

# Germany Report

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## 1. Introduction

Within the European Union, Germany is the country with the largest population. With its gross domestic product of \$40,977 per capita in 2015 (Statista 2016a), the German economy is now the strongest in Europe. The German unemployment rate (4,2 %) as of July 2016 is one of the lowest in Europe correspondingly (Statista 2016b). The country has a total area of 357,022 km<sup>2</sup> (Statista 2016c) and a population of about 81,1 million (Statista 2016d). In 2015, Germany was faced with the largest number of migrants entering the EU in recent years, with a total of 476,649 asylum applications being lodged – the highest number of applicants in that year, followed by Hungary (about 177,000) and Sweden (about 163,000) (Hawkins 2016: 15). In the first half of 2016 the number of first-time asylum applicants has already reached 361,710; that is 4,428 asylum applicants per million inhabitants (Eurostat 2016a). This number marks an all-time high in the recent history of asylum in Germany. Large numbers of migrants had entered the country previously, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, when recruitment agreements, mainly with Turkey, Greece and Italy, gave foreign workers the opportunity to migrate to Germany legally. After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the reunification, Germany saw a rise in asylum applications, which reached a peak in 1992 (roughly 440,000 applicants) (Hanewinkel and Oltmer 2015: 3). Between 1992 and 2010, immigration declined, as did the number of asylum applications; however, since 2007, this number has been increasing again, reflecting recent global developments (Hanewinkel and Oltmer 2015: 3, 6).

The German asylum system mainly adheres to the following directives of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS).<sup>1</sup> Asylum applications must be filed with the local bureau of the Federal Office for Migration and

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1 The description here is based on the *Country Report: Germany* (Kalkmann 2015).

Refugees (*Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge*, BAMF), which has several centres across Germany's federal states. Asylum claims made by asylum seekers who do not carry identification papers and/or who enter the territory after having left a third country that is deemed safe may be rejected; however, the state police usually refer all asylum seekers to BAMF. If people seeking protection are eligible for asylum, they will be accommodated at an initial reception centre, which provides the necessary basics ('first needs'), such as shelter, food, heating and hygiene products. After filing their asylum application, they will be subjected to regular procedures. BAMF conducts personal interviews with the asylum seekers to determine their itinerary and possible reasons for being granted asylum. If the Dublin Regulation applies to the case, the asylum seeker's claim may be categorised as 'inadmissible', and the person will be sent back to the country responsible for examining the asylum claim. In reality, the Dublin procedure has been suspended for those coming from Greece and Malta, and several German courts have decided that there should also be no deportations to Italy and Bulgaria.

Asylum can be granted either in the form of constitutional asylum, which is the refugee status according to the Geneva Convention, or in other forms of protection (subsidiary status, prohibition of deportation). In addition, national protection status can be granted to people at risk of "substantial and concrete danger to life and limb or liberty" (Kalkmann 2015: 13). A maximum of three appeals can be submitted to the court and can have a suspensory effect on deportation if the application was not rejected and deemed 'manifestly unfounded or inadmissible'. BAMF conducts accelerated procedures for asylum claims that are either manifestly unfounded or well founded. Manifestly unfounded asylum claims are claims made by people coming from what are regarded as safe countries of origin, which (2016) include Ghana, Senegal, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Montenegro. For people with a good chance of being granted asylum, written procedures can replace the personal interview, although only positive decisions can be made this way; otherwise, the application must be subjected to the regular procedure. In 2015, people from Syria or Eritrea and religious minorities from Iraq were eligible for the written procedure if they so chose.

Regarding the current asylum situation in Germany, there has been much talk about the refugee crisis, with numbers of up to 1,1 million asylum seekers having entered the country (BAMF 2016a). However, the numbers of third-country nationals who entered Germany in 2015 are

highly unreliable and vary significantly depending on the source of information. It was implied that some 500,000 people had to wait to apply for asylum during that year, but that there were several issues with incompatibility of the registration software, double counting and other issues. Moreover, the influx of a large number of migrants caused the German accommodation system as defined by law to collapse. Upon their arrival, migrants were not accommodated in initial reception centres where they would generally file their asylum claims with BAMF. Instead, they were transported to various kinds of emergency shelters where they were not able to apply for asylum and were simply given a document, called *BüMA (Bescheinigung über die Meldung als Asylsuchender)*, that confirmed their “having reported as an asylum seeker” (Kalkmann 2015: 15). Subsequent lodging of an asylum application might take several months. This distorts the numbers, meaning that there is no reliable information about how many people seeking protection are currently in Germany and how many of them will actually apply for asylum (Kalkmann 2015: 13 ff.; Bogumil et al. 2016: 128 ff.).

BAMF does, however, supply reliable information on filed asylum applications. When based on number of asylum applications per 10,000 inhabitants in 2015, Germany ranks fifth out of the 28 EU countries, but with a total of 59 applications per 10,000 inhabitants, it still exceeds the EU-28 average of 26 (Hawkins 2016: 15). Of all the applications received in 2015 in Germany, 441,899 were first-time applications and 34,750 were follow-ups. Since 2014, the number of first-time applications has increased by 155,3 % (BAMF 2015: 7).

First-instance decisions (2015) by BAMF resulted in a protection rate of 49,8 % (BAMF 2016: 35), which is slightly below the EU-28 average of 52 % (Eurostat 2016c). The rates for humanitarian (refugee) protection and subsidiary protection are shown in Table 1. The high number of pending applications was due to the large influx of asylum seekers in 2014 and 2015, which caused BAMF to fall behind in processing registrations and filing new applications, severely exacerbating long-standing capacity issues (Bogumil et al. 2016: 128; Kalkmann 2015: 6, 10).

Table 1: Asylum applications in Germany in 2015

Applications in 2015	Pending applications in 2015	Refugee rate	Subsidiary protection rate	Rejection rate	Formal decisions
441,899	364,664	48,5%	0,6%	32,4%	17,8%

Source: Adapted from Kalkmann (2016: 6) and BAMF (2016: 7, 34, 42).

According to Eurostat data, in the first half of 2016 total recognition rate for Germany constituted 68 % and subsidiary protection was granted in 9 % of cases (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016f). In total, 256,680 asylum decisions were made in Germany in this period of time, 82,450 of them were negative ones (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016f). Refugee rate constituted 58 % in the first two quarters of 2016 (Eurostat 2016d; Eurostat 2016f).

