



Press release

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**State Secretary Güler in Gütersloh District:
"Amazing things are being done here – but this
is a wakeup call for integration policy."**

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The municipal integration centre and integration agencies provide support, especially with language mediation in the coronavirus pandemic

The Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration has issued the following statement:

The State Secretary for Integration, Serap Güler, has visited the municipal integration centre and the two integration agencies of the DRK state association Westfalen-Lippe e.V. and workers' welfare association (AWO) OWL e.V. in the Gütersloh district to learn about their work during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The swift and simple support provided by municipal parties who work with integration in the Gütersloh district in overcoming the coronavirus pandemic must be recognised," says State Secretary Güler. "I am very grateful for the work being done by the municipal integration centre and integration agencies of the DRK and AWO. During the meetings on site I sensed the dedication by officials and volunteers for people from south-eastern Europe in particular. This commitment is very helpful to the people affected right now. Now in particular, it is paramount that the people know where they can get help and information."

The municipal integration centre has established a free hotline for citizens of Bulgaria, Poland and Romania, which provides information about the coronavirus in the caller's respective native language. This also includes

employment matters. The DRK in the Gütersloh district is especially involved in testing, provisions and care for people in quarantine. One important task is consolidating volunteer work on site. The AWO integration agency OWL e.V. is currently assisting with a measure that provides people in quarantine with solidary packages. They are also organising donation campaigns for people affected. The needs that may arise after the quarantine are also being considered so that corresponding services can be offered on site.

The spread of the pandemic to the meat industry in the Gütersloh district once again shows how precarious employment conditions prevent the integration of people into society.

"The current circumstances regarding Tönnies and the subcontracted companies are disturbing and deeply shameful. Some of the factory workers from around the world have spent many years in isolation and without contact with society. The least that we can demand of companies is giving foreign workers the opportunity to learn the language and participate in social life," explained State Secretary Güler.

North Rhine-Westphalia is the only state with municipal integration centres. The 54 facilities around the state provide services for children and adolescents with a migration background that aim to improve their prospects for education. In addition, they coordinate the activities and services of the municipalities and private agencies with regard to integration and living with diversity. Since 2015, the municipal integration centres have provided support to citizens who work with refugees on site as part of the state programme KOMM-AN NRW.

The state is also unique in that it currently supports 186 integration centres funded by the Freie Wohlfahrtspflege NRW. These offer

needs-based integration services in social spaces statewide. The integration agencies are working closely with the municipal structures and migration services on site. Due to their immediate proximity to the people and their environment, they are able to provide targeted assistance.

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Please send questions to the press office of the Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration telephone 0211 837-2417.

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