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#### **steps Top Issue: Saving energy**

The biggest energy consumers in the household are the heating system, refrigerators, stove/oven and electronic devices (PC/Internet, TV, game consoles, etc.).

#### **Our tips for saving energy:**

- ▶ Reduce heating temperature and ventilate properly.
- ▶ Always put a lid on the pot when cooking and use circulating air in the oven.
- ▶ In the refrigerator, 7 °C in the upper compartment is usually enough.
- ▶ Always fill up the washing machine and wash at 30-40 °C.
- ▶ Always switch off lamps when not in use, replace old light bulbs with LEDs.
- ▶ Electronic devices: switch on sleep mode during breaks or switch off devices completely (also the stand-by function!).
- ▶ Driving: walk short distances, slow down on the motorway and reduce the use of air conditioning.

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#### **steps Report: Tigray, the forgotten war in Africa**

- ▶ A UN report describes the humanitarian crisis in Tigray.
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- ▶ Half a million people have already died in the conflict.
- ▶ War crimes are being committed by all warring parties.

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- ▶ There are executions and assassinations, especially of women.
- ▶ Women have practically no rights anymore, have no access to higher education or work.
- ▶ Afghan refugees in Idstein report on their relatives back home.

#### **Ukraine: Many traumatized war victims**

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- ▶ A commentary on bureaucracy on a form called something like "Declaration on the property tax assessment factor" citizens have to fill and submit to the tax office.
- ▶ A list of strange formulations and very long "tapeworm words" from the German bureaucracy.
- ▶ A collection of field reports and suggestions for improvement from our readers.

**steps knowledge: Skin colour**

Our early ancestors used the pigment melanin to protect their skin from harmful UV rays. When they left Africa and settled in Eurasia, they found less sun there. However, since some sun is required for the formation of vitamin D in the skin, the skin color in northern latitudes became pale again. ATTENTION: Dark-skinned people do not get enough light in our latitudes and often suffer from a severe vitamin D deficiency and need vitamin D substitution. This also applies to heavily veiled women or in winter.

**steps Health: Tuberculosis**

Tuberculosis is an infectious disease that decomposes the lungs and can cause serious damage to internal organs even years later. It occurs more frequently in the countries of origin of our refugees and migrants than here. Anyone who coughs for a particularly long time and suffers from night sweats should be examined. Treatment is difficult and takes a long time, but it can be done successfully. Once treatment has started, it should not be interrupted. Anyone who had to interrupt their treatment due to flight should contact a doctor immediately.

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- ▶ **A report on the voluntary Fire fighters in Idstein.**
- ▶ **Learning mentor coordinator Axel Kalb presents the work of the Idstein learning mentors.**  
35 volunteers help children in four Idstein schools with their homework, especially with learning German.  
**The need is great and new helpers are welcome!**

**steps society: Women's rights in danger**

- ▶ In many regions and countries of the world, women still have no rights.
- ▶ They have to veil themselves, are not allowed to go out on the streets without a male escort. They are excluded from education and employment.
- ▶ They are mistreated and beaten.
- ▶ In Iran and Afghanistan, women are currently particularly oppressed.
- ▶ Muslim women who want to live a self-determined life are also threatened with violence in Germany.

**steps Knowledge: Democracy**

**German Democracy has its origins in the National Assembly in Frankfurt of in 1848.**

- ▶ The first democratic elected parliament occurred after the founding of the **Weimar Republic in 1918.**
- ▶ The basis of our democratic society and state is the **Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany of 1949.**
- ▶ **Citizens elect their representatives to the parliaments and governments** of the local, state and federal governments.
- ▶ **Voting means active participation in politics, voting is a civic duty!**

**steps German**

- ▶ **German courses for refugees**  
Free German courses for refugees have been available since 2014. Currently, 18 volunteer teachers offer a wide range of courses from A1 to B2. For contact details, see box on page 14!
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### Steps Tips

#### Paperland Part 3: Changing the electricity supplier

There are many things to consider when switching your electricity supplier:

- ▶ First compare the prices and conditions of different suppliers.
- ▶ Important are terms, price guarantee and what is included in the price.
- ▶ Cheap online companies often do not have good customer service.
- ▶ Pay attention to notice periods.
- ▶ There is a special right of termination in the event of price increases during the term of the contract.

For more information: [www.verbraucherzentrale.de](http://www.verbraucherzentrale.de)

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This time searching for famous people

## Saving energy

### How to get through the winter well

*(sbo)* **Reduce consumption and save energy - but how? There are many ways, and even many small measures help to save costs.**

Gas, oil, petrol and electricity have become more and more expensive since the spring due to the war in Ukraine. Gas now even costs more than three times as much as last year. Since food and many other products have also become more expensive, the aid from the government will not be enough to plug the hole in our wallets. So we have to save energy where we can. How can we reduce our consumption and save money?

#### Identify the energy monsters!

By far the largest share of energy costs in a household goes to **heating**. According to the Federal Environment Agency, it is about **70%**. Oil or gas is usually needed for this. This is also where you can save the most.

But there are also energy monsters in electricity consumption. An average 4-person household consumes between 2,600 and 4,000 kilowatt hours of electricity a year. A large part of this goes to communication devices such as telephones, mobile phones and computers, as well as televisions and electronic games. **Did you know that a powerful gaming computer consumes around 300 watts and more?** The consumer advice centre has calculated that three and a half hours of gaming a day can add up to 380 kilowatt hours a year. **With this amount of electricity, you can operate your washing machine 500 times!** "If the internet were a country, it would be in third place in terms of electricity consumption worldwide," can be read at Check 24.

Cooking, lighting and household appliances also consume a lot of electricity.

#### So how can we save energy?

- ▶ See page 2 for our savings tips.

*Picture caption:*

*You can also save money on Christmas lighting: LED instead of standard lamps, and switch off the tree lights and light garlands at night.*

### steps in brief and translated

- ▶ Summary of all articles in German, English and also Ukrainian.
- ▶ The Arabic summaries can be found in full on page 23.
- ▶ The entire German edition, a complete translation of all articles in English and the summaries in Arabic and Ukrainian are also available online at <https://steps-fhi-ev.de/steps-ausgaben/>

## Imprint

### steps

*Multicultural magazine for neighbourly togetherness  
for immigrants and all of us in Idsteiner Land and the surrounding area*



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## Heating and hot water

**Bleed the radiators:** If it gurgles, there is air in the system and the radiators do not get warm properly - this consumes more energy.

**Don't just heat the back of the sofa:** The heating must be free to the front, so there should be no furniture or curtains in front of it.

**Set the thermostat correctly:** Level 5 corresponds to 28 degrees! Every degree less consumes about 6 % less energy. In rooms that are not used or in the bedroom, 16-18 degrees is quite sufficient. It is better to dress warmer. In addition, the air becomes too dry at high room temperatures.

**Turn down the heating** when you are not at home (but not lower than 16 degrees so that mould does not form).

**The most important rule:** ventilate the room! Open all windows fully several times a day and ventilate for a few minutes with a draught. This way you have fresh air in the whole flat without the walls cooling down. This saves a lot of heating energy.

## Cooking

**Always put a lid on the pot** when cooking or frying. This increases the pressure and the food cooks faster. When cooking eggs, vegetables and potatoes, **1-2 cm of water in the pot is sufficient** and fewer vitamins are lost.

**Hot water for cooking** can also be heated in a kettle. This is faster and uses less electricity.

**Baking with convection** uses about 15 % less energy than top and bottom heat!

**Preheating is not necessary** for most dishes.

**You can turn off the hobs** and oven shortly before the end of the required time, the residual heat is usually sufficient for the final cooking.

## Refrigerators

**7 degrees C in the upper compartment is sufficient.** If the temperature is set just one degree lower, the appliance consumes 6% more electricity! Only use lower temperatures if you need to keep quickly perishable foods such as minced meat cool. These should always be stored at the bottom of the fridge.

**The freezer** should be set to -18 degrees C.

Do not leave the doors of the refrigerators open for long.

If ice has formed in the freezer or upright freezer, the appliance should be defrosted.

## Dishwasher

**Fill it as full as possible** and use the Eco programme.

## Washing machine and dryer

**The appliances should always be made full.**

For normal laundry, washing temperatures of **30 or 40 degrees C** are quite sufficient; this is also gentle on the laundry.

**Dry clothes on the line** instead of in the dryer.

## Electronic devices

**TV, Internet, mobile phones, computers and PC games have a lot of potential for savings.** Does the TV have to be on when you're not watching it?

**Playing games on the computer consumes a lot of electricity.**

Internet surfing with a tablet or smartphone consumes less energy than with a PC or laptop.

When working on the PC, switch to **sleep mode** when you take a short break. For longer breaks, it is better to shut down completely.

**Lowering the brightness of monitors and screens** can also save a few kilowatt hours.

Very important: the standby function also consumes electricity - so always disconnect the devices completely from the mains.

You can also save if you **give your WIFI a break at night** and also switch it off when you go to sleep. The smartphone can go into flight mode.

## Lighting

Replace old incandescent and halogen lamps with LED lamps - these use up to 90% less electricity!

Always switch off lights where they are not needed.

## Driving

Even if there is no speed limit in our country, **it is better to drive slower**. According to the ADAC, a medium-sized car on the motorway consumes up to two thirds more fuel at 160 km/h than at 100 km/h.

**Avoid short journeys:** to the bakery, the doctor's or the local bank, leave the car at home and walk more often.

**The air conditioning in the car can cost up to 1.5 litres of extra fuel** per 100 kilometres - you can save fuel here if you only use it when really needed and only at a slightly reduced temperature and power.

## How to get children interested in saving energy

**Explain to your children why we all need to save energy.**

**Make a game with them:** let them look for energy consumers in the home. Whoever finds the most sources wins.

**Ask them for their ideas** on how to save energy.

There are books explaining the topic well to children.

## Here's what our readers have to say about saving energy:

**"We will no longer walk around the flat with a T-shirt on this winter**, but set the heating lower and put on warm clothes.