Between January and October 2015, the main countries of origin of asylum applicants were Syria, with 103,708 applications filed; the Balkan region (Albania: 49,692, Kosovo: 35,583, Serbia: 24,486); and Iraq, with 21,303 applications. Only 0,02 % of applications filed by Syrians were rejected, whereas the rejection rates for Albania, Kosovo and Serbia were at 99,8 %, 99,5 % and 99,8 %, respectively; 79,4 % of Iraqi nationals received some form of protection (Kalkmann 2015: 6). The main countries of origin statistics hasn't changed in the end of 2015 (Eurostat 2016d).

Table 2: Countries of origin of asylum seekers in Germany, January–October 2015

Country of origin	Number of applications	Protection rate (refugee status, humanitarian/subsidiary protection) (%)	Rejection rate
Syria	103,708	99,98	0,02
Albania	49,692	0,2	99,8
Kosovo	35,583	0,5	99,5
Serbia	24,486	0,2	99,8
Iraq	21,303	79,4	20,6

Source: Adapted from Kalkmann (2015: 6).

The research presented in this chapter was carried out in the city of Bochum, which is located in the federal state of North Rhine–Westphalia (NRW). Although NRW comes in fourth among the federal states when ranked according to its size geographically, in population it by far surpasses Bavaria, which is ranked second. With its population of 17,6 million,

NRW is the most densely populated federal state in Germany (Statista 2016e). It also receives the largest share of asylum seekers (21.12%), followed by Bavaria (15%) (Stadt Bochum 2016), owing to the Königstein Quota System (the *Königsteiner Schlüssel*), which determines the number of asylum seekers sent to each federal state and city. It allocates quotas according to population size and economic performance, not surface area (BAMF 2015). Bochum itself is part of the fifth largest agglomeration in Europe, the Ruhr Valley. With an area of 145,4 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 369,314 (Stadt Bochum 2015), Bochum receives 1,6 % of the asylum seekers allocated to NRW (Stadt Bochum 2016). As of 2016, the unemployment rate in Bochum was at approximately 10 % (Stadt Bochum 2016a), which is 3,6 percentage points higher than the unemployment rate for the whole country, which was 6,4 % in 2015 – the lowest number since the German reunification (BA 2016) and below the EU-28 average of 9,4 % (Eurostat 2016b).

As of January 2016, there were 5,350 asylum applicants registered in Bochum and about 150 new asylum applicants arriving per week. They were accommodated at 261 reception camps across the city (Stadt Bochum 2016b). As of 1 January 2016, there were 17 gyms being used as emergency accommodation. Bochum accommodates about 12,25 asylum seekers per 1,000 inhabitants in 2016, not counting refugees and those asylum seekers who had their claim rejected but their deportation suspended (WDR 2016a, b). This number is considerably higher than the 4,428 asylum seekers per million inhabitants in the whole of Germany, as in the first half of 2016 (Eurostat 2016a).

In this chapter, we focus on the city of Bochum to examine the work being carried out by the cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations and their role in the local asylum system in Germany. In particular, we collected data from major actors, networks and those working locally with asylum seekers and refugees and elicited the organisations' views on the asylum situation in Europe.

## 2. Current State of Research

A considerable amount of research has been published concerning asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. Because many of those publications address the legal aspects of this field, they are not particularly relevant to the MAREM project. Other studies focus on the social and integration aspects

that affect asylum seekers and refugees. For example, in the report by the Robert Bosch Stiftung (2016), several experts analysed the asylum situation in Germany in 2015 and made recommendations, focusing mainly on these issues, although they also examined matters on the European policy level. They found that a system of burden-sharing at the EU level is required and proposed that a solution should be found on this level. They also proposed that the German asylum procedures should be enhanced, which has some relevance to the MAREM project, because it discusses CEAS and also considers the German background. Lahusen (2016) analysed the bureaucratisation of the EU through CEAS and concluded that the EU has successfully institutionalised the legal framework. He found that although a common European administrative state has yet to be established, a Europeanisation is occurring on the local administrative level. Hatton (2012) addressed similar issues, focusing on whether an EU-wide policy system can and should be integrated and concluding that deep integration of a joint system is preferable and achievable. Kalkmann (2015) presented comprehensive data on both the German system and CEAS, as well as the on how they deviate from each other. This was particularly useful for understanding the level of implementation of CEAS in Germany. Concerning the national level, Oltmer (2015) concluded that Germany has difficulties coordinating the countless political and administrative actors between the different levels and that people in need of protection come to Germany in particular because they can find already established networks of families and other migrants there. Bogumil et al. (2016) pointed out deficiencies in the German asylum system that stem mainly from an inability to cope with the Office for Asylum and Refugees, the complicated bureaucracy and problems with the registration software.

Kleist (2015) published one of the few reports on the contributions of asylum-related organisations, with a focus on the social structure, and concluded that most volunteers work within associations and self-organised groups and that their function is to accompany asylum seekers and refugees to meetings with public authorities and to give language lessons.

Although studies have been done regarding legal, social, integration and policy issues on several levels, no research is currently available regarding the organisational networks of asylum-related organisations and CEAS. In response to this research gap, we formulated the following research questions as the basis for that part of the MAREM project focusing on Germany:

- How do the cooperation networks of asylum-related organisations in Bochum function?
- Who are the important actors in the refugee-related organisational field, and how are they linked to one another?
- How is CEAS relevant to the asylum-related organisations in Bochum?
- Can forms of isomorphism (described in the first chapter of this book) be identified in and among asylum-related organisations, and is there a gap between talk and action on both the local and EU level?
- What are the organisations' views on CEAS and its implementation at the local level, and what do organisations propose for the improvement of CEAS and the asylum situation in Europe?

### 3. Hypotheses

Because the aim of the EU is to implement CEAS by providing a uniform standard for the admission, handling and integration of asylum seekers and refugees, it is reasonable to assume that coercive isomorphism occurs that stems from institutional pressures and government directives. Moreover, dealing with asylum seekers and refugees requires that organisations be highly flexible, and new organisations have emerged in response to the situation in 2015. Presumably, funding for migration-related projects is rather short-term and project-specific, so mimetic and normative isomorphism may also be observed within the organisations that deal with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum.

Provided that these processes are indeed to be observed, the theory of neo-institutionalism (described in the first chapter of this book) suggests that there will be a tendency towards homogenisation across the organisations that work with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum. This might exert pressure from below, causing the local city administration to adapt to the organisations' expectations, thus causing a change from below rather than from the level of the EU. Extensive networking may occur at all levels, and city administrators and local organisations might seek to influence each other, further promoting homogenisation.

