

agisra

Annual Report 2016

The information and counseling center for female migrants and refugees

The abbreviation **agisra** stands for “**Arbeitsgemeinschaft gegen internationale sexuelle und rassistische Ausbeutung**“ (association against international sexual and racial exploitation).

In 1993, agisra began to work in Cologne, with jobs financed solely as work-related measures. From a small organization developed not only a professional counseling service but an important political player within the areas of women, migration and integration. Qualified professionals work at agisra, predominantly women with personal experience of migration.

Our advice, support and therapy are provided regardless of social and ethnic background, religion, age, sexual orientation, language skills and residency status. We take a solution and resource-oriented, antiracist, feminist and transcultural approach. agisra supports female migrants who find themselves confronted with abusive relationships, sexism (oppression on the basis of gender), racism (oppression on the basis of origin, religion, language etc.) and other types of oppression. The support of the women is resource orientated and is intended to allow the women to independently organize their lives. The work is partial towards the best interests of the women.

Self-organization means “learning by doing”. With this in mind we want to combine “heart and mind” by using courage, optimism, commitment and expertise in order to achieve Utopia and to work pragmatically.

Our central demands are human rights for migrant and refugee women and the legal and social equality of migrant women in society. According to the motto “empört Euch!” (rise up!), we actively participate in domestic politics and advocate for the human rights of migrant and refugee women.

¹ With the “gender asterisk”, we intend to draw attention to the area of contention surrounding the tendency to describe gender in terms of two sexes, e.g. to clarify that by “women”, we mean all those who identify as women, regardless of the gender they were assigned at birth or their particular biological sex characteristics. “Women” aren’t the only people affected by heteronormative or cisnormative discrimination, but all LGBTQ people. However, we find ourselves nevertheless in a world/ a society, in which patriarchal and cisnormative preconceptions still shape our everyday life, and which thus makes the fight for women’s rights still necessary. We continue to discuss this issue.

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1. Introduction

Dear Colleagues,
Dear Friends,
Dear Readers,

We leave behind a turbulent and exciting 2016!

At the beginning of the year we were kept busy by the events of New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne. Debates about sexual violence and racism and the planned changes to the law that had been introduced by the government required constant internal discussions and public statements from us. Furthermore we also received press inquiries from around the World. We are very pleased that sexualized violence against women is no longer being further trivialized, but at the same time we are firmly opposed to inciting racism in the fight against sexism. Furthermore, we note with great concern the instrumentalization of sexualized violence in order to carry out refugee policies and exacerbate laws. 2016 was one of our most important years to date: our feminism remains antiracist!

Just like in 2015, we experienced a high need for counseling for refugee women in 2016. As well as this the consultation requests continued to grow. The housing situation for refugee women and their children continues to shock us, and we continue to fight for decent accommodation for refugees. This year our focus was on counseling refugee women, as well as sharing our expertise in the field of working with refugees. On the following pages, we will report in more detail about our focus on migrant women and refugees, the right to protection against violence must remain intangible and universal, this also applies for girls and women in refugee accommodation.

2016 saw the start of BONVENA, a collaborative project in Cologne, funded by the Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs and the European Aid Fund for the most deprived persons, in which we are the consultants and the start-up part of the collaborative network. The project is aimed at particularly disadvantaged newly immigrated persons from the European Union and aims to improve social inclusion through a bridging function between newly immigrated people and existing diverse offers of the standard system. For many years there has been no funding for our psychosocial support for EU women, so we are particularly happy to be part of this project for women from the European Union seeking counseling. Due to the special legal position and the resulting social rights, disadvantaged women from the EU need special support in the areas of domestic violence, trafficking in women, (family) conflicts, livelihoods/debts, housing, healthcare and health insurance, discrimination / racism, assistance by authorities and access to German courses.

This year the housing situation for many of our clients continues to worsen. Access to affordable housing in Cologne is especially difficult for single parents, migrant women and people on social benefits. For many women this means they have to live in very small flats without the possibility of withdrawal, having to accept poor living conditions, and for some this means they are forced to remain in abusive relationships.

For many years now, we have been working within networks of for female refugees and migrant women and dealing with racism. At the same time, we are bringing the subjects of fleeing and migration, circumstances of women and sexism into discussions in networks. This year, we are experiencing a great deal of attention for racism and sexism awareness campaigns and the special situation of refugee women. In 2016, agisra e.V. was asked to host numerous workshops, seminars, and lectures. We also participated in activities for the rights of refugee women, and gave speeches at demonstrations and protests. It is a great concern of ours that we can create spaces of self-empowerment together. The visit from Women in Exile & Friends in Cologne and the empowerment weekends for refugee women and their children were something special for us in 2016.

