues till the end of our lives.

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Muna KC Karki

## 2.4 Arrival in Germany

My name is Pauline Ngono Atangana, originally from Cameroon. I came to Germany in September 2013 to continue my studies. I had already completed a Bachelor's degree in Marketing and Communication with a specialisation in Advertising in my home country. After obtaining my first academic degree, I worked part-time as a sales and promoter assistant while attending German courses at the Goethe Institute in Cameroon.

Before we can start studying at a German university, we foreigners (or Cameroonians) must write and pass the DSH exam<sup>1</sup>. The Studienkolleg option is not available to us, as Cameroonian certificates are recognised by German universities.<sup>2</sup> At the beginning of my stay here, I therefore had to step on the gas with German courses. I was enrolled at various institutions and achieved my goal.

My older sister studied here and supported me at the beginning. But we

didn't live together because I was constantly travelling around Germany for German courses. This also meant that she bought a lot of things for me online and everything was always delivered to my home. That's when I started asking myself questions.

In Cameroon, I always bought everything in the marketplace or supermarket. E-commerce<sup>3</sup> was a new terrain for me. I wanted to learn more about it, which is how my enthusiasm for digitalisation was born. I wanted to understand the process of e-commerce and while searching for suitable information, I gradually discovered terms such as online marketing, online communication, digitalisation. As there was something to do with marketing and communication, I started looking for a suitable consecutive Master's programme.

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1 German language test for university admission.

2 For an overview of the necessary recognitions, see: [https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/pdf/ZAB/Zugnisbewertungen/Einzureichende\\_Dokumente/Kamerun\\_Zugnisbewertung\\_Dokumente.pdf](https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/pdf/ZAB/Zugnisbewertungen/Einzureichende_Dokumente/Kamerun_Zugnisbewertung_Dokumente.pdf) (in German)

3 Online trading

## The way to Anhalt University of Applied Sciences: My luck!

The 2015 winter semester marked my start at Anhalt University of Applied Sciences in Bernburg. A unique university surrounded by greenery, a beautiful campus consisting of old buildings with a touch of modernity, beautiful gardens: from spring onwards, it simply blooms and the meadows and forest around it are completely green.

After two semesters, I left Anhalt to take part in an Erasmus programme in France. As part of my degree programme, the third semester was intended for a stay abroad or an internship. After six successful months at the ESM-IAE School of Management (part of the University of Lorraine), I was back and was allowed to write my Master's thesis and then hold my colloquium in February 2018. After four semesters, my normal standard period of study, I finished with an overall grade of 2.8. This degree opened the doors to the digital world, which still fascinates me and which I continue to discover.

There are not necessarily failures behind a success story, but there are a lot of things that you would have wished for differently. I have told you about my career in Bernburg so roughly, but my integration at the university has not been so easy. Everyday life for students consists of lectures, group work and exams. There aren't that many foreigners at Anhalt University. Many consider the country to be very racist and dangerous for People of Color, which is not entirely true. As a foreign student, I found it difficult to find working groups though. This meant I sometimes had to do things on my own. Although we could count 100% on the support of our lecturers, the pressure was always

there. My personal attitude was always „instead of running after students who don't want to talk and work with me, I can just research and do my projects on my own". The good thing is that my lecturers allowed me to work on my own, but it wasn't easy because I had to write projects and assignments for other courses at the same time. This affects the quality of your work in the long term. Sometimes I read my old work and I think: well, I could have done that better!

As a foreigner, German students didn't want to work with me. They thought I didn't understand the subject matter because I simply couldn't express some words very well. My vocabulary is not that rich? German is not my mother tongue!

There were students who lived in Magdeburg or outside Bernburg and sometimes wanted the groups to meet at their homes to work. These were a few conditions that were not acceptable to me for financial and time reasons. My fellow students could all drive and almost all of them owned a car. The Anhalt University of Applied Sciences travel card didn't cover any travelling costs and the library was always open very late so that students could work on campus in safety. Why did I have to leave the campus to integrate into a group? No thanks.

I couldn't afford to book tables in the campus café „U-boot" or buy drinks in order to work. The students who accepted to work with me at some point can't say that I never delivered. I always did my part of the work properly and handed it in on time.

The realities of some foreign students that German students do not experience, do not even know and do not know

After my German courses, I worked hard for 6 months, saved money to be able to start my studies and finance them. Many foreign students do that here. I had enough money for my fixed costs during my time in Bernburg: rent, food, health insurance. But no money for extra expenses. In addition to this financial limitation, there is also pressure from the immigration authorities and there are also students who don't have enough money for everyday life. They therefore have to take on a part-time job, which is not so easy to find in Bernburg either. Fortunately, I was not affected by this situation.