In summary, we thus propose six hypotheses:

- *Hypothesis 1:* Forms of coercive isomorphism may be detectable.
- *Hypothesis 2:* Forms of normative isomorphism may be detectable.
- *Hypothesis 3:* Forms of mimetic isomorphism may be detectable.

- *Hypothesis 4*: If Hypothesis 1,2 and 3 prove to be true, there may be tendencies towards homogeneity within the organisational networks of asylum related organisations in Bochum.
- *Hypothesis 5*: Intensive networking that further promotes homogeneity may be taking place in Bochum.
- *Hypothesis 6*: Homegenisation among local organisatioins may exert pressure on the local government and travel upwards to EU level.

#### 4. Data

In the first quarter of 2016, the MAREM research group conducted eleven interviews with asylum- and refugee-related organisations operating in Bochum. Table 3 gives a detailed list of the interviewees and their main characteristics.

The interviews were conducted with executive employees of six local non-governmental organisations (NGOs), one local governmental organisation, two voluntary networks,<sup>2</sup> a lawyer<sup>3</sup> specialising in refugee and asylum issues and a research institute (Ruhr-University Bochum). We collected relevant data on how the cooperation networks in Bochum function and on the extent to which they affect the establishment of CEAS. In order to identify isomorphic processes, the interviewed experts were asked several questions regarding their own education and that of their co-workers, as well as whether they copied best practices from other organisations and how much EU directives have affected their work. We also examined the cooperation of asylum-related organisations to other relevant organisations and the homogeneity or heterogeneity of those networks.

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- 2 'Networks' in this case refers to official actors, not ties between actors. Voluntary networks in Bochum show characteristics of organisations and act as such.
  - 3 The lawyer is not affiliated with any organisation but served as an expert on asylum issues during this research.



Table 3: Interviewees in 2016 in Bochum

Organisation	Spatial reach	Actor type	Driving norms	Main issues	Tasks	Resources
PLANB Ruhr e. V.	Local	NGO	Human rights	Youth	Support	State, private
Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Bochum	National	NGO	Human rights	Asylum	Support	State, private
Ronahi e.V.	Local	NGO	Human rights	Asylum	Support	State, private
Kinder- und Jugendring Bochum e.V.	National	NGO	Human rights	Youth	Support	State, private
Evangelischer Arbeitskreis Asyl im Kirchenkreis Bochum e.V.	Local	NGO	Religious	Asylum	Support	State, private
HaRiHo – die Stadtteilpartner	Local	NGO	Human rights	Integration	Support	State, private
Jobcenter Bochum	Local	GO	Social security	Labour market access	Support	State
Netzwerk Wohlfahrtsstraße	Local	Network	Human rights	Integration	Support	Private
Netzwerk Flüchtlinge Langendreer	Local	Network	Human rights	Integration	Support	Private
Heike Geisweid	Local	Lawyer	Human rights	Asylum	Advocacy	Private
Ruhr-University Bochum – Institute for International Law of Peace and Armed Conflict	National	Research institute	Objectivity	Humanitarian crises	Research	State

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

The NGOs and voluntary networks we interviewed conduct their operational work on the local level. In most cases, they specialise in the support of migrants and share common key issues such as integration and youth work. Furthermore, PLANB Ruhr e. V., Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Bochum<sup>4</sup> and Ronahi e. V. are in charge of several reception centres. With the exception of the Ruhr-University Bochum (the only research institute interviewed) and the Jobcenter Bochum (the only GO interviewed), all the organisations are human rights-orientated, but most have other, additional

4 The German Red Cross.

driving norms. Most of the organisations have their financial support provided by a combination of state and private sources (Table 3).

Hereafter, the organisations we interviewed will be referred to by the following abbreviations:

PlanB	PLANB Ruhr e. V.
DRK	Deutsches Rotes Kreuz Bochum
Ronahi	Ronahi e. V.
Kinder- und Jugendring	Kinder- und Jugendring Bochum e. V.
AK Asyl	Evangelischer Arbeitskreis Asyl im Kirchenkreis Bochum e. V.
HaRiHo	HaRiHo – die Stadtteilerpartner e. V.
Jobcenter	Jobcenter Bochum
NW	Netzwerk Wohlfahrtstraße
NL	Netzwerk Flüchtlinge Langendreer
RUB	Ruhr-University Bochum.

In the following section, we present the results of our research in Bochum.

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Networks

All the interviewed asylum-related organisations stress the importance of cooperation. When asked about the importance of networking and cooperation, PlanB (2016) had this to say:

*It is very important. If we did not cooperate, we would know only a small part of what we know at the moment. If you do not keep yourself up to date through cooperation and aiding one another, the whole thing will not work.<sup>5</sup>*

The AK Asyl (2016) shares similar views:

*You have to try to be active in as many networks as possible, because we can only ensure having the most up-to-date information available if we think [in] networks. [...] You need objective information. This can be ensured only if one is incorporated into networks. A stand-alone island solution is unimaginable in this context and would not make any sense at all.*

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5 This statement and all that follow were translated from German to English by the authors of this chapter.

The Kinder- und Jugendring (2016) agrees and adds the following:

*What works extremely well here is the networking of different aid organisations. The cooperation with individual employees of the administration is also truly excellent.*

In addition, there is an elaborate system of networks and regular meetings in Bochum that appears to involve all relevant organisations. Such networks can be divided into two categories. The first category includes networks of volunteers that evolved around individual reception centres to provide support to asylum seekers and refugees and then spread their links around the city; these networks now also include actors from professional organisations. The second category includes networks whose main purpose is the exchange of information, especially (but not exclusively) with professional organisational actors and city administrators.

The volunteer networks' main focus is on supporting asylum seekers and refugees in all areas and concerns of their day-to-day life. These networks are highly flexible and consist of a heterogeneous group of volunteers who offer a wide range of assistance.