Our work was recognised this year most notably by a generous donation from the 'RheinEnergie der Kölner Lichter 2016' and an award from 'Springer Medizin Charity Awards'. Thank you very much, we are very pleased about the great response

We hope you enjoy reading about what we have been up to,

Kind regards from the team at agisra e.V.

2. Focus 2016

The right to protection against violence must remain inalienable and universal, even for girls and women in refugee shelters.

Human rights violations and female-specific reasons for fleeing one's home country

Just like men, women flee their home countries because of worldwide human rights violations such as poverty, hunger, war, torture, lack of education opportunities and lack of medical supplies and services. Girls and women are also subject to additional gender-specific human rights violations, which are closely linked to the control of the female body and sexuality. These include but are not limited to rape, female genital mutilation, forced prostitution, trafficking of women and sexual exploitation, forced abortion, forced sterilisation, forced reproduction, coercion to maintain virginity, forced marriage, forced sexual orientation, force to wear/not to wear a headscarf, stoning and suttee (widow burning).

According to the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) at least 50% of refugees are girls and women.[1] Since it is often the women who are responsible for the care of the children, the elderly and those in need of care, they have poorer access to (financial) resources because of the traditional patriarchal distribution of gender roles, many of them remain in the remote regions such as neighbouring countries. However according to the UNHCR, the number of women and minors who reach Europe has been steadily increasing in recent months. Whilst on the move, girls and women are also exposed to gender-specific dangers: in a survey published in 2016 by Amnesty International, many respondents reported having experienced physical violence and sexual exploitation. They reported having been harassed by smugglers, security forces, or male refugees, and/or forced to engage in sexual acts. Some of the respondents described the fact that smugglers and their helpers bothered them and other women and offered them a cheaper rate or shorter waiting times in exchange for sex.

Arrival in Germany and still not protected!

Living in collective accommodation

Many female refugees who have arrived within the last two years have been reporting on unacceptable conditions in their accommodation. The majority of female refugees have experienced sexualized violence either in their country of origin and/or whilst fleeing. For many, having arrived in Germany is no guarantee of feeling safe and secure. The collective accommodations which are home to many different types of people, the majority of whom have fled violent experiences, and the conditions they have to live in often lead to stress, depression and other illnesses. Especially women who have experienced sexualized violence, the majority of which still have fears related to the experienced violence. Sleep disorders, anxiety, decreased resilience and fatigue are common symptoms that are intensified when the women are exposed

to extreme stress and cannot feel safe in their own room. In emergency accommodations such as sports halls, there are sometimes no privacy screens to shield them from the prying eyes of others. From bed to bed women, men and children sleep next to strangers, often with people they are unable communicate with.

The conditions for mothers who have just given birth are also unacceptable. Women who have recently given birth cannot adequately provide for themselves and their babies in these communal accommodations. Thus, clients complain about the fact that they only have access to boiling water at certain times for the preparation of baby food. Communal showers and toilets are often filthy, which makes adequate hygiene near impossible. There is also little to no privacy, especially in the gyms. Women describe that whilst they have been breastfeeding, they are in plain sight of the wandering eyes of the security staff, the volunteers and fellow roommates. Refugees often live under these extreme circumstances for many months. A client once stated in a counseling session "I fled from the war in Syria in order to survive. What I am experiencing here is psychological war." According to the EU Directive, which came into force in 2013, vulnerable people such as unaccompanied minors, the disabled, the elderly, pregnant women, single parents with underage children, victims of trafficking, people with serious physical illnesses, people with mental health problems and those who have suffered from torture, rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual abuse such as victims of female genital mutilation, need to be identified during asylum procedures. These people must be given special protection. In almost all cases these collective accommodations do not fulfil, and indeed go against, the protection requirements.

This year our counseling center was visited by many women who have lived in the previously described situations. There were so many of them that the women who were (pregnant, with infants, with handicapped children, diabetics, women traveling alone) came to us in groups, because they were unable to get appointments separately. By means of protest letters and requests for help to policy makers and to the Refugee Coordinator of the city of Cologne, and by articles in various forms of media, by making speeches at public events and rallies, we tried to draw attention to the untenable situation and the human rights violations that many women and children in Cologne are experiencing. A different accommodation was made available to single women or families; as well as this some female only accommodation was created in Cologne in 2016, but overall this made little difference to the situation. People are still being housed in emergency shelters such as gyms, including newborns, women who have just given birth, heavily pregnant women and women traveling alone.