German students need to know that in many ways we don't have the same backgrounds. We have challenges that they can't understand: There are many problems in this world that shouldn't even exist. Tolerance, resilience and understanding make it easier to resolve many conflicts. I am not someone who accepts everything in the name of success. I have helped many students with their French assignments at university, but not necessarily students on my degree programme. Each of us has something to offer regardless of skin colour or origin.

I did not take part in an international programme. The Master in Online Communication is open to both German and international students. I can't really talk about inequality here because I wasn't treated badly or underestimated by my lecturers. But the education and mentality of some students cannot be changed by the lecturers themselves. As a former student, I naturally feel part of

the change through my experiences, my story. I tell it today so that people can think differently. The two euros that some people spend on a coffee is a lot for some people who have to count every cent to survive.

Firstly, many foreigners come here because Germany gives us the opportunity to work and study at the same time. Our parents can't really support us financially. Secondly, children from rich families don't usually come to Germany to study. They go to the USA, Canada, where the fees are very high, but where they feel better as a person. It's completely legitimate for me to work for Germany or to do voluntary work, which I do in retirement homes.

My home country is a developing country where a lot still needs to be done. However, the younger generation has no influence on this. My family expects a lot from me, so I stay focused and focused on my goals.

What I would also like to say is that Anhalt University of Applied Sciences does not really have a department that helps foreign students find their first job and does not take any initiative to accompany foreign students on this path. It's not always so easy for us to even find an internship. In other colleges or universities, there are platforms where such information is available for graduates.

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Pauline Ngono Atangana  
translated by Niels Kropp



# 2 PERSPECTIVES

## 2.5 The Perception and Lived Experience at the Job Market in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany

In the scope of the current publication, I will provide my perception and expectations of job opportunities and my lived experience in contrast to my expectations before coming to Germany. I will reflect on the working environment as a foreigner residing in a foreign land, confronting new people with a new culture in the prospect of globalization. I will also discuss career prospects in Sachsen-Anhalt, migration, and the regional labour market.

My name is Lievin Manirakiza, and I come from Burundi. I study the International Social Sciences Masters Program at Theologische Hochschule Friedensau in Möckern Landkreis of Jerichower Land in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. Before coming to Germany, I completed a bachelor's degree in Physiotherapy and worked for four years in Burundi. My home working experience helped me adapt and integrate into a new working environment, facing new challenges. I was a health practitioner working in a health facility and on-site as a humanitarian agent caring for children living with disabilities. My working experience contributed to my adaptation to a working environment in Germany.



### Employment Trend and Opportunity

I cannot compare my country, Burundi, with Germany regarding job opportunities and career development. The German labour market has plenty of job opportunities encompassing skilled and non-skilled jobs. I remember when I arrived in Germany for the first time in March 2020, slightly two weeks before the coronavirus outbreak, I applied for



a residence permit. To my surprise, it came with a work permit enabling me to work 120 days along with my studies for a year. Though we could not go out for jobs, inside the campus we could receive something to do and get a little money as a student.

When I came to Germany, I expected to work as a Physiotherapist. Unfortunately, due to policy regulations, embracing my field was impossible. At least a non-skilled job was available to sustain a living. Instead, during the coronavirus pandemic, I received many skilled job offers (related to physiotherapy and social work) and non-skilled jobs in logistics companies.

Therefore in 2021, I could receive an outside campus job during summer break. I made the first contact with the job market with Randstad, an intermediate recruiting company; then, I was assigned a logistics job with HERMES in Haldensleben. In Hermes, the working environment was excellent, inclusive, and friendly. Later, I was employed with Amazon both in Osterweddingen and Helmstedt alternatively. Like Hermes, the working environment was good, inclusive, and pleasant to foreign employees.

I remember being employed for an extended period in logistics with DHL. As expected, the work environment was very different and could not be compared with that of Hermes or Amazon.

Moreover, according to my experience and search, Sachsen Anhalt used to have many job opportunities for students, both skilled and non-skilled. Nevertheless, we have observed something new since the beginning of this year, 2024, when many students

needed help finding job offers; it was not expected to happen. I cannot say why students could not be employed as they used to be. Still, it was because of the regional migration of people coming toward Germany who were attracted by the elevated salary (minimum wage elevated recently) and the presence of asylum seekers who could take full-time employment. Another incentive for attracting more workforce could be that Germany is known to have a solid social protection scheme and many other benefits when working in Germany.

### Challenges and problems

Working in Germany has been my dream, though there are challenges that I must circumvent. Those challenges exist even in my home country but on a different level. First, language skills are the gate to entering the German labour market. Second, the working environment is designed protectively so that foreign or non-German citizens can find a place to be. Non-Germany citizens include other Europeans and non-Europeans, including Asians, Africans, and South Americans.