*A network like Hamme Hilft is casual, very flexible (HaRiHo 2016). For us, it's all about how we can help people to connect with each other [...]. It is a dynamic process. You have to sensibilise yourself to the needs of the people. We want to give many people the opportunity to [become active] themselves (NW 2016).*

Offers of assistance are directed primarily at asylum seekers living in the reception centre in question, but these centres are usually open to anyone willing to participate. They do not discriminate against anyone, as the following statements reveal:

*The philosophy is clear; we share the same values. We generally share the opinion that everyone is human. And that all those seeking aid have the right to get it (HaRiHo 2016).*

*The guideline here is to help, or help to help. We try to treat the refugees with respect (AK Asyl 2016).*

*The reason people are coming to us is completely irrelevant. Those persons need help, which they will get. We do not draw distinctions. Nobody asks, 'So are you from a safe country?' Quite the opposite! We do not care about things like that (NL 2016).*

Two of the volunteer networks in Bochum were interviewed during the MAREM project. NW was one of the first asylum-related networks to be established in Bochum, and it started as a neighbourhood initiative to support a nearby reception centre. The second one is NL, which is relatively

young and was founded for the same reasons. The AK Asyl can also be considered a network of this category, and HaRiHo is closely linked to the network Hamme Hilft. Networks that focus on the exchange of information include the Sozialraumkonferenz,<sup>6</sup> the Initiativkreis Flucht und Asyl.

*We exchange information in 'Sozialraumkonferenzen', or panels, with professional actors and try to identify the needs (HaRiHo 2016).*

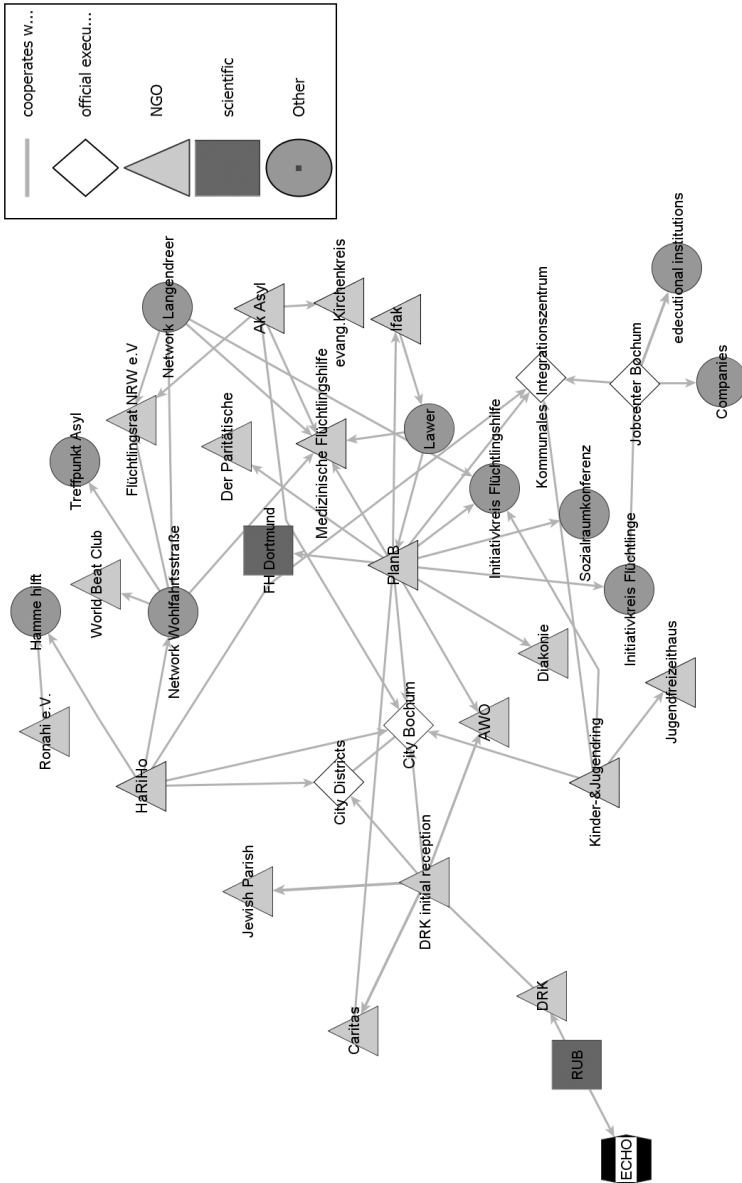
All interviewed organisations participate in several networks from both categories. Figure 1 shows the egocentric cooperation networks (see the first chapter of this book for more information on this term) of asylum-related organisations in Bochum according to their actor type. It includes only the eleven interviewed organisations and the cooperation partners they named and therefore does not show the complete network of asylum-related organisations in Bochum.

Figure 1 shows that the reconstructed part of the whole network (see the first chapter of this book) is fairly homogeneous relative to the actor type, because it includes 19 NGOs but only three GOs. Upon further analysis, it becomes clear that each actor has ties both to NGOs and to GOs and networks. Actors that are particularly well connected are PlanB (an NGO), the city administration (a GO), the Kommunales Integrationszentrum (a GO), the Medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe (an NGO) and NW (a network). All interviewed organisations cooperate with the city administration in some way. Hence, when viewed according to actor type, the egocentric cooperation networks show slight tendencies towards heterogeneity for all organisations, although scientific institutes and international actors play a minor role.

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6 The Social Demographic Conference and the initiative Flight and Asylum are conferences that address issues related to asylum seekers, refugees and other groups on a regular basis.

Figure 1: Asylum-related organisations in Bochum, their cooperation partners and actor types



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

The aim of the website [Fluechtlingshilfe-Bochum.de](http://Fluechtlingshilfe-Bochum.de), which is run by the city of Bochum, is to provide a conclusive overview of asylum- and refugee-related activities in Bochum and lists relevant organisations according to their actor type. A total of 49 different organisations are divided into the following categories: registered society/organisation, which includes 19 organisations, 22 voluntary networks, and the city, which includes seven actors and two student projects ([Fluechtlingshilfe-Bochum.de](http://Fluechtlingshilfe-Bochum.de)). Although the egocentric network for each organisation is quite heterogeneous, it follows that the overall landscape of asylum-related organisations in Bochum is dominated by NGOs and volunteer networks.

*Table 4: Development of networks of asylum-related organisations in Bochum over time according to the actor type of the partners*

Question: Is your network becoming rather homogenous or heterogeneous regarding the actor type of the partners?	
<b>PlanB</b>	Heterogeneous (but homogeneous in terms of norms and values)
<b>DRK</b>	Not directly stated, but heterogeneous <sup>7</sup>
<b>Kinder- und Jugendring</b>	Heterogeneous
<b>HaRiHo</b>	Heterogeneous
<b>AK Asyl</b>	Heterogeneous
<b>NW</b>	Heterogeneous
<b>NL</b>	Heterogeneous
<b>Jobcenter</b>	Heterogeneous

Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

Considering that the network visualisation in Figure 1 shows only the situation as it stands in 2016, it is important to consider the evolution of these networks. Consistent with the results, most of the interviewed organisations stated that their networks have become more heterogeneous over time.

