

## Forced Migration and Refugee Studies in dialogue— Germany’s approach to global forced mobility and displacement

Parliamentary evening, Deutsche Parlamentarische Gesellschaft Berlin, 12 May 2022

The Russian attack on Ukraine has once again brought the dramatic consequences of forced displacement to the public’s attention. The cross-border movement of refugees from Ukraine is the fastest-growing since World War II—and yet it is only one of many major refugee crises in the past three decades. The vast majority of displaced people worldwide have found refuge in the countries of the global South, often close to their home country. Where safe, voluntary return is not possible, for instance due to ongoing violence, according to international agreements, displaced people shall be offered a permanent perspective in their host country (“integration”) or in a safe third country (“resettlement”). What role can and should Germany and the European Union play in this?

Against this backdrop, the German Development Institute / Deutsches Institut für Entwicklungspolitik (DIE)\* organised a Parliamentary evening on 12 May 2022 on behalf of the cooperation project “Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer” (FFVT) on “Germany’s approach to global forced displacement: How to proceed with resettlement and humanitarian reception”, which focused in particular on the Ukrainian refugee situation. The evening took place under the auspices of Dr h.c. Thomas Sattelberger, Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. Among the guests were members of parliament and staff of the Bundestag, migratory policy spokespersons of the political parties and expert officials of relevant ministerial departments.

Short presentations by researchers from the FFVT network prepared the ground for the ensuing discussion. Dr Franck Düvell (Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies at the University of Osnabrück) provided background information on Ukrainian society and general scenarios on the intentions of Ukrainian refugees in Germany and the European Union to integrate or return. In particular, he addressed refugee and internal displacement figures in and from Ukraine, explained their limited informative value when viewed in isolation and put them into context with data and insights from the pre-war situation.

The Ukrainian scholar Professor Dr Victoriya Sereda (Ethnology Institute, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Kyiv, and Imre Kertész Kolleg, Jena) followed up on this and pointed out in her presentation that a broad social mobilisation in support of the large heterogeneous group of internally displaced persons (IDPs) had taken place in Ukraine since 2014. This social engagement, she said, was in response to insufficient state support. According to initial survey results on the needs and expectations of Ukrainian refugees in Germany, civil society and Ukrainian self-help networks also play a pivotal supporting role in the current refugee situation. She then emphasised that refugees are increasingly instrumentalised as part of strategic warfare to destabilise hostile states. Global migration and security governance need to pay more attention to these trends, she said.

Professor Dr Conrad Schetter (Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies - BICC) then addressed trends of global dynamics in forced migration, pointing out that refugee movements are increasing globally and that the situation of displaced people is becoming more precarious. He stressed that the reasons for this are an increase in civil wars and autocracies as well as violent crime and climate change. Currently, three-quarters of all displaced people worldwide find themselves in protracted refugee situations of more than five years, and two-thirds of all people who have fled are IDPs. Conflict prevention and peacekeeping have proven to be the most effective means to prevent forced migration. Moreover, humanitarian aid and development cooperation must be thought of more in tandem. He finally stressed that a paradigm shift towards discussing the potentials and needs of displaced people is necessary.

A panel discussion with the speakers followed the keynote speeches. A central point in the lively discussion was the question of the appropriate time and scale of Ukrainian children's integration into the German pre-school and school system. From a scientific perspective, experts agreed that integrating them as soon as possible was crucial as structural routines were important for the development of children. In addition, all experiences with comparable refugee situations gave rise to concerns that many of them would not be able to return quickly. Discussants, however, also addressed the special situation of refugees from Ukraine: Unlike with many other civil wars in recent history, there is a legitimate government that is recognised by the refugees and with which Germany and the European Union could and should discuss questions of return, resettlement and integration in the framework of valid international obligations.

With this event, FFVT contributed to highlighting the relevance of multi-disciplinary and diverse Forced Migration and Refugee Studies in Germany which can assist policymakers in addressing the challenges related to forced displacement in the best-informed way as possible.

\* The name of the institute was changed to "German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS)" in June 2022

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**Project info**

*Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer*

The cooperation project “Forced Migration and Refugee Studies: Networking and Knowledge Transfer” (FFVT) aims to strengthen interdisciplinary forced migration and refugee research in Germany. To this end, the project, which is funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), brings together research on migration, development, conflict and violence, climate change, health, governance and human rights and other topics. In this way, FFVT supports the networking of researchers and institutes working in all relevant research fields dealing with forced migration. To provide young academics with teaching and training opportunities in Forced Migration and Refugee Studies, it plans to establish study and graduate programmes. Furthermore, FFVT promotes the internationalisation of German research activities further and, therefore, offers a global fellowship programme, among other things. The dialogue between academia, practitioners, the media and politicians is another key element of its work. FFVT is to contribute to establishing a sustainable infrastructure for research on Forced Migration and Refugee Studies in Germany to facilitate excellent academic work in this field.

FFVT is jointly run by the Bonn International Centre for Conflict Studies (BICC), the Centre for Human Rights Erlangen-Nuremberg (CHREN, University of Erlangen Nuremberg), the German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS, Bonn) and the Institute for Migration Research and Intercultural Studies (IMIS, University of Osnabrück).

Please note that the content provided is a summary of the points discussed during the event. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of FFVT, its members or funders.

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