To save petrol, you can also go to work by bus or train. In Idstein, you can also do a lot of things on foot. At the moment we pay €110 for electricity every month. If it gets much more expensive, we'll have a problem. But so far we haven't had any news about an increase in our electricity bill. We have changed all the lamps to LED and we also always turn off all the appliances, including the stand-by function, when we don't need it. I hope this will help us save a bit of electricity."

*Fazel Haidari*

**"You can save a lot of electricity with proper use of electronic devices.** I turn off my smartphone and laptop when I am not using them and switch them off completely at night if possible. This not only saves electricity, but also conserves batteries. The TV should not be on all day either. It's also important to disconnect the devices from the power completely, so also switch off the stand-by function."

*Constance Thomas*

**"We already pay 200 euros a month for heating.** But we don't know yet how much we will have to pay when the new bill comes. Maybe the new bill will come in November or December. We are three people - two adults and one child. We are trying to save energy everywhere and have not turned on the heating yet. If it gets even colder, we will heat less than last year and dress warmly. We will also save electricity."

*Saba*

**"We save energy on hot water because we take shorter showers now and we don't take them every day.** We turn off the tap in between soaping. We haven't turned on the heating until October. When we have had visitors, we always turn off one of the light bulbs from the ceiling lamp in the living room to save electricity. We now only do our laundry once a week. We turn on the dishwasher every two days. We cook only once a day."

*Shirzad family*

**"In Afghanistan, many people have no heating at all.** When it gets cold in winter, everyone sits around the korsi (or sandali). This is a low table over which thick blankets are placed that reach down to the floor. There is an electric heater under the tabletop. You turn it on for a short time until it is warm underneath, and everyone puts their legs underneath. This heater doesn't need much electricity, but the warmth under the blanket lasts for a long time. We're thinking about getting a Korsi, too.

But in any case, we'll set the heating lower and dress warmly this winter!"

*Rahman Azizi*

**"The energy-saving method we do at home, for example, with hot water:** since heating water consumes a lot of energy, we changed the shower head and we take short showers. Similarly, when heating, we make sure that we open all the windows wide at the same time when ventilating and close them again after a few minutes."

*Tesfamichael Kiflom*

**„Use less energy when using the communication devices - that's how I save electricity:**

I always take the chargers out of the socket. It is necessary to disconnect the chargers of phone, laptop, tablet, smartphone and other devices from the sockets otherwise they will continue to consume electricity even if they are not connected to a device as the circuit will continue to run through them. I always switch off appliances like TVs, computers, printers, stereos completely. If they are left in standby mode, they still consume electricity.  
I use energy-saving light bulbs, which consume two-thirds less electricity than incandescent bulbs."  
*Ahmad Aldahik*

## Tigray - the forgotten war in Africa

**Where there is no news, the world does not know what is going on. That does not change the fact that a humanitarian disaster of epic proportions is taking place in the Horn of Africa.**

*(sbo)* Tedros Ghebreyesus - Dr T., as they call him - is the head of the World Health Organisation and comes from Ethiopia, or more precisely: from Tigray. A cruel war is still raging there. According to estimates of a study by the University of Ghent in Belgium, half a million people have already perished - killed by bullets and bombs, starved to death or died due to lack of medical care. "Dr. T." commented on the situation in his home country in a press conference at the end of August. The province of Tigray was completely sealed off and there was no way for him to contact his relatives either. He does not even know who is still alive. The blockade of electricity, internet, mobile phone and monetary transactions, imposed by the Ethiopian central government at the beginning of the civil war more than two and a half years ago, continues, making it impossible for people to contact their relatives outside Tigray or to receive money and aid from them.

### UN investigators report war crimes

In recent months, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has repeatedly highlighted the catastrophic situation in the civil war zone. In September, Commission Chair Kaari Betty Murung said: "The humanitarian crisis in Tigray is shocking, both in terms of scale and duration. The widespread denial and obstruction of access to basic services, food, health care and humanitarian assistance is having a devastating impact on the civilian population and we have reason to believe that this amounts to a crime against humanity." She said she also had reasonable grounds to believe that the central government in Addis Ababa was using starvation as a method of warfare. She appealed to the Ethiopian government to restore basic services and ensure full humanitarian access. For their part, the Tigrayan armed forces should ensure that humanitarian organisations can operate unhindered."

### All warring parties violate human rights

Since the beginning of the conflict, there have been rapes and crimes of sexual violence on a "staggering scale", according to the report. Tigrayan women and girls have been targeted with particular violence and brutality by Ethiopian and allied Eritrean forces and regional militias. Commission member Radhika Coomaraswamy commented, "Survivors of sexual violence in northern Ethiopia have suffered horrific crimes, but we fear we have only uncovered the tip of the iceberg." However, United Nations investigators also found evidence of war crimes and human rights violations by Tigrayan forces, reporting extensive killings of Amhara civilians, rape and sexual violence, and looting and destruction of civilian property in Kobo and Chenna in August and September 2021.

### Is the world deliberately looking the other way?

In her "Zeit" column in September, Andrea Böhm calls the civil war in Ethiopia currently "by far the worst war in the world". It simply cannot be allowed "that a region with around 5.5 million people has been largely cut off from all supplies for almost two years", without internet, mobile phone network or local press. And so the world doesn't notice - or doesn't want to notice...?

### An interesting comparison:

Vladimir Putin in March 2022 on the war of aggression against Ukraine: "special military operation".  
Abiy Ahmed in 2020 on the war against Tigray province: first "law-enforcement operation" - here meant as operation to restore law and order), later "military operation".

## Afghanistan: No jobs, no income, no women's rights - and 95% of the people do not have enough to eat

(sbo) Although a humanitarian and social catastrophe is currently taking place in Afghanistan, the country in the Hindu Kush rarely makes it into the headlines at the moment. Unless there is another brutal attack like the one on the Kaaj Education Centre in the Dasht-e-Barchi region of Kabul province on 30 September. This was one of many other attacks against women, minorities and civilian institutions across Afghanistan and resulted in at least 19 deaths and dozens injured - including many schoolgirls. This is Afghanistan after more than a year of Taliban rule, which, by the way, is still not recognised by any other state in the world:

- ▶ A large part of the population is starving, according to a UN report 95 percent of the estimated 39 million inhabitants do not have enough to eat.
- ▶ 15 years of economic growth have been wiped out in one year - per capita income has fallen back to the level of 2007.
- ▶ Many have lost their jobs. Women in particular have hardly any opportunity to pursue a profession and girls are only allowed to go to school up to grade 6 - this does not exist in any other country in the world.
- ▶ Women also run the risk of being abused if they leave the house without a male companion.
- ▶ The UN documented a total of 160 extrajudicial executions of former security forces and government employees by the Taliban between 15 August 2021 and 15 June 2022, as well as 56 cases of torture and 170 arbitrary arrests of former government employees. Relatives of people who had worked for the former government or security forces are also at risk. And these are only the officially known cases.

**Refugees from different provinces in Afghanistan report how their relatives are doing back home. They wish to remain anonymous for security reasons; the names are known to the editors.**

**A family from Herat** is very worried about their parents and siblings. "My brother has already been arrested several times by the Taliban, and my parents have only been able to get him released for ransom," reports the father of the family. "Many have no work, and those who don't have a business or agriculture don't know how to feed their families." His wife adds, "It is worst for the women. It's even worse than during the first Taliban rule, because women have had a better time for the last 20 years, when they could learn, study and work. And now that dream has been shattered. Now they practically cannot go out of the house." They have relatives who are educated and also speak perfect English, but now have no jobs, especially if they worked for the former government or the foreign armies. One cousin, a women's rights activist, fled to Iran with her children after the Taliban vandalised her office. She is part of the group that has received an acceptance letter from Germany and is now trying to organise her departure from Iran. "The Taliban are also pressuring people, stealing their food and anything else they can use," the family continues. "Those who have their own field can survive - and feed their neighbours in the village at the same time."

The parents and siblings of the family mother have been living in Turkey for four years. Three of the siblings went to school there, but despite passing their final exams, they did not receive a certificate and therefore cannot do any training or study, they say. Until now, the family lived on the money generated by the sale of farmland and the harvest income, but since the Taliban came to power, the relatives from Herat can no longer send money abroad. "My father had fought against the Taliban and was wounded," the family mother reports, "He doesn't speak Turkish and is also too sick to work. There is no support from the Turkish state. Only a sister who has found work in a restaurant can earn a little money."

**Fighting is still going on in the mountains of Pandshir and Andarab**, although the Taliban have now taken power there too. A family from this province reports about their relatives who fled to Kabul. They tell of looting and killings. "Our family fled to Kabul because of this," says the father of the family. "My brother is hiding from the Taliban, who have already come looking for him. They say if he does not surrender voluntarily, they will kill him. My sister is terrified of the Taliban and has become so sick over it that she had to go to hospital. She is only 25 years old. An uncle who also fled to Kabul is living in a tent with his family because he has no place to live, no job and no money."

**A family from a town in Kabul province** says their relatives fled to Iran. Friends and acquaintances from their home country report that many have neither work nor income, and that **there are even families who sell their children to the Taliban** because they otherwise have no money for food.

## Spotlight from the war in Ukraine:

*(hpb)* **A physiotherapist known to us who helps in Ukraine with Doctors Without Borders writes:**

"... Here in the rehabilitation institute ... there are particularly many amputations (often also double on both legs or arm and leg) and other high-grade injuries, in addition to the psychological war traumas that one would not even like to imagine. Hence the second component (psychosocial support), which of course also has to take root first (fighters who have become hard from the front). It is not uncommon for those affected to drift into alcoholism or other addictions. The country will have to deal with all this for many years..."

Pages 6 - 7

steps Opinion

## That's no way to go digital!

Thoughts about forms and other annoyances

*A commentary by Steffi Bobrowski*

I have a severe allergy against forms. To be honest: I get pimples by now just seeing a form! And if I have to fill one out (which happens quite often), I only do it between Monday and Friday. The weekend is my form-free time.

The fact that the Roman Empire didn't go under because of its already rampant bureaucracy is probably because they didn't have paper yet, only clay tablets, and they couldn't print forms yet. We do not have this problem here today (unfortunately).