Figure 2 shows the egocentric cooperation networks according to the organisations’ spatial reach. Apart from the networks, most organisations are incorporated into internationally operating umbrella organisations such as the DRK and the Kinder- und Jugendring. However, their operational

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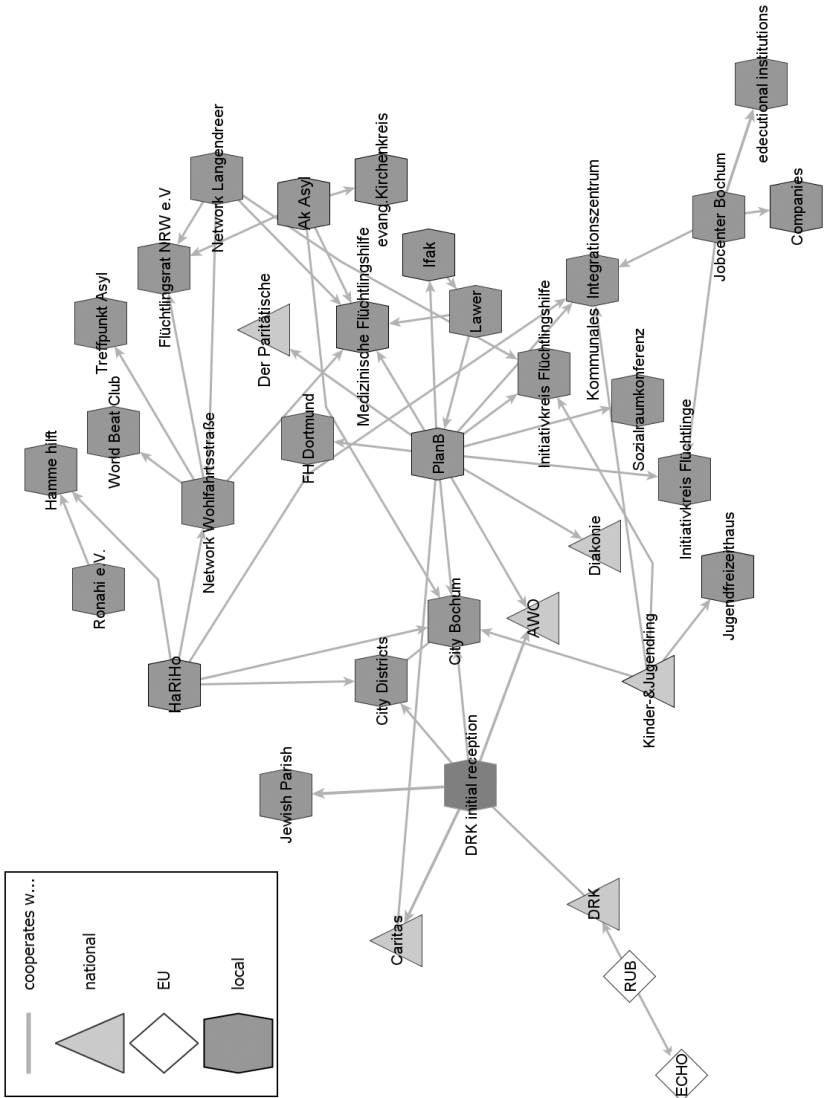
7 The answer is clear in the context of the questionnaire.

work is focused on the local level. The offices in Bochum operate on a local basis, and their activities, if any, are only loosely concerned with international agendas. Accordingly, the data suggest a tendency towards homogeneity within the cooperation networks regarding the spatial reach of organisations, so these organisations should be regarded as local organisations with an international background when one considers the spatial reach of their activities. Taking this into account, the only international organisation that appears in Figure 2 is the Office of the European Commission.

In the next step, the norms and values of asylum-related organisations in Bochum are analysed (Figure 3). In this case, one can differentiate a number of categories, including objective, religious, humanitarian and political/law enforcement.

At first glance, the networks appear to be very heterogeneous, with all the categories listed above represented. This is because the visualisation takes into account only the main issues. Upon further analysis and based on the data from the expert interviews, however, it becomes evident that the organisations usually have more than one goal. They may, for example, have a religious background but consider themselves to be human rights-based and objective (see AK Asyl 2016). None of the norms and values shown in the visualisation seemed mutually exclusive for any of the interviewed organisations. All of them named at least two relevant categories when asked about their norms and values, and some stated outright that they prefer collaborating with actors who share similar values. Thus, the data show a tendency towards neither heterogeneity nor homogeneity.

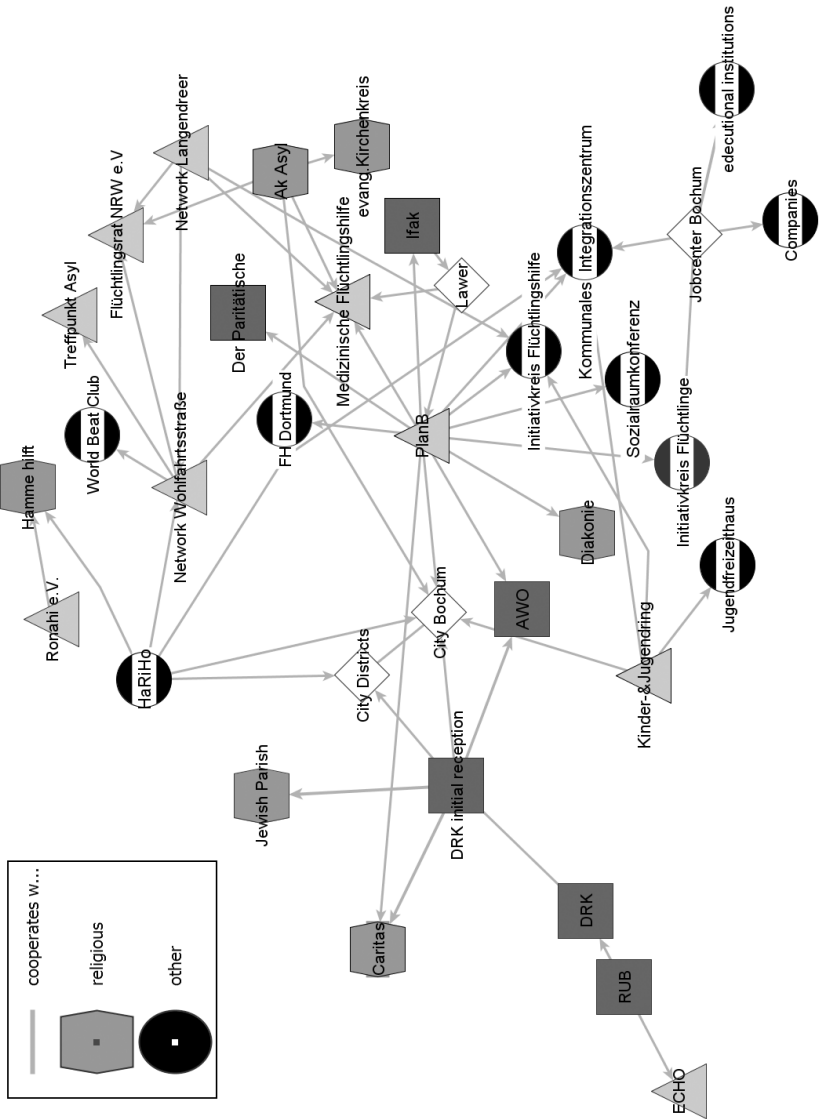
Figure 2: Asylum-related organisations in Bochum, their cooperation partners and spatial reach