The group meetings, which initially occurred due to the working at capacity situation of our counseling center, quickly developed into a meeting place where women (with the support of language mediators) could for the first time share their experiences with women of other linguistic backgrounds, to acknowledge similarities and show solidarity within a safe environment. During the visit in the Summer from Women in Exile & Friends in Cologne, many of the refugee women took part in the activities, peer education and empowerment workshops.

The living situation of asylum seekers is characterized by feelings of helplessness and the inability to act: accommodation in communal and collective accommodations, unfair treatment due to residence requirement and residency, limited social and health services, and the dependence of one's own perspective on the future of political and social "mood" all leave little room for a sense of autonomy.

Through empowerment weekends, Wen-do workshops and informative events in different languages, we were able to reach many refugees and create spaces for self-empowerment.

Gender-specific violence in shelters - Dangerous places for women and children

The federal, state and local authorities have created dangerous places with the establishment of collective and emergency accommodations. The danger, especially for women traveling alone and for victims of sexualized attacks and violence is high. Fearful of being attacked, women traveling alone and their children often refrain from using the toilets at night and feel greatly restricted in their freedom of movement. Refugee women reported to us about sexual harassment and coercion, not just from male refugees but from the staff as well. Women affected by this do not usually know who they can turn to for help and protection. In 2016 the topic of protection against violence in refugee shelters was finally comprehensively developed based on many reports by various NGOs and women's organizations. The ideas developed for protection include guidelines for constructional measures for the creation of privacy and safe access to common areas, questions on staff selection and training, and the dealing of specific types of violence and threats. These ideas must now be implemented as soon as possible at the municipal level. The demand for dignified accommodation and the situation and the experiences of fugitive accommodation in own and closed apartments all still exist. The demand for accommodation that is of an acceptable standard also still exists, as do the situation and the experiences of refugee accommodation in their own private apartments.

Protection from violence in shelters - second class protection?!

"Who hits, goes!" is one of the achievements of the Violence Protection Act of 2002 which, for the first time, prioritizes the victims of domestic violence. Additionally, the position of the victim was emphasized and strengthened in other areas as well.

For female refugees, however, this is only theoretical. Collective housing puts victims of violence at an increased risk because personal safety is not always guaranteed. In addition, the actual and legal status of those affected is dominated by the laws concerning foreigners' rights/asylum procedures, which is not aimed at protecting against violence. Thus in reality, the regulatory law often takes precedence before the protection against violence. Women often do not receive adequate support and secure accommodation in women's refuges, for example, since the necessary "permissions" (permission to leave, reallocation) are not given promptly enough and the finance for these protective measures is not secured.

Social workers in the accommodations, dormitory administrators, security personnel and volunteers are new players in the field of violence, which gives them a central role to play in the prevention of violence and the support of those who have been affected by it. The issue of gender-specific violence against refugees has thus become a cross-sectoral issue in the areas of refugees' and women's counseling. In the past year, we have been able to train many professionals and interested people from different sectors on our training courses. In addition, we were invited as experts to roundtable discussions around North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) by the networks against domestic violence, to present and discuss obstacles and the need for improvements. Within the Cologne network against domestic violence we were asked as experts to present and discuss hurdles and what could be done to improve the situation. The Cologne network on domestic violence, in which we participate as representatives of Lila in the Cologne Network for the Autonomous Women's Counseling Centers and Women's Houses, will publish with our help a guide to the refugees in Cologne in 2017.

agisra participated in the development of the RefuShe´ app, with which refugee women can access information about their fundamental rights in Germany, as well as where they can find help if they are faced with violence. The arrival of the app in NRW should make it easier for women affected by violence and women exposed to domestic violence to access external assistance such as emergency numbers and helplines. A navigation function guides users to counseling centers in their area. The app was made available at the end of 2016.

Outlook

There is still a lot of room for improvement. Solutions need to be found so that refugee women regardless of residency status straightforward, guaranteed, direct access to safe women's shelters. As long as the right to protection for all women affected by violence is not guaranteed nationwide, a clear statewide regulation is urgently necessary, by means of a decree on the cases of violence, which must override the residency and fixed abode requirements and secure financing. Female-specific accommodation places in shelters, which can also be occupied at short notice, must be further developed. There should be qualified female professionals to support women who have experienced violence. Naturally in the case of counseling and therapeutic services, language assistants should be used.

