



Edition 139 – November 2015

Good News: Refugee Initiatives

29,000 refugees have already been registered in Berlin by the end of September. In addition, an unknown number of unregistered refugees have arrived in Berlin. By year-end, it might be more than 60,000. The inflexibility of the authorities can be frustrating, but on the other hand, the innovative energy of many – often young – Berliners is inspiring. For instance, the volunteer work of about 20,000 Berliners has been organized through volunteer-planner.org. Fluechtlinge-willkommen.de/ brings people who offer rooms in contact with refugees who are looking for rooms. The Kiron.University, founded by two students from Berlin, is the world's first university for refugees. Nearly 1,000 refugees began their online studies in October. Welcomedinnerberlin.de provides opportunities for individuals, people sharing a flat, and families to invite refugees for a meal and get to know one another. Tens of thousands of Berliners have donated or have done voluntary work in order to help people arriving in Berlin who have often lost everything.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the large number of committed helpers and for all the creative solutions**
- **Pray for sustainable integration concepts**

Good News: The Economy is growing

Deputy chief Christian Wiesenhütter says the Chamber of Commerce (IHK) is hanging on to its growth forecast of 1.9 percent for the current year. The growing number of tourists has been decisive for the upswing. In the first six months of the year, there were 13.8 million overnight stays. The development of skilled crafts and trades is also encouraging. Tradesmen companies have experienced a real economic boost since spring. No one can currently assess with certainty how the refugee problem will develop. The Chamber of Commerce estimates that in the coming year, 3,000 Syrian refugees with good qualifications will enter the Berlin labour market after being granted asylum. For them as well as for the far greater number of low-skilled workers, the number one goal should be language-learning. The Job Centre will be working

on tools for integration that will be available to all job seekers.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the positive development**
- **Pray that it will be dealt with in a socially just way**

Registration of Refugees

The situation at the State Office for Health and Social Affairs in Moabit has improved since the first registration of refugees was moved to the Bundesallee. A waiting room was set up in a building. More tents will be set up. Instead of volunteers, doctors from the Charité will look after the refugees. This is a significant improvement compared to the existing conditions. Nevertheless, refugees still have to sleep on the street sometimes. Approximately 10,000 of them have not been registered yet. And the influx continues.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the recent improvements**
- **Pray for good, efficient solutions to register and accommodate refugees well**

Alexanderplatz

Compared to previous years, the number of acts of violence on the Alexanderplatz in the first five months of this year declined slightly. Unfortunately, it is still one of the most dangerous places in Berlin. In October another murder nearly took place when a 17 year old refugee from Lebanon wanted to defend a girl being molested. He was stabbed and seriously injured.

The Alexanderplatz is a busy place. 350,000 people cross it daily. The Senate's process of resident-involvement for the redesign of the old Berlin Mitte has been completed. A consensus emerged for the preservation of a public space including a park. Whether and to what extent development should take place is still controversial. The results will be presented to the Parliament early in 2016. If, however, the interests of investors desiring construction prevail, many residents would be very disappointed. The "People-Museum" with the body parts under the TV tower was rejected by local residents and the district of Mitte. People want a people-oriented, non-commercial use in the

building at the bottom. Some have had the idea of making it into a Christian meeting and prayer room.

Prayer:

- **Thank God for the reduction of violence and more peace on the Alexanderplatz**
- **Pray that the residents' wishes for a people-oriented redesign will be implemented**
- **Pray for clarity, resources, and open doors for a possible Christian usage**

Welcome Classes

School is compulsory for refugee children. The large number of refugee children is a huge challenge for school administrations. In Berlin, refugee children are taught together with other children who do not speak German in "welcome classes" - small classes where a teacher takes care of about 12 students. Within two years, the number of these classes has tripled. Now new classes must be set up at an ever-increasing pace, and they all need teachers. A total of 354 positions have been created for this purpose. Teachers are confronted with multiple problems. Many children are traumatized by war or by having had to flee their home country. Teachers in welcome classes must have special training. At the moment however, career changers who have the appropriate language skills are often used. Private schools now also want to set up welcome classes, among others private Protestant or Catholic schools and the Christburg-Campus.

Prayer:

- **Pray that new pupils settle quickly and find good friends**
- **Pray that all teachers will be able to withstand stress and have good empathetic skills**
- **Pray that enough teachers can be found to meet the increasing demand**

Berlin is growing

Berlin is growing rapidly not only because of the increasing number of refugees. Governing Mayor Michael Müller expects that over a half a million people will move to Berlin by 2030. Therefore, the infrastructure (schools, kindergartens, medical care, etc.) must be expanded and improved. A particular challenge will be to build enough housing. Therefore, Urban Development Senator Andreas Geisel is planning to build 15,000 lightweight construction homes in the coming year. There are still unsolved problems between the federal government and the State of Berlin. Berlin wants to take over state-owned apartments in the city. The federal government still owns many prop-

erties in Berlin, which the Senate would like to purchase cheaply, but the federal government wants to get a higher price on the open market.

Prayer:

- **Pray for a rapid agreement between federal and state governments concerning the properties**
- **Pray for creative solutions for fast construction**
- **Pray that there will be no conflicts about obtaining housing between poorer population groups and refugees**

Semester Start

In October, the winter semester began at Berlin's universities. Following the record high last year, the numbers of students have remained high, and many young people are new to the city. A global comparison of the fixed costs for students in large university cities showed that Berlin ranked first as the cheapest city, mainly due to the lack of tuition. But the increase in student numbers always causes the challenge of accommodation. The housing market for students in Berlin is very difficult and often temporary solutions must be accepted. In Berlin, the price of a room in a shared flat is 371€ Euros, which puts Berlin already in 8th place (average 304 Euros). The universities are responding to the high number of refugees. For instance, there is the In(2)TU Berlin program or Welcome@FU. These programs provide counselling and mentoring for refugees as well as free participation in seminars / lectures and preparatory language courses. In addition, the re-orientation of new students is always an opportunity to reach students with the Gospel. There are several Christian student groups and communities who are active on campus at the beginning of the semester.

Prayer:

- **Pray for solutions for the housing problem and easier orientation for students arriving in the city**
- **Thank God for programs which have already begun. Pray that these will expand to other universities**
- **Pray for wisdom, open doors and hearts for all Christians who are active on campus**

Dates

- Nov. 11, 6pm: Prayer for city politicians in front of the Rote Rathaus**
- Nov. 14, 2:30pm: Day of Prayer for persecuted Christians, EFG Tempelhofer Damm 133-137**