All those who have helped migrants on their way through the asylum bureaucracy in recent years could write a book about their experiences and know how quickly a thick file folder is full. Especially the refugees from Ukraine, who are used to the digital age, are amazed that they have to enter the same data in page-long forms over and over again - even if they go to offices of the same authority (e.g. the foreigners' office and the migration service, which both belong to the district administration). But even the "normal" bureaucracy that we all have to deal with in Germany is... well, not normal. The language in which official letters and forms are written is also not normal. It's not only migrants who have a hard time with the cumbersome terms and phrases.

### **The tax office is starting a project...**

Because I don't have the space to write a whole book about it here, I will only describe one example: Sometime in spring I received a letter from the tax office. They informed me in detail on three pages about the reform of the property tax and that I should give them some data from 1 July because I own a house. They kindly sent along a link to a checklist so that I could prepare it in advance. Up to that point, everything was still pretty simple and I felt well equipped for the task. Now all that was missing was registering with Elster, the tax portal, because that's where the online form was that should be used to submit the data. To register, I had to download a special app that the Bavarian Tax Office had come up with. I don't think you should allow a Bavarian office to come up with an app, but rather leave this to professionals (e.g. clever hobby IT specialists in their teens who have an idea of what user-friendliness means).

After a lot of back and forth between the app and the browser and the input of various codes and TAN numbers, including a 50-60 character jumble, I was finally the owner of an Elster account. With a heavy sigh, I put my password and documents aside for the time being - after all, I still had to wait for the activation of the form from 1 July and for the letter with the activation code.

### **First the system collapses**

It was no surprise that the Elster website broke down at first after the launch, because after all, almost 50 percent of all households in Germany had to fill out this form. When I tried it after a few days, it took me another four-step back and forth with codes and TANs to log in, and it took me 10 minutes to even find the form. I was naive enough to expect that there would be a hint on the homepage, because a few million other people would be looking for it too. I could also have read the 20-page information with the instructions if I had found found it. Or watched a few nice YouTube videos.

### **The problem:**

There is no form at all in the forms section for the "declaration of the property tax assessment amount" (as the tax office had written). The form is called "Hauptvordruck (HGrSt 1)"! You only notice that it is the right one when you print it out at the end.

The full name is printed in the heading. Filling it out was another challenge, because the tax office's checklist didn't mention any attachments or additional forms, without which the form simply wouldn't be sent.

After a few tantrums and digging through my house file, I had finally managed to enter all the information correctly and the system reported the successful submission of my data. I printed these out just to be on the safe side. It could be that it didn't work after all and that the tax office would send me a reminder at some point (if they even had time to do so because of all the complaints and phone calls).

### **Hope dies last!**

I'm pretty sure that a large proportion of the millions of other homeowners who have called the contacted the tax office hotline to request that they be sent the printed form. So maybe it's a good thing we have paper instead of clay tablets today after all. At least until we manage getting the digitalisation done in a customer-friendly way.

## **The language of German bureaucracy**

The authorities often use expressions that we do not use in normal language:

For example, if you want to **apply for a work permit**, you have to make an "application for employment".

If you are supposed to make an appointment ("**Termin**"), the official letter says: "A personal visit is required".

If one has **not observed a rule** while driving, the police write:

"You caused harm to others by failing to exercise due care in road traffic" or "You are accused of having committed the following administrative offence".

**The official language also likes to use very complicated "nested sentences" - such as the one shown in the picture:**

I wonder if every recipient of this letter knows what a „Grundsicherungsleistungsträger“ (Basic security service provider) is? This means, for example, the Sozialamt (Social Welfare Office) or the JobCenter.

**A speciality of the German language are "tapeworm words":**

**„Mittelfristenergieversorgungsicherungsmaßnahmenverordnung“**

This 58-letter tapeworm word really exists - no joke! It is the official name for the government's financial aid for citizens and companies in the energy crisis. (The decree has 20 pages, by the way).

But the very longest word we could find even has 67 letters!

**...and sometimes readers are also overwhelmed by "tech talk".**

This is a quote from a newspaper article about a new bridge construction. Despite the very active works, there is quite a lot of passive in here, and readers are certainly also overwhelmed by too much "technical Chinese":

"To construct the bored piles, a casing is first driven into the ground, then a drill auger is used to clear the casing, which is then being reinforced and concreted."

Do-it-yourselfers and engineers probably understand this...

## And this is what our readers have to say about bureaucracy:

We asked some of our readers what their experiences with our bureaucracy have been recently.

**V. B.\* from Hofheim took in Ukrainian refugees in March and has also been accompanying them through the maze of refugee bureaucracy ever since. Here is his commentary:**

There is a war raging in the middle of Europe and so close to us, and people like you and me are being hit by bombs. They definitely need support, especially because our government has so far completely failed to support and help Ukraine defend itself. This is where we citizens need to send a signal privately and show the people of Ukraine that our willingness to support them is not just lip service.

Personally, I experienced the invasion of the Czech Republic by the Russians first hand, and we were taken in by a family in Germany at that time without much fuss. That's why I know that it can be done.

### **My experience with bureaucracy:**

A lot of the information is requested several times from different offices (registration office, district, federal government). People scan ID cards several times, but apparently these cannot be made available centrally (the killer argument: data protection). Perhaps it is also intended to create positions for "bureaucracy pilots" who are familiar with the application processes? The processes change so frequently that one cannot rely on experience already gained.

It is very difficult for refugees to attend a German course. It takes 4-6 weeks to even get an appointment for the placement test, and then you have to wait another few weeks for the course to start. Surprisingly, in the neighbouring municipality it goes within 2 weeks until the course starts.

### **My suggestions for improvement:**

► The information should be simplified and written in understandable language and not create a "flood of links" for topics that most refugees are not "interested" in, such as LGBT and psychosomatic problems. These topics can be dealt with later if needed. First, the basic needs (residence status, roof over one's head, financial security, health insurance) should be ensured.

► Standards or processes should be unified and information centralised. Ideally as a clear diagram showing the steps/actions for applying for basic needs.

*\*Name known to the editors*

### **Refugee assistant and integration guide Ahmad Aldahik reports on a special case of bureaucracy:**

"Refugee families from different countries suffer from the separation of family members, and it is not only about adults. Rather, it is about underage children being separated from their parents.

A refugee family in Idstein, a father and a mother, have been living separately from their three children for five years, hoping for a family reunion. This is now no longer possible due to a delay in reunification.

Two children have reached the age of majority and the third cannot join his mother and father because of the bureaucracy involved in family reunification."

**Rana Tarab comes from Syria, has been in Germany for seven years and has lived in Idstein with her husband and three sons since 2015. She is a master beautician and runs her own studio here. As a businesswoman, she also has to deal with the pitfalls of our bureaucracy.**

"I find the wording of the official language very complicated and difficult to understand, even if you speak good German.

Many processes take too long. The paper form is cumbersome and takes time. Instead of filling out forms by hand and taking letters to the post office, you could do a lot of things faster online. Often you meet staff who don't understand their work properly. No matter where you call, you always have to tell your story again. If you have to make an appointment, you have to wait a long time to get one.

### **My suggestions for improvement:**

► I think it would be useful if authorities would write their correspondence in simple language.

► We should switch from paper to digital form.

► If the authorities don't have enough staff, then they can also offer appointments via Zoom, for example, so that you don't have to wait a long time for an appointment. That would save time for everyone involved."

## Skin colour

**Interesting, astonishing, worth considering: An excursion into human evolution**

*(hpb)* In the history of mankind, a decisive development began about 2.5 million years ago, as a result of which man learned to move on two legs. The world became cooler. What this has to do with our skin colour is exciting.

### **How did dark skin colour come about?**

The development began when the climate, which was hot at the time, cooled down. Our ancestors (Australopithecus), who until then had lived in the cooler highlands of South Africa, were thus able to use new, lower-lying habitats - if only they could get there. Their legs and feet were still used to trees. But those who could walk better now were better off. So now those whose bodies and legs were increasingly reshaped to make this possible gained advantages. However, the heat accumulation caused by the fur that our ancestors still had was an obstacle to the strenuous walking that had now become possible. Less hair and more sweat glands therefore also meant advantages.

This is how it came about that they lost their fur about 1.2 million years ago. But because the skin was now vulnerable to the sun's harmful UV rays, they invented protective pigments at the same time. Thus, the dark skin colour gradually prevailed. Our ancestors had dark skin!

### **But why did Europeans and Asians become lighter-skinned again?**

With the newly acquired ability to walk far, man was able to migrate out of Africa. He settled in Europe and Asia, where there was less sun, in different waves. But since sun is necessary for the formation of the vital vitamin D, man shed his tan again in the more northern latitudes; he became lighter-skinned again. This development is relatively new; it only spread in the Holocene (beginning 12,000 years ago); presumably, Neanderthal man also had lighter skin before then.

### **How do the different skin colours come about?**

The pigment in the skin that causes tan is melanin. It exists in a slightly lighter and a slightly darker form (pheomelanin: yellowish-reddish; eumelanin: brownish-black). The amount and the mixture largely determine the colour of the skin.

### **What is the colour of our skin good for?**

Melanin is produced in specialised cells of the skin (melanocytes) and released into the actual skin cells (keratinocytes), where it protects their genetic material from UV rays. Unprotected skin cells are at high risk for skin cancer, especially black skin cancer, melanoma. Melanin also protects folic acid, which is important for the cells, from decay. UV-B radiation (320-280 nm) is particularly dangerous, but even the less energetic UV-A radiation (400-320 nm) is not without risk.

### **Sun hungry - Why?**

Actually, it makes no sense to lie in the sun for a long time and let it "fry" you. However, those who are sun-hungry are "victims" of special endorphins. These are hormone-like messenger substances that are emitted by skin cells and which ensure sufficient sun hunger. For despite tanning, sufficient UV rays must be available for the formation of vitamin D. This is a finely tuned control circuit. In the case of particularly "sun addicts", much like drug addicts, the control circuit is overridden. We have to warn them. Black skin cancer is becoming more frequent; at present, the incidence is already 20 melanomas per 100,000 inhabitants per year.