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.



Figure 3: Asylum-related organisations in Bochum, their cooperation partners, norms and values



Source: Adapted from expert interviews and website analyses as part of the MAREM project 2016.

## 5.2 The roles of GOs, NGOs and Volunteers

The local work with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum is characterised by networks<sup>8</sup> that rely mostly on volunteers.

*It is great that there are aid networks located at every reception centre, covering all issues: sports clubs, church, youth groups (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).*

All interviewed organisations conduct their work with the support of volunteers, and such support is perceived as vital for the integration and participation of asylum seekers and refugees.

*The network would not exist without the volunteers. The administrations' employees that work in the reception centres often work part-time and have to provide care for 200 people at a time. They cannot coordinate everything. That's when they ask us for help [...]. The people in the network do everything for free. There are almost no salaried employees in the networks (NL 2016).*

*The social workers do ask us for help, for example, when a person needs translation [or] company when visiting a doctor (NL 2016).*

*The work Hamme Hilft does is very important for the people, especially as the state supplies only basic services when it comes to integration [of asylum seekers and refugees] (HaRiHo 2016).*

NGOs also provide similar aid for asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum and sometimes fill a gap left by the state.

*At the moment it is still the case that organisations, networks and volunteers carry the integration process. Without them, it would be incredibly difficult for the asylum seekers and refugees to settle down here (HaRiHo 2016).*

Cultural institutes are also important for integration, because they offer a wide range of activities that allow the asylum seekers and refugees to participate in society (see e.g. HaRiHo 2016; PlanB 2016; AK Asyl 2016; NW 2016). However, RUB (2016) explains that NGOs are not as relevant as they should ideally be:

*I think that international organisations, UNHCR and others are not being considered in an adequate way. [...] Their influence is relatively small when it comes to political issues. However, the support of these organisations is needed when it comes to the implementation, because they can help and this is very important (RUB 2016).*

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8 Refers to official networks, not ties between actors.

In contrast, the interviewed NGOs and official networks do not think that state organisations are having a positive influence on the situation.

*State organisations play an enormous role, especially the BAMF, because we are here to correct the deficiencies the BAMF causes [...], especially state re-  
gimentation in the form of idleness (AK Asyl 2016).*

*The problem with the public institutions is that they depend on the adminis-  
trative system, the political declarations, and the law, and this makes them in  
many areas not flexible (NW 2016).*

### 5.3 Isomorphism

In keeping with the neo-institutional approach, the collected data implicate isomorphic processes with regard to the organisational cooperation networks of asylum-related actors in Bochum. In the following, we will highlight some aspects of homogenisation of cooperating organisations.

First, the organisations' criteria for cooperation were analysed with the result that the networking organisations tend to share the same philosophy, as already shown in Figure 3: they share the same norms and values; they are all humanitarian, non-radical, democratic organisations; and all the organisations we interviewed stated that among the criteria for not cooperating with each other are racism, fundamentalism and undemocratic driving norms.

*The organisations we cooperate with must be democratic, antiracist and non-  
violent, just like us (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).*

*The cooperation partner should have the same philosophy such as neutrality  
and objectivity (DRK 2016).*

*They should think like us, have a humanistic approach and think in huma-  
nistic terms. We care about the person, not the colour of their skin or religi-  
on. We are independent from politics and religion (PlanB 2016).*

Regarding this aspect, we observed tendencies towards homogeneity.

DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 155) noted that “*The greater the extent to which an organizational field is dependent upon a single source of support for vital resources, the higher the level of isomorphism*”. This is the case in Bochum, because all organisations receive some sort of funding from the city and government.

*We are financed by project funds, by funds of the BAMF and by city funds  
(PlanB 2016).*

*Our work is funded by contracts with the city of Bochum (Ronahi 2016).*

*One part are resources from the city administration. That is the most important pillar of our finances, as well as funding from the federal state and state (Kinder-und Jugendring 2016).*

Eventually, this homogeneity in funding might lead to a homogenisation of the organisations that deal with asylum/refugee-related issues (see the first chapter of this book).

According to DiMaggio and Powell (1983: 155), another indicator of the extent of isomorphism within an organisational field is the education of staff and management: *“The greater the extent of professionalization [...], the greater the amount of institutional isomorphic change.”* The staff working for asylum-related organisations in Bochum predominantly have a background in the field of social studies, as evidenced in the following statements:

*They are all qualified educators, social workers or social scientists (Kinder-und Jugendring 2016).*

*They are specialised staff from the full range of social work: social workers, social scientists, professional educators (PlanB 2016).*

Therefore, there is homogenisation regarding the educational background of staff within the organisations, leading to a similar structure and strategies, both informal and formal. This also applies to the interviewed GO, Jobcenter, which noted that:

*the qualification of our employees is changing. In the past, most of them had an administrative background. Today, more social scientists and pedagogues get employed (Jobcenter 2016).*

Another point can be made concerning mimetic isomorphism, because there were indications of copying best practices. In theory, this happens for a number of reasons, notably the uncertainty of the environment and a desire to increase the chances of survival, which lead organisations to imitate other organisations' strategies and behaviour. One mechanism for accomplishing this is to mimic best practices (see: First chapter of this book):

*We copied most of it from them [Netzwerk Wohlfahrtstraße]. We don't need to invent everything over again (NL 2016).*

*Yes, we do copy successful modi operandi (PlanB 2016).*

*We are strongly geared towards the Flüchtlingsrat NRW and their structures and strategies. We also adopt their practices, gratefully (AK Asyl 2016).*

Even when there is no direct copying, there is at least an exchange of knowledge. In particular, information about strategies for dealing with is-

sues related to refugees and asylum seekers is often harmonised across organisations in Bochum.

