

30. October 2023

City Hall

## Joint declaration by the mayors of the district of Borken on the refugee situation in consultation with the district of Borken



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The city leaders of the district municipalities, including Bocholt's mayor Thomas Kerkhoff, are sounding the alarm and warning that the cities will be overburdened in the course of accommodating refugees.

At the meeting in Stadtlohn on 27.10.2023, they issued a declaration together with the district of Borken. In it, they demand support from the state and federal government.

# Core statements

1 The cities and municipalities in the district of Borken see themselves at the limit of feasibility due to the very strong increase in the number of allocations in recent weeks. Further allocations will lead to a massive overload. This is especially true against the background of the many refugees who have already been accepted here in the past years.

2 We are currently caring for 4,655 people from Ukraine alone. In addition, there are more than two thousand refugees from many countries of the world, whom we care for in emergency shelters and rented properties, making a total of more than 6,700 people in the district of Borken. In addition, there are refugees who are accommodated and cared for privately. Since 01.08.2023 alone, a further 1,246 persons have been assigned to the municipalities in the district of Borken to date, and many more have been announced. Acceptance among the population is clearly sinking. We, the municipalities in the district of Borken, want to help, but we see that the limits of our possibilities have been exceeded. Without solidarity-based support from the citizens and prioritisation within the administrations, we would have already reached the limit in the past. 3.

It is not expedient to accommodate people in gymnasiums and industrial halls over a longer period of time. These temporary solutions have already clearly reached their time horizon. In this way we are no longer doing justice to the people.

In addition to the growing difficulty of generating emergency accommodation, it is no longer possible to provide for children and young people in schools and day-care centres. On the one hand, there is not enough space and personnel available. On the other hand, it is not adequately possible to do justice to so many pupils with the most diverse prerequisites in terms of language and previous education within a school system. This task can no longer be solved within existing municipal structures and standards. 5.

A particular challenge is the accommodation of many young men travelling alone from many parts of the world and very different cultures, who often come to Germany with high expectations.

(6) Due to the current need for very tight occupancy of refugee accommodation, interpersonal and socio-cultural conflicts exist and are increasingly intensifying.

7) The accommodation of a large number of refugees from Ukraine and other countries of origin was possible in the past. Only some of the persons are receiving assistance. Integration into work has only been partially successful. 8.

If they are receiving assistance, integration into work is increasingly difficult, among other things because the comparatively high social benefits make it increasingly unattractive to become independent of state social benefits through income from work.

9 We experience human fates in the accommodation of unaccompanied minor refugees. It is no longer possible to do justice to this growing group of people. All capacities are exhausted. Care capacities in terms of space and personnel are no longer available. 10.

10 The employees in care and administration are also massively and systematically overworked. The shortage of skilled workers intensifies the effect.

## Demands on active persons in politics

1. an end must be put to the unlimited allocation of refugees to municipalities. This applies in particular to economic refugees. A defined burden limit for the municipalities is needed. 2.

Only persons with the prospect of remaining in the country should be allocated to the municipalities. 3.

3) The social standards at the European level must be urgently harmonised. This includes the introduction of benefits in kind and payment cards. 4.

4. asylum procedures must be accelerated. In case of rejection, repatriation must take place immediately. 5.

5. alternative forms of organisation must be created for the care of children and young people in day-care centres and schools, if necessary and at least with a view to the future.

6. immediate measures must be made possible and implemented for the few individuals with inappropriate behaviour.

7. integration into the labour market must be further promoted as a matter of priority. External incentives, obligations and also binding agreements are needed, which are no longer provided for in the Citizen's Income. Examples include continuous presence on site, the acceptance of jobs below the assumed qualification level and compulsory participation in language courses.

The municipalities expect fair compensation from the federal and state governments for the financial costs of accommodating and caring for the refugees, including for the costs of holding them.

(9) We currently have a strong housing need in the region, even without immigration. This will be absolutely exacerbated by the accommodation of refugees. Therefore, it is imperative to launch a housing construction programme that triggers both privately financed and social housing construction in parallel. This requires massive financial support from the public sector.

The world is in turmoil. Germany needs comprehensive buffer capacities for coming crises.