### **Vitamin D deficiency in African refugees**

A dark skin colour, such as that currently brought by migrants from Africa, is not a good quality in our latitudes. People of colour have a hard time producing enough vitamin D. In Switzerland, 86% of refugees from Eritrea had vitamin D levels that were clearly too low. Testing and, if necessary, substitution is therefore urgently recommended. This also applies to heavily veiled women.

### What do we associate with skin colours?

Dark skin colour is often associated with Africa and Africa with underdevelopment. Underdevelopment, in turn, is all too easily lumped together with inferior intelligence. But that is definitely not right. Many people still think in categories determined by skin colour.

### Skin colour: not a criterion for evaluating people!

The number of genetic variations that contribute to skin colour is very large: at least 170 have been studied. Even in light-skinned people there are many variations. It is nonsense to try to find a special combination of them - consciously or unconsciously - as a criterion for evaluating a person. There are many examples of genetic differences that are much more important than skin colour in terms of life, and which cannot be seen. The immune system, for example, is also influenced by many genes and is rich in variation. We do not judge according to such criteria, but probably only because we cannot see the differences. What constitutes the value of a human being for us is an ideological question, which everyone answers differently, but which is certainly worth thinking about.

#### Did you know?

We are all descended from African ancestors. Modern humans (*homo sapiens*) evolved from early pre-humans. The oldest find of hominid bones so far comes from a lowland in East Africa. The scientists have given the skeleton the name Lucy.

#### Photo caption:

Here is the colourful group of young gymnasts born between 2013 and 2015. Skin colour does not matter; what counts is the team spirit and the joy of being part of it, and in the competitions it's the score that counts.

**Dear Children, join such a colourful and cheerful squad! Here you can also learn German and make friends.**

©Photo: TV 1844 Idstein. Website: <https://www.tv1844idstein.de>

## Health care and preventive health care

*(hpb)* They play a big role in Europe and especially in Germany. We want to motivate everyone living here to take care of their health and that of their children - not only when it is too late. This includes, for example, infectious diseases, dental care, nutrition, women's diseases, mental illnesses, knowledge about the functions of internal organs and risk factors for chronic diseases.

### Topic Tuberkulosis –

#### Why we have to talk about it

**In the countries of origin of our migrants and refugees**, there is significantly more tuberculosis (often abbreviated as TB) than in Western Europe. This is according to the statistics of the WHO (World Health Organisation): The incidence in Afghanistan, for example, was 193 in 2020, in South Sudan 232, in Ethiopia 132 and in Eritrea 81 in Syria, on the other hand, only 19 per 100,000. According to the Robert Koch Institute, Ukraine is also a country with a relatively high incidence: "an estimated 73 cases per 100,000 (reporting incidence Germany: 5 per 100,000)". In addition, the bacterial strains prevalent there have become increasingly resistant to antibiotics (tuberculostatics). Reason enough to draw attention to tuberculosis.

**Tuberculosis figures are falling worldwide**, but more slowly than in recent years (according to the WHO). In Europe, the Ukraine war plays a certain role in this. It is assumed that waves of refugees with cramped collective transport and collective accommodation are encouraging the spread.

**Refugees from the Middle East, Afghanistan and Africa** are examined for tuberculosis on arrival at the initial reception centres; this includes an X-ray examination of the lungs. It is a compulsory examination - except for pregnant women and children under 15 years of age (§ 62 Asylum Procedure Act). Those who test positive are automatically sent for treatment.

**Refugees from Ukraine** are not systematically screened for tuberculosis. According to WHO and RKI (Robert Koch Institute), this is not necessary. However, people who belong to a risk group should be tested for it through our health system. The RKI is promoting this.

**Risk groups** are, for example, contact persons of people with infectious tuberculosis. They also include people with a weakened immune system, an autoimmune disease, chemotherapy or dialysis. The RKI further lists: "People with inadequately treated previous tuberculosis, HIV, smoking, alcohol and drug addiction, malnutrition, diabetes and life circumstances such as homelessness, a previous prison stay and poverty." If you do not know whether you belong to a risk group, you can ask your doctor.

## What is tuberculosis?

**Tuberculosis is an infectious disease** that is particularly insidious. If left untreated, it breaks down the lungs, creating cavities (caverns) from which it can bleed. In earlier centuries, there were repeated reports of people who had suffered a "haemorrhage". The famous poets Molière, Goethe and Novalis and the composers Paganini and Chopin are examples.

**The pathogens are the tubercle bacilli.** They hide from the body's immune defences by invading body cells. There, they are hardly accessible even to most antibiotics. Treatment therefore takes a particularly long time.

**The bacteria are usually transmitted through droplets** that are coughed up and inhaled by other people. This is why tuberculosis usually starts in the lungs. However, they can also enter the body through the gastrointestinal tract. The prerequisite is that the infected contact person has "open tuberculosis". Open and closed tuberculosis: "Open" tuberculosis is when tubercle bacteria from the lung tissue enter the respiratory tract (bronchial system). It is "closed" when this is not the case, i.e. when no pathogens can be detected in the sputum for a long time. Closed tuberculosis can worsen at any time and become open.

**Symptoms of a fresh infection are usually cough, fever and night sweats.** However, the symptoms are not clear-cut. They can initially be misinterpreted as a flu-like viral infection. However, they persist, whereas a viral infection clears up after a few days. Then examinations should clarify the diagnosis: This is usually done by a sputum examination and an X-ray of the lungs.

**Complications often occur many years after the infection.** They affect the internal organs, lymph nodes and bones. The tubercle bacilli can settle practically anywhere. Tuberculous meningitis, kidney inflammation and heart muscle inflammation are particularly critical. An uncured tuberculosis that seems to lie dormant for years can trigger surprisingly severe diseases.

**Treatment is difficult.** This is because very often the bacteria have become resistant to many of the antibiotics (tuberculostatics). Resistance increases when treatment, which often lasts for 2 years, is too low or is discontinued. Fortunately, there are reserve drugs.

## Important:

The treatment of refugees who were already under TB therapy in their home country must not be interrupted! They should definitely report here and seek medical treatment. Treatment will be covered by the relevant health office or insurance companies.

Please spread the word!

Good online information on tuberculosis (suitable for smartphones) can be found at

<https://explaintb.org/info/en>.

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## steps Voluntary Work

### Firefighter - the dream of all boys

Even children and young people are already involved in voluntary work  
- a report on the youth fire brigade in Idstein

When Moritz heard that the volunteer fire brigade in Idstein also trains children, he immediately wanted to join. Here he reports:

"Even as a small child, I was enthusiastic about the fire brigade. I found the vehicles fascinating. I would like to help people who need it. And I think it's important to put out a fire and it's great when it works. We do several exercises, still without fire, but with rolling out hoses and stuff like that. We look at the vehicles and what they have with them; that's called vehicle knowledge. There are about 20 young people in the youth fire brigade. More and more girls are joining. As a member, you also get your own fire brigade gear. We have a camp every year, and this time there were 16 of us, including one migrant child. It was great, you get to know each other and trust each other. You can join the youth fire brigade from the age of 10. There is also a children's fire brigade from the age of 6, where you do more theory and get to know the "fireman"."

The mother adds: "They have super nice instructors; they do great things with the children, sometimes also with neighbouring fire brigades and with the district youth fire brigade."

### The fire brigade needs new blood!

Have we aroused your interest?

In the volunteer fire brigade, children can already learn how to fight a fire, even children from families who have moved here. Don't you want to join?

You can find more information and download a registration form on the Idstein fire brigade homepage:

<https://feuerwehr-idstein.de/mitmachen/aktives-mitglied.html>

**By the way: Not only boys, but also girls are invited to join in!**

# The Idstein Learning Mentors

*By Axel Kalb, Learning Mentor Coordinator*

## **Info: What do the learning mentors actually do?**

The learning mentors of the city of Idstein are a project of the Office for Social Affairs, Youth and Sport of the city of Idstein, whereby the individual learning mentors and their coordinator each work on a voluntary basis. In pre-Corona times, about 35 learning mentors were active, working with 4 Idstein schools, the two primary schools Auf der Au and Taubenberg, the Limes Comprehensive School and the Erich Kästner Special School.

However, the learning mentors are not a usual tutoring organisation, they only work with children who need very special support. About 80% of these are children of refugees or migrants who need to learn the German language or improve their knowledge, and about 20% are children who have a handicap and therefore need special care.

It follows that for the majority of our learning mentors, a special qualification in the individual school subjects is not necessary. Rather, we are looking for people who have sensitivity in dealing with children and who enjoy working with children. The learning mentors try to create a special, friendly bond with "their" children so that the children are motivated and enjoy learning.

## **Practice: If I wanted to become a learning mentor, what would I have to do?**

The learning mentor coordinator will discuss your wishes and ideas with you: Do you want to work with primary school children or accompany children at the special school or teach German to children in the German intensive classes at the comprehensive school? Whatever you decide, you will receive all the support you need from the coordinator and the teachers at the schools.

Would you like to work with the children directly at the schools, or would you prefer to work outside in premises provided by the town of Idstein? It is also possible to teach the child in their home or in your own home. How much time can/would you devote to the children? (Average 1 x 1.5 hours per week). Based on this and further information from you, the Learning Mentor Coordinator will then find a "suitable" child for you and introduce you to each other.

Your activity as a learning mentor does not restrict your personal freedom: in addition to the school holidays, when your child is not being taught by you.

**Please help the children and become a learning sponsor, it is a very important and at the same time very nice task!**

**Contact us without obligation:**

**Mail: [lernpatenidstein@gmail.com](mailto:lernpatenidstein@gmail.com)**

**or**

**Office for Senior Citizens, Integration and Volunteering**

**Mrs Müller, Mrs Rill: 06126-78313 or -314**

## Women's rights are not negotiable!

*(hpb)* **A strange statement. But there are regions of this earth where women are seen as property and at the same time as a danger to other men. Still!**

### **No freedom, no rights, no education, ritual circumcision.**

We are amazed to hear that men in the countries of origin of our refugees are supposed to protect and highly value women by hiding them from the eyes of other men. Hence the strict dress code with veiling, often even of the face. The veiling is meant to make the women not desirable to men. This means that if a man comes too close to a woman where he is not allowed to, it is the woman who is to blame. Sharia law is like this in many of the countries of origin of our refugees. The rules of Sharia are determined by men; and they take a martial approach.