Social housing as an element of social status has been neglected in the last decades in Cologne. Women who experience domestic violence often have to remain in these violent relationships due to a lack of affordable housing. We demand the implementation of the aforementioned EU directives (2013/33/EU) in Germany. On the one hand, urgent measures need to be taken in order to identify the most vulnerable people who need protection the most. On the other hand, specific measures must be

taken after the identification process, in order to ensure the protection of the people concerned.

The Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence - the Istanbul Convention - makes protection a right for all women regardless of their social and ethnic origin, their residence, their religion, etc. The Istanbul Convention has been in force since the 1st of August 2014 and has the goal of combatting all forms of violence against women. Germany has so far only signed the Convention, but has not yet ratified it! We demand rapid ratification and prompt implementation in German law.



Demo on International Day for Combating Violence against Women

3. Counseling and Therapy

As a group consisting predominantly of migrant and refugee women ourselves, since 1993 we have offered psychosocial counseling and therapy for migrant and refugee women, as well as accompanying them to external meetings and appointments. The services we offer are free of charge, confidential, and take place according to the wishes of the client. We counsel and support women regardless of their social and ethnic background, religion, age, sexuality, language skills and residency status.

3.1 Counseling and Support

In 2016 our transcultural team offered counseling in Arabic, Amharic, Bosnian, Bulgarian, German, English, French, Korean, Croatian, Lingala, Farsi, Polish, Serbian, Slovenian, Spanish and Tigrinya. Counseling in other languages was also provided with the aid of interpreters. We take into account migration-specific issues, including feminism, transculturalism, and antiracism, integrating a resource-oriented approach.

We act on the resources and needs of the clients, in order to empower them and encourage them to make their own decisions. The aim of counseling is for the clients to gain new perspectives, so that they can fight for their own rights.

Our telephone hours are on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, which we use to arrange appointments and offer counseling by telephone. In addition we accompany clients to appointments with the authorities, lawyers, doctors etc., to support them in representing their own interests and rights (e.g. during trials).

Women learn of agisra principally through word of mouth, or are informed about us by authorities (the police, Jobcenter or clinics), other advice centers, schools etc. In some cases, women contact us from abroad via the internet and counseling takes place over the internet.

Women from all over NRW utilise the counseling we offer by phone. Additionally, communicators like teachers and doctors as well as employees at other counseling centers come to us with questions on migration-specific issues.

Generally clients will come to us for more than three appointments; many come to us once a week for a longer period of time. The number of counseling sessions we carry out by phone isn't included in our statistics.

The following table shows issues, with which women came to us this year. Many women come to us with several different issues to discuss, as many of them bring complex questions and problems.

Counseling Themes in 2016			
Work/Residence permit	68	Isolation	76
Asylum/Protection	217	Child abduction	9
Residency status	64	Health insurance	43
Right to remain independent of marriage (§31 of right to remain law)	38	Conflicts with others	48
Emigration	8	Permanent residence permit	10
Chaperoning (Bureaus, trials)	185	Prostitution	15
Acquisition of documents/passports	27	Racism/Discrimination	69
Right to remain	64	School	43
Marriage/Relationships	86	Pregnancy (and/or conflicts therewith)	36
Naturalization	14	Sexual violence/Rape	58
Upbringing problems/Generational conflicts	64	Custody/Residency of children	43
Reuniting of families	36	Stalking	4
Female genital mutilation (FGM)	61	Separation/Divorce	112
Financial/Maintenance/Social aid	190	Reallocation of residence (asylum)	18
Trafficking of women	66	Paternity/recognition thereof	26
Health (psychological/physical)	252	Arrangement of German courses	91
Domestic violence	155	Returning to Germany	2
Marriage process	15	Forced marriage/Violence within the family	51
		Other themes	64

Other themes included but were not limited to: data protection, drug problems, inheritance, sex change, homosexuality, opening accounts, bodily harm, debt, trans identity, and placement of women in women's refuges.

Clients by age in 2016	
Underage	12
18-25	100
26-35	230
26-45	145
46-55	61
56-65	31
65 and older	5
Unknown	36
Total	620

In 2016 we supported 620 women. The number of counseling and advice sessions totaled 3608. To give an idea of the thorough and time-consuming support work to which these statistics refer, we present here a small selection of the enquiries we received in 2016.