*It is important: How do other organisations deal with a problem?* (Ronahi 2016).

PlanB and Kinder- und Jugendring also offer intercultural training for professionals and volunteers, which further promotes homogeneity (PlanB 2016; Ronahi 2016).

#### 5.4 The European Level and CEAS

Starting with the assumption that the organisations we interviewed might perceive a gap between talk and action concerning official declarations and actual organisational behaviour, it became evident that there does indeed seem to be a discrepancy. Many of the organisations see a failure at the *top-down* EU level. Those in Bochum criticise the Dublin Regulation for being only arbitrarily enforced. As a predecessor of CEAS, the Dublin Regulation was regarded as being applied improperly during its time as a regulatory directive. For example:

*The Dublin Regulation is applied only when it is useful. For some groups (Syria, Iraq) the Dublin Regulation gets ignored, and for some groups, which are wanted to leave, it will be applied* (Ronahi 2016).

*The Dublin Regulation is kind of a joke. If you applied the Dublin Regulation correctly, Germany would have nothing to do with refugees at all* (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).

Concerning the establishment of CEAS, the collected data suggest that European law and regulations have not been implemented in reality. National laws regarding issues that concern asylum seekers and refugees are still in place instead of the contents of CEAS.

*[The implementation of CEAS] is and has always been very slow. So was implementation of the qualification directive, [...] the last big change to our asylum system. It was an eternity before the subsidiary protection status was put into effect. I have the feeling that things take a long time when there could be a change for the better, and a change for the worse happens faster* (Geisweid 2016).

*Little gets implemented; it is shame that solidarity does not go that far. Germany itself did not care about the CEAS for years, because the asylum seekers ended up elsewhere anyway as a result of the Dublin Regulations* (Ronahi 2016).

*The EU level is too far away to have a common policy. Even in Germany there is not one common system (NL 2016).*

Further statements show that the national and local authorities are to blame for not applying European laws:

*The [EU] directives are known, but they have not been implemented yet. [...] The authorities stick to the national law, not to the European directives (Geisweid 2016).*

*You can notice a discrepancy between the different federal states. [...] There are families here who have been waiting for an interview eleven, twelve, 13 months. This is not acceptable. And it is sheer mockery when the federal and federal state government publicise that the average duration of proceedings often is five or six months (AK Asyl 2016).*

When we analysed the data, we found a gap between talk and action, not only on the EU level but on the local level as well. National and federal regulations are not applied, as is also the case in Bochum.

*There are about 300 children who are school-aged but have not gotten a place in school [...]. The Federal government failed to provide enough capacities, because it is not only a right for the children to attend school, but also a statutory duty to do so (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).*

*I think there is a lack of structuration in many areas. There is no structure. I experience this myself a lot. The BAMF, the municipalities and even the public authorities dealing with labour market access – everything is still very chaotic. There is, for example, no common system for registration (Jobcenter 2016).*

NL (2016) adds that when caring for asylum seekers and refugees, NGOs sometimes have to fill the gap the state leaves,

*especially in initial accommodation, where we do things that should be organised by the state. It is far from okay when doctors from our network must organise the medical care. This is a state responsibility. It is an expression of state failure when we have to do this (NL 2016).*

None of the interviewed organisations regarded CEAS as something positive. The following statement by Kinder- und Jugendring sums up the main points expressed by the organisations:

*In my opinion, the CEAS is inhuman. [...] The government's only goal is to keep refugees away from Europe. The objective is to keep people out of here and it takes liberty with the consequences of this action. This is public knowledge, and Amnesty International has exposed multiple cases. That Turkey deports persons to war zones, which violates the Geneva Convention, violates the European Convention on Human Rights, violates our reputed great Western values. This development is dramatic, with the headline 'Inhuman' (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).*

## 5.5 Criticism and Suggestions

*I don't know if the EU wants to fail in all cases. I have the impression that Europe does not believe in itself anymore, that the countries care more about their own interests instead of the community. I assert that [the EU] was an artificial construct, that the countries no longer believe in themselves (PlanB 2016).*

The interviewed organisations mainly criticise the European asylum regime and its impact on the national asylum system.

*The EASY system<sup>9</sup> is a huge problem, [such as when] people who are in NRW, whose relatives are here, are moved to Bavaria near the Czech border where there's only one bus a day. They just sit there and wait. [...] The accommodation itself is a catastrophe. There aren't even those six bedrooms in the gyms anymore. There are sections, separated by paper towels. In the past, there were separate sections for women and men. Nowadays, this isn't considered anymore (Geisweid 2016).*

Other points of criticism include the high level of bureaucracy and deficiencies in the asylum proceedings themselves. The interviewed experts further draw attention to shortcomings on the local level.

*Bureaucracy is a big barrier, when you collaborate with public authorities and they say 'It has always been like this.' This inflexible system [is a problem]. Things coming from the city are progressing very slowly (HaRiHo 2016).*

*Our problems now are structural issues. You do not know where to start and how to continue. Also, the [lack of] transparency of target groups – not to know who comes and when they come, how many will they be. That you always work with a crystal ball. Those are our problems; financial means are widely available (Jobcenter 2016).*

*Then of course the duration of asylum proceedings [must be criticised]. The wait for filing an application [is too long]. They only receive a paper on which their status as an asylum seeker gets extended. They are held back for months or even years and nothing happens. It drives them crazy if they don't get any information (Geisweid 2016).*

According to some organisations such as the Kinder- und Jugendring and DRK, the local administration fails to carry out sufficient work when dealing with asylum seekers and so does the federal government. Experts state that much improvement is needed.