### **We take a stand:**

NO: It is not the woman who seduces the man by her feminine appearance alone. If he behaves irresponsibly, then **he** is to be held accountable, not she.

In our country, the European Convention on Human Rights with its prohibition of discrimination applies. There and in our Basic Law it is stated: All people are equal, with regard to all legal rights!

**In our country, no one is allowed to oppress another person**, to prevent them from receiving an education, to force them into an unwanted marriage, to expose them to a secret Sharia law. No woman may be circumcised because otherwise she would have too much desire during sex and could more easily be unfaithful to her husband. In Europe, this is considered dangerous bodily harm and abuse of a ward and is punished accordingly. Anyone who arranges for a circumcision abroad (the so-called "holiday mutilation") is sentenced as an instigator or even as an accomplice. Anyone who systematically oppresses another human being, a woman, commits - let us be clear about this -

► **a crime against humanity. This is not simply discrimination.**

### **Death-defying courage for freedom**

We hear from many independent sources about the agony and death-defying courage of women in the countries of origin of our refugees and migrants who are denied these rights. Taking to the streets despite the danger to their lives: Can we imagine that? The flame of freedom cannot be extinguished. Tragically, neither can the flame of imperiousness and obsession with power.

### **Our task: Explaining and exemplifying**

People who have fled to us often know no other social order than that of dictatorial rule, which was often also the rule of Sharia. Some of them have experienced unspeakably bad things and simply long for safety. Some of them, however, cannot come to terms with freedom as we understand it. This cannot be fundamentally changed overnight. We all know that.

**This also applies to the relationship between the sexes.** These immigrants are not immediately enemies of our democracy. But we have to show them, with patience and by example, that we grant freedom and equal rights to everyone here - and that they should do the same. Our refugees should also know and recognise that their women have equal rights. They should recognise that their daughters, who are still young now, have the right to education, the right to practice their religion freely and the right to choose their partners and decide for themselves - in any case if they stay with us.

### **We call on our refugees and all our fellow citizens:**

- Let us protect our freedom! Let us protect it by defending women's rights!
- Let us show solidarity with the struggle of women in the countries of origin and everywhere against discrimination, oppression and for free self-determination!

It is the task of the whole of civil society, of all of us, to stand up against the exclusion and mistreatment of women.

## The steps editorial team reminds

### Oppression of women in Muslim countries - recent cases:

- ▶ In Tehran, Mahsa Amini died after she was arrested and abused by the Islamic morality police because allegedly her headscarf did not fit properly.
- ▶ Girls in Afghanistan are no longer allowed to go to secondary schools, women are no longer allowed to work.
- ▶ Courageous women in Saudi Arabia were imprisoned because they wanted women to be allowed to drive.
- ▶ In Africa, girls continue to be victims of ritual genital mutilation.
- ▶ 20-year-old Amal in Sudan was recently sentenced to death by stoning for leaving her husband.

### There is also violence against women in Germany:

- ▶ In Germany, around 300 women die from violence every year. In 2018, for example, 353 women were murdered, 122 of them by their own life partner (source: EIGE Gender Statistics Database).
- ▶ A study published in 2011 gives a detailed overview of so-called "killings in the name of honour" in Germany. Between 1996 and 2005, 78 cases with 109 victims (43 of them men) and 122 perpetrators were recorded. A quarter of them involved the killing of young women by family members. (Source: [www.igfm.de/ehrenmorde-in-deutschland/](http://www.igfm.de/ehrenmorde-in-deutschland/))
- ▶ She has received death threats and is under police protection: the lawyer, author, women's rights activist and imamin Seyran Ates. The Frankfurt lawyer Seda Başay-Yıldız received death threats because she represented the family of one of the victims in the NSU trial against right-wing terrorists.
- ▶ In 2019, the Islamic Centre Munich published the following advice for husbands on its website in case their wife disobeys them: For this, the husband must follow three steps: "admonition, separation in the marriage bed and beating". This text was removed again after strong protests. Beating women is forbidden in Germany.

## Democracy - what does it mean for our lives?

*(hpr)* **Democracy (from the Greek demos - people and kratos - rule, power) is the form of government in which we live in Germany. Democracy stands in contrast to monarchy (rule of a monarch), aristocracy (rule of the nobility), oligarchy (rule of a group) and dictatorship (rule of an individual or a group). There are very different forms of democracy in the world, but they are all the same in their basic principles.**

### The emergence of democracy in Germany

In Germany, we have lived in a democracy since the end of the First World War and after the proclamation of the Republic, with one interruption, namely the Nazi dictatorship from 1933 to 1945. 70 years earlier, in 1848, the German National Assembly was founded from the delegates of the participating German states (the German Reich did not yet exist). It was not yet a democratically elected parliament as we know it today. However, it already enabled the free expression of opinion among equal mandate holders and the passing of resolutions by a majority. The National Assembly met in the Paulskirche in Frankfurt am Main.

**After the First World War, the Weimar Constitution** of 1918 established the German Reichstag, a democratically legitimised assembly which, for the first time in Germany, resulted from general, free and equal elections. From now on, all adult citizens were entitled to vote. For the first time, they are allowed to influence future governments with their vote. The same right also applies to elections to the German

state parliaments and the "parliamentary" bodies of municipalities, cities and districts. After the end of Nazi rule, the 1949 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany (the Basic Law) takes up the basic democratic principles of the Weimar Constitution, amends and supplements numerous provisions and thus regulates our present form of state as a democratic and social constitutional state.

### **Grundgesetz, the Basic Law - the basis of state and society**

Our constitution, adopted according to democratic rules, describes the rights and duties of every German. It defines the structure of our state in terms of legislation, administration and justice. It describes Germany as a democratic and social constitutional state that guarantees every German an independent judiciary with equal rights and duties for every citizen and a social safety net in case of need. The constitution assumes the equality of all people and allows complete freedom of expression as well as freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. The constitution guarantees the free exercise of the rights of every German and requires the observance of the applicable duties. The freedom of each individual is limited only by the freedom of others and the inviolability of every human being. Laws, ordinances and statutes that have come into being democratically regulate the way people live together in Germany.

### **Voting means helping to shape the future**

Elections must take place at regular intervals determined by law. The elected persons, the elected representatives, decide on federal and state laws and ordinances and adopt municipal, city and district bylaws on behalf of their constituents. This is why we speak of a representative democracy. By exercising their right to vote, every citizen can participate in the formation of political will at the federal, state and municipal levels through their elected representatives, the elected officials. Democracy requires and enables majorities and minorities. To protect minorities, there are rules that must be observed. Opposition can lead to better results of deliberations. Majorities must justify their exercise of power to the electorate. A change of power must be made possible through regular elections fixed by law.

### **Democracy does not work by itself**

Democracy must be defended constantly and every day. There have always been enemies of democracy. Extreme forces have always wanted and still want to eliminate it in order to seize power for themselves, which can then no longer be controlled through elections. One such attempt was, for example, the storming of the Capitol in Washington in January 2021. In 1933, Hitler described the central place of democracy, the parliament, as a "chatterbox", i.e. superfluous, and transformed Germany into the authoritarian, dictatorial regime of the Nazis.

### **Only democracy can secure freedom**

Democracy, with the ever-necessary political opinion-forming of each individual citizen and numerous groups, with ever-necessary elections, with contentious discussions in civil society, in parties and parliamentary groups can often be tedious. But if citizens participate responsibly and well-informed, exercise their participation rights responsibly and go to the polls regularly, this is the most effective safeguard of democracy and the guarantee of a self-confident, free and protected life for every individual.

**It must be our unshakeable conviction that democracy is the best of all forms of government known in the world if we are to secure human rights and freedom for all.**

### **What does democracy mean to you? Please tell us what you think!**

We would like to know what democracy means to you. What ideas do you associate with this term and what expectations do you have of democracy? Try it with a single sentence! We would be very pleased if you would complete this sentence and send it by e-mail to this address: [redaktion@steps-fhi-ev.de](mailto:redaktion@steps-fhi-ev.de):

**For me, democracy is when ...**

We will publish your answers on our website and in the next issue. Please let us know if we can use your first names in the publication. We are looking forward to your answers!

## We make you fit in German!

The voluntary language courses in Idstein have been running for eight years now.

By Nicola Lisy

Can you imagine that refugees have to wait several years for their refugee status to be recognised and are not allowed to attend a state language course during that time? This refers to the so-called integration course, which teaches the German language as well as knowledge about society and politics. Such courses are only accessible when the recognition procedure has been completed, which can often take five to six years for people from countries like Afghanistan or Somalia.

For us volunteer German teachers in Idstein, this was unacceptable. We think that people who have found protection with us must also have a chance to integrate into our society. That's why we have been offering free language courses since 2014 to bridge the time until they can take an official course. Our founding team started the classes with about 40 participants in the Bishop Dirichs Home with homemade learning materials. Over the years, the project took off and we received a lot of support from the Idstein parishes and the Montessori school, whose rooms we were allowed to use free of charge. The Fresenius University even provided us temporarily with a specialist teacher and teaching. Our range of courses expanded beyond A1 to B2 conversation and we were even able to offer a career entry course and job application training.

Our team currently consists of 18 teachers, including an emeritus professor of English, many retired or active teachers, as well as some dedicated career changers. This enabled us to run eight introductory German courses for Ukrainian refugees in Idstein Kern, Wörsdorf and Hünstetten-Limbach in the spring and summer of this year. With the help of the former Idstein Family Centre, there was even a course with childcare.

In the meantime, most of the Ukrainian refugees have been placed in official courses. So we have capacity for a new literacy course. In the new FHI meeting place, an e-learning course for levels A2 and B1 will start in November, and there are also still free places in the beginners' course.