However, tackling the challenge of language skills and integration into a culture and society should be based on understanding its language. Therefore, learning German is perceived to take much work. In my country, people can self-learn English, but learning German has been challenging. Some German native speakers cannot understand what I am saying here, but that is true. The good news is that German language comes quickly whenever you decide to learn it seriously.

I have struggled to find a language school, though plenty are in Magde-

burg. I have visited more than three schools, but they could not pick me up because they required a paper from BAMF<sup>1</sup>, which they could not even explain how I could get it. Lack of information has been problematic, as it used to be for others. The last school I visited was Oskar Klämmer Schule. They also asked me for the same paper, and as I could not provide it, they helped me apply for it.

In general, I can say that some of the school's employees can be othering people by skin colour when not providing adequate information or help when necessary. When you cannot communicate in German, you tend to be rejected and people avoid you; though you may have other capacities and can help, it sounds rude. The information regarding the BAMF sponsorship for the integration course was off my side when needed most.

The second issue concerns the working environment, which I perceive as inclusive and free from othering and discrimination. When one starts the job, before the contract is signed, employers explain that there is no place for racism, bigotry, and other related issues. Unfortunately, some team leaders or colleagues are not friendly, which could make your working environment hell. Imagine working in a logistics company like DHL with other people doing the same work, from Monday to Friday, and being allocated where you must lift more than 25kg without a break for 6 hours. To your astonishment, you can leave the workplace very worn out at the end of the day while your colleague of a different colour is not worn out at

all. If you try to speak out, they do not hear your voice. As I said, the working policy can be good, but its implementation is far from the reality. In brief, the workforce inside companies is treated on different bases depending on persons you work with.

### Addressing issues to reflect global solidarity and social justice

Concerning global solidarity and social justice, everyone, regardless of where she or he lives, should remember that tolerance and a friendly social environment create a positive mindset in international people residing among them.

History tells us Germany is a country of proud people with much discrimination aspects and a home of racism because of what Hitler did to the global nations. I remember when being admitted to study in the International Social Sciences master's program people told me two important things I have already verified since I live in Germany. First, I will face othering and discrimination, and second, after I graduate, I will be open to many job opportunities, whether in Germany or at the international scale, because Germany is recognized to hold the best education system.

To my surprise, I find different realities and unexpected things for the first assumption regarding othering and discrimination. Little things can happen when you cannot communicate in the German language because there are still people who do not feel well to see other nations among them and consider themselves as real Europeans. In that case people of different colours,

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1 Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge

especially Africans are being underestimated. But in General, this country protects everybody regardless of their skin colour. When Police asks you something, they do it respecting the law of the land; that is my experience. Other people might have different views.

I have never worked in a skilled job in Germany, but this is what I expect after graduation. In unskilled jobs, colleagues can complicate ones life by overloading your job assignment. But most of the time, a department leader with a global mindset, because she or he has travelled outside Germany, can try their best to make you comfortable. Nevertheless, colleagues' challenges are often everywhere; here in Germany, it may be due to language problems or racism, but also, in my country and other countries, it happens. For example, where I worked, I could be hated or challenged by colleagues because of my performance at work, my regularity, and many other positive or negative aspects related to the placement. For instance, on Labor Day, the employer can reward you just because you have been an exemplary employee, which can raise issues among workers.

My study course has created a space for understanding and integrating into new cultures; its application started in the school environment, my daily routine in the different workplaces and how I relate to other people from different cultures, religions, and languages. It opened my eyes to bringing contributions to global solidarity and social justice.



## „Skilled labour immigration“ in Saxony-Anhalt from a development policy perspective

In November 2021, the now ended German government coalition promised a „new beginning“ and a „paradigm shift“ in migration policy in its **coalition agreement**: „With an active and regulatory policy, we want to shape migration in a forward-looking and realistic way“.<sup>1</sup> Various associations and organisations have since commented critically on this announcement and accompanied its (non-)implementation.<sup>2</sup> This paper follows on from these comments and outlines what needs to be done for a genuine paradigm shift in Saxony-Anhalt.

The reform of labour migration is at the centre of the „active“ policy. The background to this is the much-discussed shortage of skilled labour, which will be almost impossible to combat without immigration to Germany. This is all the more true for Saxony-Anhalt, which has experienced a considerable decline in population since reunification. For this reason, business organisations such as the **German Chamber of Industry and Commerce** have long been calling for more unbureaucratic, practical ways

of recruiting people who want to work in Germany. The immigration of skilled labour is being discussed at various levels in Saxony-Anhalt, not least in view of the Intel settlement in Magdeburg. On the part of the state, the topic has been set in principle (e.g. **European and internationalisation strategy** and **foreign trade concept**) and discussed within the framework of the **skilled labour pact** (Fachkräftesicherungspakt) among other things. The state's **development cooperation guidelines** also express the hope that migration can be organised for the benefit of all.