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9 The EASY system (*Erstverteilung von Asylbewerbern* [Initial Distribution of Asylum Seekers]) distributes asylum seekers across Germany (BAMF 2016c). See also Section 1 of this chapter on the *Königsteiner Schlüssel*.

*The situation of asylum seekers and refugees has to be improved significantly. It is preposterous that 17 gyms are still occupied. It is preposterous that asylum seekers are accommodated in gyms without any privacy for over 6 months. It is preposterous that asylum seekers who are geduldet<sup>10</sup> basically do not have any chance to work, to earn something for themselves. It is a catastrophe that children cannot attend school. So there is a lot of work to do (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).*

*And now the [administration has] capitulated and does not believe in its own proceedings anymore. In my opinion, they simply gave up. There isn't any information anymore when asylum seekers are moved from one facility to another (DRK 2016).*

### Organisations demand that

*the EU create a universal standard, distribute refugees fairly, not only accounting for number of inhabitants but also economic capability (Ronahi 2016).*

*It is important to make joint efforts. [...] The Dublin Regulation must be abolished. [...] Legal ways (of migration) should be created, so that people do not have to arrive by boat and drown. [...] The handling of asylum applications needs to be done more quickly (HaRiHo 2016).*

*We need international politics that think ahead for the next 50 years, because there will be many refugees to come [...] Germany should solve the problem together with the EU (RUB 2016).*

*Germans, asylum seekers and refugees should have the willingness to accept cultural values and not insist on only their own values. This is true for both sides (AK Asyl 2016).*

However, the interviewed organisations maintain a positive mindset.

*The system of welfare and social services works really well in Germany already. It is positive that the state does not aim to do everything, does not pull all the strings. That way we can introduce the humane aspects (PlanB 2016).*

The experts also provide suggestions on how to improve the situation on all levels. They suggest that the federal government create legal means of entry and face up to its responsibilities.

*Because at the moment there is an incredibly [high] number of wars in the world, incredibly many emergency situations, [...] there are many, many refugees. It is clear [...] that Germany has a responsibility in this and that we have to allow at least a proportion of those persons to come here. We are a rich country and certainly have more responsibility than a small country such as Lebanon for example (Kinder- und Jugendring 2016).*

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10 *Geduldet* = tolerated, referring to asylum seekers who had their claim rejected but whose deportation was suspended; they are permitted to stay but with reduced entitlements (Lohre 2009).



Regarding the situation of asylum seekers and refugees, they propose that everyone who comes here should

*be able to work from day one, ... to have their hand held and the opportunity to orientate themselves (Jobcenter 2016).*

*The participation of refugees can be improved in many cases: quick access to the labour market or generally more opportunities for work, which is also a national problem (HaRiHo 2016).*

Society should also participate in the reception and integration process and keep an open mind towards migrants.

*We have to give these persons the time to settle down, to warm up to our society. I expect from our society that we don't throw them off their guard, that we do not give them a feeling of 'You are here now, so we can show you how civilisation works.' They are already civilised, it's just another civilization (PlanB 2016).*

According to the interviewed organisations, the work of the administration could be improved by providing more professional training and better networking of state actors.

*I would like [to see] better networking within the city administration. I miss a network within the accommodation centres (DRK 2016).*

*Much more training [is needed] for those persons working for the administration. They have had the same jobs for decades. Mandatory training [would help] sensitise the staff. They are not pedagogues; they like numbers. But when it comes to humans, there has to be more education (HaRiHo 2016).*

## 6. Conclusion

Our results show that the local structure of the system that deals with asylum seekers and refugees in Bochum is dominated by local NGOs, which are perceived – and perceive themselves – to be of vital importance for the reception and integration of asylum seekers and refugees in the city. In Bochum, an extensive networking of asylum-related organisations is observed. All of the interviewed organisations participate in a number of networks, working groups and regular meetings to exchange information, ideas and best practices. In addition, there is a complex and extensive network of volunteers, which spans across the city and typically forms around the infrastructure of each individual reception camp, while maintaining links to both one another and to the professional organisations.

Our analysis of egocentric cooperation networks in Bochum revealed that they are rather heterogeneous with respect to the actor type of the organisations and are homogeneous with respect to their spatial reach; for each organisation on its own, the norms and values of the interviewed organisations were mostly multifaceted, but overall they were very similar when compared with one another. Isomorphic processes further substantiate the observed homogeneity. In the organisational field of asylum-related organisations in Bochum, these processes are especially prominent in terms of the way they are funded and the educational background of staff. All the organisations receive at least some of their support from city's federal funds or are otherwise tied to them through project funding. Relevant personnel, including those at the management level, are trained predominantly through some form of professional education program. This poses certain threats to efficiency measures and, more importantly, can lead to pressures of homogenisation on the local level. Homogeneity is further promoted in the selection of cooperation partners in that the interviewed organisations tend to prefer groups that share similar norms and values.

Based on these results, the first part of the hypotheses can partially be corroborated. Intensive networking on the local level does indeed take place. Isomorphic processes are indeed at work; however, the organisations still perceive a gap between talk and action on the local level. Although the organisations are increasingly intertwined and well informed about policy and *modi operandi* on a local level, this knowledge does not necessarily extend to higher levels. EU directives and therefore CEAS do not have a significant impact on the work of asylum-related organisations in Bochum, other than being a binding legal framework, a violation of which causes legal consequences. Moreover, we did detect a gap between talk and action on the EU level. The interviewees knew very little about CEAS, which gives way to the conjecture that pressure to alter the local administration's *modi operandi* will not be travelling upward. Hence, we should reject the hypothesis that homogenisation at the local level might exert pressure from below and cause the local city administration to adapt to the organisations' expectations, thus inducing change from below rather than from the EU level. However, because the MAREM project's work is focused on egocentric networks in selected cities only, it is impossible to draw conclusions that transcend the level of the interviewed organisations that are involved. With no data yet available on the complete cooperation network in Bochum, or even in Germany, more research will be needed in this area.

All in all, we can confirm the presence of a certain level of homogeneity due to isomorphic processes at the local organisational level in Bochum, with respect to the egocentric networks of selected organisations, as well as the presence of a gap between talk and action. The interviewed organisations share a critical view of CEAS and do not perceive it to have an effect on their operational work. However, based on this response, we cannot necessarily conclude that our findings can be generalised and applied to the national or EU level, nor do they imply general homogenisation across all asylum-related organisations in the whole of Bochum, Germany or even the EU.

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