*Photo caption: The A2/B1 e-learning course for those who want to deepen their German skills with electronic media started at the new FHI-Treff at the end of October.*

## German idioms and how they originated

*(sbo)* Here we explain the origin of the idioms from the last issue. For better understanding, we give the literal translation of the German idioms.

**Die Gretchenfrage stellen** (Asking the Gretchen question)

The "Gretchen question" is an unpleasant or even difficult question that is very important but that one does not like to answer.

This expression goes back to Goethe's "Faust", the most famous classic in German literature. There, Gretchen asks the title character about his belief in God: "Now tell me, how do you feel about religion?" (Faust must have been quite embarrassed by this question, for he had become involved with the devil...). Today, journalists like to make politicians sweat with "Gretchen questions".

**Einen Vogel haben** (Having a bird)

This expression is often used when someone has said or done something crazy.

In the past, this expression was used for the mentally ill, i.e. when someone was "crazy". People used to believe that birds were the cause when someone was "not quite right in the head". They believed that the birds were sitting right in the brain! So if someone did something crazy, they must have had a bird in their head.

A similar saying with the same meaning can be explained in the same way: **Bei dir piept's wohl!** („It's beeping in your head.“)

**Etwas auf dem Kerbholz haben** (Having something on your tally stick)

If someone has done something wrong (e.g. stolen something), we also say "He's got something on his mind".

Traders used notched sticks to hold debts from customers who couldn't pay for their purchase straight away. These were wooden sticks that were split into two halves. As many notches were carved into both halves as the customer owed. The buyer got one half, the seller the other. And both now knew how much the buyer still had "to pay".

**Fest im Sattel sitzen** (Sitting firmly in the saddle)

That's what you say when someone has a secure position. For example, a company boss who doesn't have to fear competition, or a politician who has been re-elected with a large majority.

This expression comes from the Middle Ages, when knights had to sit firmly in the saddle and on their horse when they competed in jousting tournaments.

**Einen Bock schießen** (Shoot a billy goat)

This is said when someone has made a big and stupid mistake. Shooting festivals were held as early as the late Middle Ages. Competitions were held there, and the best shooters got a prize. The worst shooter got a consolation prize, a billy goat. "Goat" meant missed shot.

**Den Kopf in den Sand stecken** (Putting our head in the sand)

When we "bury our head in the sand", we mean to close our eyes to an unpleasant fact.

This idiom arose from a misunderstanding between humans and animals when Europeans first saw ostriches in Africa. These birds, when in danger, lower their heads very close to the ground so that the rest of their body looks like a bush to the enemy. But the Europeans thought that the ostriches actually buried their heads in the sand. They thought the ostriches believed that if they did this, they would no longer be seen.

**Alles in Butter** (Everything in butter)

This saying also comes from the Middle Ages. When expensive glasses were transported from Italy over the Alps to Germany, most of them quickly broke during the wobbling on the carriage ride over the roads of the time. A clever trader came up with the idea of putting the jars in barrels and pouring hot, liquid butter over them. Once the butter had cooled and solidified, the jars no longer wobbled and reached their destination in one piece. And so "everything was butter"!

## „I was always the first to sign up“

The successful course programme of "Frauen kommen weiter" for refugee and migrant women

by Ildikò Szelecz, project manager of "Women get ahead"

**"I was always the first to sign up when a new course was offered," Mahbooba Hashimi proudly reports.**

She is a participant in the project Frauen kommen weiter\* of the CITOYEN Foundation from Frankfurt (steps issue 3 reported in detail in May 2022). Mahbooba came from Afghanistan six years ago with her husband and young child. Here in Germany, she has set herself a professional goal that she is determined to achieve. She wants to take up a medical profession, her dream is to work in a doctor's practice. I still remember very clearly our first long conversation at our office in Idstein. We thought about it for a long time and mapped out the path that had to be followed to achieve this goal: German courses, catching up on school, training and all that with a family that wants to be provided for. The fact that Mahbooba can already help others because she has already attended several courses and learned a lot is one of the biggest successes of the model project. *Women get ahead* supports the participants to help themselves and to turn their wishes and dreams into reality.

"There are so many opportunities here and I recommend it to the other women to try it and make use of the possibilities," says **Sadhna Batra**, who trained as a hotel manageress in Idstein and is currently training

to become a sommeliere. Sadhna came to Germany from Afghanistan with her family, attended the integration class, graduated from school and completed her training. Now she has a permanent job as assistant restaurant manager.

**Sara Modir is also happy;** the nurse from Iran has found her dream job in a home for the elderly.

The list of success stories can easily be continued. I am very proud of our participants.

The main thing you need for the courses is interest, a willingness to learn, and you should attend regularly. If you are unsure which course is right for you, you are welcome to arrange a preliminary talk with me (for contact details, see box on the right).

Then it's time to register!

### **Courses from January**

From January 2023, there will be new courses within the framework of the projects "Women get ahead" and the computer courses of the CITOYEN Foundation for women with a migration background. The courses will be held in Idstein, Bad Schwalbach, Geisenheim and Waldems. The courses are free of charge, they take place once a week in small groups (maximum 6 participants) and last about three months.

\*The project "Frauen kommen weiter" (Women get ahead) to promote the social participation and integration of refugee and migrant women was initiated by the Frankfurt-based CITOYEN Foundation and is funded by the "WIR" programme of the Hessian Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration as well as by co-financing within the framework of the integration strategy of the Rheingau Taunus district as an innovative model project.

## **The course offer**

### ***...of Women get ahead:***

- ▶ How do I learn German better and faster?
- ▶ How can I find my way in the digital world?
- ▶ How do I become more self-confident and confident and achieve my goals?
- ▶ What opportunities do I have in a democratic country?
- ▶ Which profession suits me?

Registration and more info via:

Dr. Ildikó Szelec,

E-mail: fkw@stiftung-citoyen.de

Phone: 0176 504 12251

(also WhatsApp)

### ***...and for the computer course***

- ▶ How do I work with a computer?

The registration goes through Kerstin Reimers,

e-mail: projekte@stiftung-citoyen.de

phone: 069 69 86 93 60.

**There is a lot to learn and it is fun! Interested?**

## Vacations on Amrum

Ram is 11 years old, comes from Syria and has been in Germany for 6 years. During the summer vacations he was on the North Sea island of Amrum with many other children. Here is his report:

„We left from Idstein on August 18 at nine o'clock in the evening by bus. We were about 42 children and five chaperones, Germans and foreigners too.

The bus ride was fun. We watched a movie. The next morning at seven o'clock we arrived in Amrum.

Our summer camp was in Wittdün. There we lived with five people in one room.

During the day we went shopping, played, rode our bikes and did many other things. We also went to the beach and swam a bit. „

What did you do during the day?

„Our best outing was where we rode our bikes to Norddorf. That's about eight kilometers.

The weather was good, but it is very windy at the North Sea.

On the 31st of August we went back home. The whole trip was great and it was very nice on Amrum. It was a lot of fun.“

## Waste - Waste? We collect ideas!

*(hpb)* **Not only do we all want to see "no trash on our streets"; we also don't want to produce unnecessary trash. But how do we do that! Thoughtlessly we buy goods in unnecessary packaging, spit a chewing gum on the street, load too much on our plates. All avoidable waste. Let's check our habits every now and then and let us be inspired with an example from California:**

These pictures are from a field trip of a German school in California: two classes, 50 students aged about eight to ten, two overnights. Residual waste was collected, as well as leftover food. The goal was to produce no more than 0.5 liters of trash per meal with the whole group and to leave no more than 0.2 liters of food. The children were asked to record everything accurately.

The chart picture shows what came out. Explanation of abbreviations: D: dinner; B: breakfast; W:

Wednesday; Th: Thursday; F: Friday; liters of food waste: food waste in liters.

**Garbology:** this is a new discipline that studies modern waste prevention, etc. The name of this science comes from the English word for garbage.

**As an aside,** archaeological garbage piles are highly interesting for insights into how our ancestors lived. But do we want to leave garbage so that our descendants will know how we lived? What will they think of us?

*Photo caption: Waste prevention: This was the successful outdoor project of a German school class in California.*

## What children say

We ask children of immigrants what they think about Germany, how they like it here, what is different in their home country than here, and what they want most.

Heros is 8 years old and fled to Germany from Tigray (Ethiopia) with his parents four years ago. He lives in Taunusstein and is in the second grade.

**Where are your parents from?**

My mom is from Ethiopia and my dad is from Eritrea.

**Have you made friends here?**

Yes, and there are also Germans among them

**What do you know about your parents' homeland?**

Our Sua. This is the traditional drink.

**What do you think is the difference between your parents' home country and here in Germany?**

The weather!

**What do you like most here in Germany?**

The swimming pool and Taunuswunderland.

**Is there anything you find funny in Germany?**

No.

**What do you not like at all in Germany?**

That you are not allowed to play soccer in the streets.

**What do you wish for most?**

That I can become a soccer player,

## Children donate for children

A family from Wallrabenstein with three children had donated clothes, furniture and toys of their children and brought them to the FHI camp. They had learned that especially bedding was urgently needed. So the family discussed what they could also tax to it. Daughter Evangelina, who had already brought joy to a refugee child with her donated Barbie doll, also sorted out bedding, and her brother Nikos was also eager to donate something nice. He parted with this beautiful bedding and hopes that now a refugee child will be happy about it.

*© all photos on this page: private.*

# Germany – paper country

## Part 3: Should I change my electricity provider?

*(sbo)* Surely many of you have received mail from your electricity supplier with a hefty price increase in recent months. Often, the first reaction is, "Help, I need to find a cheaper supplier!" But there are a few things to keep in mind.

You should always read letters from your electricity supplier carefully. The consumer center warns: "Price increases are not always clearly marked. Some providers hide the reference to it downright in letters with a different subject, in mailings that look like advertising, or in long e-mails."

The consumer center warns however also against it to terminate the existing current tariff hastily. Basically, if a price increase comes, one has a special right of termination. That is, one does not have to wait with the notice until the expiration of the contract.