From the perspective of global ‚development‘ and human rights, however, the debate is not appropriately holistic. This threatens to repeat the cardinal error of past decades in migration policy: a policy from a German perspective that ignores the realities of migrants' lives and their societies of origin. Instead, three key aspects need to be taken into account in order to set the right framework conditions.

1 „Dare more progress. Alliance for Freedom, Justice and Sustainability“, p. 129f.

2 For example, **Pro Asyl**, the **Expert Council for Integration and Migration (SVR)**, **Diakonie**, the **Integration Media Service**, the umbrella organisation of migrant organisations in eastern Germany (**DaMost**) and many more (all in German).

## Migration policies in an unequal world

Today's globalised world is characterised by brutal inequality in living conditions and opportunities, as well as political and economic instability. A person's social context and place of birth still determine how much attention is paid to their life. Migration is also an individual and collective reaction to these conditions. The complexity of the migration process was emphasised in the report by the [Expert Commission on the Causes of Flight](#) set up by the German government in 2019. In this situation, migration can only be „controlled“ to a limited extent, contrary to the wishes of many governments.

Refugees and ‚irregular‘ migrants will therefore continue to be a factor in labour market policy that is difficult to calculate. Unfortunately, the next crises and wars will come. Taking in people in emergency situations remains a legal, political and moral duty that requires many more regular and safe channels. These people are always also labourers and skilled workers who should be supported more than they have been in the past. They need opportunities to work and to switch between different residence permits. A holistic migration policy should address the issue of skilled labour immigration in a global context. „Needs-based immigration“ in the narrower sense, as declared as a goal in the country's European and internationalisation strategy, for example<sup>3</sup>, will not be possible in compliance with international legal obligations. The practical challenges associated with this are considerable. It is best to face them head on now.

## Migration in the spirit of One World

Organisations such as the German Association for Development Policy and Humanitarian Aid (VENRO) have long called for [migration policy to be considered in terms of development policy](#). Ideally, migrants, regions of origin and destination regions should benefit from migration („triple win“). It is therefore to be welcomed that the stakeholders of the Skilled Labour Pact refer positively to the [standards of the International Organisation for Migration for the ethically responsible recruitment of migrant workers](#). However, these are non-binding and need to be enshrined in law – analogous to the Supply Chain Act. Under no circumstances should development cooperation be used as a means of pressurising third countries to cooperate on deportations and migration prevention, [as the EU member states are currently striving to do](#) and as the state government is also calling for<sup>4</sup>. Rather, the aim is to shape the framework conditions in such a way that migration is socially sustainable and strengthens the exchange between regions of origin and destination.

Active recruitment for certain occupational groups should be accompanied by a constant analysis of local labour markets in order to prevent gaps being created (brain or care drain). Instead of simply poaching people who are already well-trained and thus burdening the countries of origin entirely with the costs of training, the qualification of future workers should be significantly increased. Scholarships and training partnerships, for example, serve this purpose. Finally, it is crucial that these measu-

3 European and internationalisation strategy p. 29, Guidelines for development cooperation p. 14.

4 European and internationalisation strategy p. 57.

res are socially integrated. Regional, city, university and school partnerships that connect the old and new homes of newcomers and are revitalised by independent partnership initiatives are an important starting point here. These are still rare in Saxony-Anhalt. Existing experiences, for example in the town twinning of Wernigerode and Hôi An, should be utilised and strengthened.

a realistic view of the local and global context of migration. This is complex. Therefore, the political strategy cannot be left to individual ministries. It should be developed on a cross-departmental basis and with the decisive involvement of business, science and civil society if we want to do justice to all the people living here and those who are yet to come.

### People arrive

Germany is a country of immigration. It was never or is never simply 'labour' that comes here. It should be obvious: They have always been self-determined people, with their fears and dreams, their desire to belong. For many decades, politics and society in Germany have publicly denied this reality and a substantial proportion still do today. People who come here to work feel this, not least in their dealings with local authorities. If people are to come and stay, there needs to be a radical reform of official structures and cultures, especially the immigration authorities (Ausländerbehörden), which are known to be chronically overburdened. There needs to be a significant increase in the promotion of projects for genuine encounters, cosmopolitanism and anti-racism. Institutional support is needed for actors who have been doing this work for a long time under precarious conditions. Last but not least, credible signals are needed on issues such as naturalisation and voting rights.

A paradigm shift in migration policy that organises immigration in a sustainable, globally responsible way that is close to the realities of life for those involved has not yet taken place. The beginnings of this can be recognised. However, a real new beginning requires

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Niels Kropp &  
Christopher Isensee



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