However, if another supplier offers a much lower electricity rate, you must - as always! - read the fine print. It is important to clarify these things:

- ▶ Compare prices! Right now, it's worth looking at the rates of the local basic suppliers. These are the suppliers that automatically supply you with electricity, for example, if you have moved and have not yet chosen a supplier yourself. At the moment, these are often even cheaper than the other suppliers. With online providers, be careful if they offer "premiums" in the form of other products such as smartphones or household appliances. These "subscriptions" increase the basic price and often make the rate very expensive!
- ▶ Is there a price guarantee? The consumer advice center recommends tariffs with a term of 12 - 24 months. For very expensive tariffs, the term should not be too long. However, in the event of extraordinary events during the term, the supplier can still increase prices. Some suppliers may not even give a price guarantee at the moment because of the uncertain situation on the energy market. If there is a price guarantee, does the tariff automatically increase after a certain period (e.g. after 12 months)?
- ▶ Are all charges listed in the tariff (e.g. basic charge, energy price, discounts, taxes and duties...?). There are "tariff calculators" on the Internet that you can use to work out the costs.
- ▶ Can I later switch back to the old supplier once I have cancelled? Some companies rule this out.
- ▶ What service does the supplier offer? Price is not the only factor. It is also important whether a supplier

is accessible. You can go to your local basic supplier and clarify questions in person. An online provider with a functioning hotline can also offer good service. But if one hangs in a telephone waiting loop for hours without reaching anyone, and if there is also no other contact option, it is better to look for another supplier. It's worth reading the comments on service quality on Internet platforms. You should only use online tariffs if you regularly read your e-mails and can do without personal service.

**If you decide to switch, you must cancel your current contract:**

- ▶ Cancellation is only possible in writing, i.e. by letter or e-mail. (Ask for a confirmation!)
- ▶ In the case of an "extraordinary termination" due to your special right of termination due to a price increase, you must do this in any case. The termination must take place before the new prices become effective.
- ▶ In the case of "ordinary termination" at the end of the contract, the new supplier can also do this for you. In any case, the cancellation must be made in good time, i.e. within the cancellation period. This is stated in the contract (e.g. "3 months before the end of the term").
- ▶ In both cases, you must send the current meter reading together with your electricity meter number to the old and the new supplier on the day of the change.

**When you have received the confirmation of termination from the old supplier and the order confirmation from the new supplier:**

- ▶ Check again to make sure all the terms are listed correctly as you agreed.
- ▶ If something is not right or you have changed your mind, you can use your right of withdrawal and cancel the contract. This must be done within 14 days. Important to know: If you have signed a contract in person at the supplier's premises, there is usually no right of withdrawal.

*Picture caption: If you don't want any nasty surprises on your year-end bill, you should check your electricity consumption regularly by checking the power meter reading.*

## Infos, news, events and more...

### Idstein integration guide honored in Wiesbaden

*(sbo)* On September 8, the Hessian state government invited 25 integration guides from all over Hesse to Wiesbaden to honor their commitment to immigrants and refugees. At a ceremony in Biebrich Palace, they received a certificate of thanks from State Secretary Anne Janz from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Integration. Among the volunteers who were honored for their commitment was Ahmad Aldahik, one of our Idstein integration guides.

Ahmed comes from Syria, has been in Germany since 2014 and is now a true "Idstaaner". He is also a member of the Foreigners' Advisory Council and is also very active in Idstein's refugee aid. He has been a permanent member of the integration pilot team for a good year and is a valuable addition to the multicultural and multilingual team.

Ahmad sees this award as recognition for the work of all the integration pilots: "It is nice that our work is recognized, because it is very important. It's also good to talk about our work, because many migrants need help, especially with bureaucracy, and they don't even know we exist."

**Anyone who wants to find out more about the work of the integration guides or needs their support can find everything they need to know on the website of the city of Idstein:**

<https://www.idstein.de/leben-in-idstein/generationen/integration-und-teilhabe/integrationslotsen/>

*Picture caption: Ahmad Aldahik from Idstein (2nd from right) was one of the integration guides honored in Wiesbaden.*

## A well-visited warehouse

The warehouse of the Idstein refugee assistance (FHI) makes an important contribution to the basic needs of refugees

*By Monika Wolff*

In the old train station building, which the city had bought from the railroad, a large warehouse was created in record time at the beginning of March. The SIE (Soziales, Integration und Ehrenamt) office was very flexible and helpful in this. We had help at the start from interns from the Limeschule and PSI. They built shelves and were on duty every day for two weeks. In the meantime, many volunteers from different countries of origin help. They accept goods, sort, arrange and practice the German language. The recipients are also people from all the countries represented at the center. We received goods from Taunusstein-Wehen and from Eppstein, because the volunteers there had no more capacity to maintain the clothing drop-off. On some days we had about 100 visitors!

Our merchandise consists purely of donated items. We are looking for anything that is needed, not only clothing, but also quite a few household items. From A for apple peeler to Z for lemon (Zitrone) squeezer to B for bedding, as well as towels, cutlery, pans and pots. Also anything with a cord, like toasters, blenders, irons, coffee makers.

The people who donate often come to us for repeated visits, because they see how grateful people are and like our warm atmosphere. It is generally confirmed that in these meaningful, helpful circumstances it is much easier to part with what is stored at home.

**The helpers are mostly women**, but some men also help diligently. All of them come voluntarily, sacrifice their free time, some sort and organize all by themselves outside our opening hours, because it gives a good feeling to be needed and to do something meaningful. Some also come and are happy to talk to nice people on the side and to escape the loneliness at home. This is especially the case with refugees who have family members at home in the war zone. One Idstein woman said, "It feels good, it's much better than having a coffee klatsch with cake and lots of calories."

We are happy about the active support also in the future and hope to motivate you to clean out your home and bring us your well preserved, but no longer used things.

**The FHI store is open Tuesdays and Fridays from 10 am to 12 pm and Wednesdays from 3 pm to 5:30 pm on site at Am Bahnhof 11 - the entrance is the last door on the left in the station building - you can recognize it by the sign in the photo on the left.**

**The picture shows that there's more than just clothing at the FHI store. This is the housewares department.**

## Disposing of bulky waste correctly

Important information for anyone who has bulky waste, collects broken furniture in the basement or is moving house

*by Brigitte Frost*

**Bulky waste problems can cost a lot of money.**

### Examples:

Furniture, mattresses and other things that are simply left in the apartment, in the basement, in the garden, on the street, can be disposed of by the landlord (for example, by the KWB) disposed of. The costs for this must be paid by the tenant. That might quite fast amount to 200,- EUR.

It is just as difficult for the tenant who has moved out to prove that this was not his bulky waste as it is for the landlord to prove that this is the garbage of family XYZ who has just moved out. The cost of disposal is simply deducted from the rent deposit.

Or: you miss the free bulky waste appointment (cost-free for up to 6 times a year – don't forget to register!) and have to drive everything to the recycling center: This costs a lot of time, work, gasoline AND also money!

So, please - inform also your neighbors, or hang the sheet in the house on the bulletin board!

### What is bulky waste?

What doesn't fit in the black garbage can:

- ▶ Bicycles, camping beds, metal or plastic garden furniture, strollers, suitcases, mattresses, furniture, sofas, rugs (rolled up), jump frames, chairs, cabinets, tables and other furniture.
- ▶ Attention: large electrical appliances = extra collection dates!

### What is not bulky waste?

- ▶ Waste from construction work, such as laminate, wooden floors, window or door frames, sinks, shower stalls, motor vehicle parts, liquids, roof battens or boards, which do not come from pieces of furniture.
- ▶ Clay and ceramics, small parts packed in bags, sacks and boxes.  
Small electrical appliances\*.
- ▶ This must all be taken to the recycling center!

### How do I dispose of bulky waste?

- ▶ 12 times a year - on fixed dates - the city of Idstein collects bulky waste.
- ▶ And on 12 other days a year, they pick up electrical appliances larger than 40 x40 x30cm, i.e. refrigerators, stoves, washing machines, but also TVs, monitors)....
- ▶ This is free of charge for each household (that is, each apartment/family) 6 times a year.
- ▶ What do I have to do?

**IMPORTANT: Call before, ask for the next appointment and reserve.** Not so late, sometimes there is already no more room in the truck:

**Phone 06124 - 606 9991** (K+R Umwelt GmbH).

And tell us what you want to pick up, only registered items will be taken! The things have to be put on the sidewalk **one day before** (neatly, so that you can still walk by).

**More info at:** <https://www.kr-umwelt.de/>

### Where can you drop off bulky or hazardous waste?

Wertstoffhof\*, Idstein, on the road to Heftrich, L3023, some items costs money...

Opening hours: Monday to Wednesday and Friday 7:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Thursday 7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. (New!) Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

\***Wertstoffhof:** For electrical appliances, even small = free of charge!

## With Ibrahim through the cuisine of Syria

### A cooking course in Taunusstein

*By Roswitha Kacmaczyk*

On August 13, the Syrian Cooking Culture Meeting of the Taunusstein Civic Foundation took place. Mohamed Ibrahim, a former ship's cook from Syria, came to Taunusstein in 2015. After the integration German course, he began an apprenticeship as a cook in the Tannenburg in Taunusstein. He then worked in Idstein-Wörsdorf in the restaurant of the golf course. Since August this year he is now a cook in the restaurant Living in Taunusstein-Hahn.

At the Koch-Kultur-Treff in August, he took eleven cooking enthusiasts on a culinary journey through the cuisine of Syria. Falafel, kibbeh, sifha, shawarma, taboule and lokma were prepared with a lot of fun and then eaten together. The participants were able to learn a lot about Ibrahim's home country. The cooking-culture-meeting will continue next year - then with the countries Benin (West Africa), Afghanistan, Morocco and - because it was so popular - again with Syria.

The dates will be announced in time in the press.

As project manager of the cooking-culture-meeting of the community foundation, I cook together with the cooks from the respective countries of origin.

*Photo caption: Syrian delicacies at a successful cooking class with Ibrahim, assisted by Roswitha Kacmaczyk. © Photos: Roswitha Kacmaczyk*

## A Delicious dish from Ukraine

### Bogratsch: a Ukrainian stew for cold winter days

Bogratsch is a hearty Ukrainian stew with meat and vegetables. Especially now at the beginning of the cold season it is the perfect food. You simply have to try this soup! And for those who don't like pork: if you use only beef or other meat, it will surely taste just as good.

Larissa fled from Kiev in March before the war and lives in Idstein since then. She shared her family recipe with us and gives detailed instructions:

**You will need this amount of ingredients for a 10-liter pot** (for 5 liters, just take half!):

- ▶ 250 grams of smoked bacon
- ▶ 350 grams of onions
- ▶ 350 grams of carrots
- ▶ 750 grams of beef
- ▶ 750 grams of pork
- ▶ 100 grams tomato paste
- ▶ 25 grams of pischta (Hungarian chili paste, alternatively similar to taste)
- ▶ 10 grams smoked paprika powder (alternatively normal)
- ▶ Salt, pepper and bay leaf
- ▶ 3 liters of water
- ▶ 1.5 kilograms of potatoes
- ▶ Water to (almost) the edge of the pot
- ▶ 250 grams of tomatoes
- ▶ 250 grams of red peppers
- ▶ Sour cream and chopped parsley for serving

#### Preparation:

- ▶ Coarsely chop all ingredients\*.
- ▶ Cut the bacon into cubes and heat in the pot on low heat.
- ▶ Peel the onions and cut into 8 - 16 cubes, depending on size.
- ▶ Add to the rendered bacon and sauté over high heat.
- ▶ Peel the carrots, cut into thick slices, add to the onions and braise.
- ▶ Reduce the plate to medium heat and let everything stew.
- ▶ Remove the meat from the tendons and skin, cut into pieces at least 3 cm long.
- ▶ Raise the heat and brown the beef first, then the pork.
- ▶ In a bowl, mix the tomato paste with 1 liter of water and the spices. Pour to the meat, stir, add the bay leaf, add another 2 liters of water and reduce the heat to medium. Braise.
- ▶ In the meantime, peel the potatoes and cut them in half (and if they are very large, cut them into four pieces). Add them to the pot. Fill the pot with water. Boil until the potatoes are cooked.
- ▶ Coarsely chop the tomatoes and peppers.
- ▶ When the potatoes are cooked, salt the stew, pepper, season to taste, add tomatoes and peppers, bring to a boil, turn off, cover and simmer for 10-15 minutes.
- ▶ Serve with parsley and sour cream.

**The total cooking time is about one and a half hours.**

Bon appétit!

#### Our secret tip:

Cut the ingredients coarsely - Bogratsch is usually cooked over a fire in a cauldron, without having handy utensils at hand. It is also possible to cut coarsely directly over the kettle. So I suggest you try to chop everything coarsely in any case, to get the typical taste. And to make it taste really good: salt, pepper and season properly.

## Do you come from Germany or from conviction?

### The political joke as a remedy for frustration

(sbo) **Do you come from Germany or from conviction?** - This is the title of a booklet of political jokes from around the world that Willy Brandt collected from his hosts around the world during his travels as German Chancellor. In difficult times, and especially in dictatorships, citizens create an outlet for their discontent by making fun of "the authorities." They are also a means of dealing with the horror that a bad economic situation or even a war brings. The target of political jokes and caricatures is therefore first and foremost presidents and heads of government. The worse the situation and the crazier the politicians, the more numerous and crazier the jokes. Donald Trump provides the joke inventors and caricaturists with new inspiration every day to this day, while Joe Biden makes their job a little harder. Our government also provides them with enough material. Since February at the latest, however, Vladimir Putin in particular has been cruelly ensuring once and for all that they are not out of a job. In democratic societies, humorous criticism can be openly disseminated in all media, but in dictatorships it can only be done secretly and under the constant threat of ending up in prison. Despite this - or perhaps because of it - the best jokes and caricatures are created there. They make "those up there" look ridiculous and thus like normal people. Spreading them and telling them to each other creates solidarity and encourages people not to take everything so seriously and not to let it get them down. Here are some historical and current examples

#### From the Soviet Union in the 1980s:

Did you know that General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev didn't die in Moscow and of heart failure at all, but in an accident during a state visit to Egypt? He fell into the water on a trip down the Nile and was eaten by a crocodile. The poor crocodile threw up medals for fourteen days afterwards.

#### From East Berlin in the 1980s:

A man comes to the newsstand at Alexanderplatz, buys the „*Neues Deutschland*“, reads the first page, then throws the paper in the trash can. The next day he comes back and does the same thing. When he does it again on the third day, the vendor asks, "What are you doing?"

"I'm looking at the obituaries," the man replies.

"But they're in the back," the salesman wonders.

"Nah," says the man - "the one I'm looking for is on page one!"

#### About Trump:

Question: why was Trump watching the Olympics?

Answer: he wanted to know how high the Mexicans could jump.

A report from the Trump era has surfaced in the intelligence files: A fire had once broken out in the White House and destroyed Donald Trump's private library. Both books had burned. Particularly tragic: he had not even finished coloring the second book.

#### About Putin;

**Once Putin and Merkel** met at a dinner party. Merkel went up to Putin and told him, "There are many ways to make money, but only one honest way!" To which Putin replied, "And that would be?" Merkel: "I knew you didn't know that one."

**After the shelling of the Crimean bridge**, the chief engineer gives Putin the status report.

"President Putin, I have good news and bad news."

"The good first!"

"We can repair the Crimean bridge."

"And what is the bad news?"

"We need your long meeting table for that."

**A man stands on a street corner in Moscow** and shouts, "The president is an idiot!"

The militia comes running, handcuffs the man and yells at him, "It is forbidden to insult President Putin."

"You don't understand, I do mean Ukrainian President Selenskyj, it was him I insulted."

The militiaman glares at him, "Don't bullshit us! Everyone here knows who the idiot is."

**A man in Russia wrote on a banner** that Putin was crazy. He got 15 years in prison for it - for leaking state secrets.

**Question: How do you get Putin to go to prison?**

Answer: You just have to tell him that the cell belongs to Ukraine.



*This cartoon about Putin's role in the destruction of Aleppo also fits to illustrate his war of aggression against Ukraine. (© Cartoon: Hussam Sara)*

## Promising start: The FHI meeting place in Idstein

**With perfect weather and lots of visitors: Meeting place for living integration opened in October**

(aa) The invitation of the Flüchtlings- und Integrationshilfe Idstein e.V. (FHI) to the opening of their new meeting place met with great interest: On October 22, well over 100 visitors gathered at Bahnhofstraße 41 to join in the official launch of this new integration meeting place in bright sunshine.

Not only members and refugees were present, but also the press and representatives of some other organizations and local politics. A hardworking team of women had organized and prepared a rich buffet with Ukrainian and Afghan specialties and cakes as well as pretzels and sandwiches.

### Thanking the DSEE and the landlord

FHI Chairwoman Monika Wolff and co-organizers Ahmad Aldahik and Andriy Shumeyko from the Initiative Idstein hilft Ukraine (IHU) reported on the project, which was set up in record time thanks to funding from the German Foundation for Engagement and Volunteerism (DSEE) - only five weeks had passed from the conclusion of the transfer contract to the funding application to the inauguration. Monika Wolff also thanked the landlord for letting the housing unit to FHI. Kateryna Shumeyko (IHU) translated the speeches as well as the greeting of the deputy mayor Wolfgang Müller for the many Ukrainian guests very professionally into Russian.

### A meeting place for new and "old" Idsteiners

The FHI meeting place serves refugees and migrants as a meeting and training place. However, it is also a meeting place for all Idsteiner through joint events with refugees and their German fellow citizens.

"Our goal is to promote integration and lively togetherness in Idstein by offering a colorful and interesting range of activities," explains Monika Wolff.

### A multi-functional meeting place

Three beautiful rooms allow for a variety of uses: The centerpiece is a training room with a smartscreen, whiteboard and variable furniture. Internet and WLAN are installed so that PC and online courses can also be held. Initially, German, computer and painting courses are planned, as well as a Ukrainian women's meeting and a games evening. The first events have already taken place (see also article on German courses on page 14). There is also a "children's room," which was also immediately inaugurated

by the many children present at the opening ceremony. Finally, the outdoor area can be used for larger events - so if necessary, meetings can be moved outside.

### **More ideas welcome!**

During the event, visitors were able to make their own additional suggestions for use on a board. This action resulted in a number of good and interesting ideas.

## **Why do we need an international meeting place in Idstein?**

**A space to talk, learn, craft, play, be creative together - this is how FHI wants to promote the integration of refugees and migrants:**

- ▶ Joint projects of locals and migrants.
- ▶ Promoting acceptance, tolerance, and intercultural understanding.
- ▶ Language promotion and socialization
- ▶ Space for creativity and self-realization
- ▶ Courses for young and old
- ▶ Recreational activities, especially for refugee children
- ▶ Promotion of civic engagement.

**Everyone is allowed to participate, and ideas are welcome!**

Contact: Axel Burisch

E-mail: [fluechtlingshilfeidstein@gmx.de](mailto:fluechtlingshilfeidstein@gmx.de)

*Photo captions:*

*Photo above: Kateryna Shumeyko (IHU) translates the speeches into and from Russian, next to her from left: Inna Schumacher from Limeschule, FHI Chair Monika Wolff, Deputy Mayor Wolfgang Müller, Andriy Shumeyko from IHU and FHI Board Member Ahmad Aldahik.*

*Photo left: The entrance to the new FHI meeting place at Bahnhofstrasse 41 in Idstein.*

*Photo below: Axel Burisch is pleased with the successful start and the many ideas collected: Anyone who has more is welcome to tell him about them!*

Page 23

steps Arabic

## Arabic translation of the short content descriptions.

Page 24

steps Riddle

## Steps Riddle

**The Crossword riddle searches for famous people of the past and present.**

If you read this newspaper carefully, you will find pictures with the questions for this puzzle. They give clues to the solutions.

Below you will find all the questions again. If all the answers are correct, you have to fill in the colored letters in the boxes below the puzzle with the corresponding colors in order. Have fun!