- Problems with domestic violence also present a need for accommodation. After some time in a women's refuge, and after the time period after which the violent partner is evicted from the shared place of residence, clients didn't know what else to do. They had often decided to stay in their shared residence with their violent partners because it was not possible for them to find other accommodation.
- In 2016 many women came to us who, although traveling alone, were pregnant or had experienced violence, and had been put up in gymnasiums. There they have no private sphere, no protection from assault, and the hygiene conditions are completely unsuitable for pregnant women and women with small children and infants. A concern of these women was therefore to find better accommodation. We could only manage to get them transferred to other accommodation in a few cases. For example, a woman from Albania and her five children were housed in a gymnasium despite her being pregnant. In addition, one of the children was critically ill. We outlined the family's situation

in a letter to the health authorities. Thereupon the woman was transferred to alternative accommodation with the cooperation of the health authorities and the city of Cologne. They now have two rooms at their disposal there.

- Many women with experiences of violence from so-called “safe countries of origin” in the Balkans came to us for advice in 2016. Supporting these women in obtaining right to remain was hard, and since they came from these “safe countries of origin”, many asylum applications were rejected. In one case however we were successful. A woman came to us with her underage daughter, who was under threat of forced marriage in Germany by her father and the paternal side of her family. Being deported to Albania would have increased this risk. We accompanied the mother throughout the asylum application process, and she received support from a lawyer. The hearing at the Migration and Refugees Bureau (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge - Bamf) was conducted by a special representative. The daughter was recognized as a refugee on the grounds of the threat of forced marriage, and her mother and siblings were thereupon awarded refugee status too.
- In 2016 we also supported many women who had been raped whilst fleeing. These women often wanted to start therapy to work through what they had experienced, and ran into financial difficulties. The costs are only taken on by agisra when the women apply for support within a year of arriving in Germany. This affects many women, as within the year following their arrival they first have to apply for residency, and only consider seeking therapy at a later point.
- Most survivors of FGM are traumatized, and live in an environment where the issue is highly stigmatized. Accompanying these women to medical examinations is an essential part of supporting them, but it’s also crucial to raise awareness of the issue among medical professionals. In 2016 we dealt with a case where the long term consequences of type three FGM (infibulation or “pharaonic” mutilation) were very severe. We accompanied the pregnant woman to many appointments at the uni clinic and clarified her condition to doctors and other medical staff. We also accompanied her to further postnatal treatments.
- Through our regular outreach work in areas where prostitution is practiced, we can inform women about their rights as well as build a relationship of trust. For this reason many women sought out our advice center in 2016 on the grounds of precarious living situations. And we often dealt with their struggle to leave sex work. All these women had health problems that made it impossible to continue their work. Homelessness, lack of savings and usual inability afford health insurance were all big challenges for existing counseling structures.
- 2016 saw an increase in women seeking us out for help with the asylum process, of whom the most significant number had been victims of trafficking in other EU countries. They had fled traffickers of women and sought protection in Germany. The asylum seeking women had been directed to refugee organizations that could not offer protection from newer violence. We were able to house some women in danger in protection flats and women’s refuges

Countries of Origin

In 2016 we gave women from 78 different countries counseling sessions:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Altai Republic, Australia, Belgium, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, the Czech Republic the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Eritrea, France, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Kosovo, Kurdish territories, Lebanon, Lithuania, Macedonia, Madagascar, Mali, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Serbia, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, Tajikistan, Thailand, Tibet, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, the USA, Zambia

3.2 Therapy

Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen offers one-to-one therapy, family therapy and couples therapy in Korean and German, and in other languages with the help of interpreters. The position of migrant and refugee women in our society, their migration background and their experiences of racism are all taken into account in therapy. Issues such as migration, violence, identity, and conflicts with family, children and partners are all worked through using different methods, and concrete progress is made, with the aim of integrating these women into everyday life.

In 2016, eight women in total used this therapy. Below is a table listing the issues with which women came to us for therapy. Some women named more than one issue.

Therapy Content Statistics for 2016	
Anxiety/Threat of death	2
Conflicts with partner	3
Depression	4
Conflicts with family	5
Violence	7
Problems relating to migration	5
Psychosomatic problems	6
PTSD	5

Right to remain	4
Sexual violence	5
Finances	2
Conflicts with others	2
Isolation	1

Clients by Age in 2016	
26-35	3
36-45	5
Total	8

A total of 94 therapy sessions were held, three of which with the help of a translator.

3.3 Streetwork

2016 also saw agisra streetworkers visiting various hotspots for sex work in Cologne: pubs, apartments, clubs, brothels, and streetwalking in the south of Cologne. A considerable number of the sex workers are migrant women*. We spoke to many of them in their native language. Interpreters also accompanied the street workers to help them reach women who spoke other languages.

Generally our contact with them will be about neutral issues like questions to do with health, residence and work rights. Through a continual process of building trust, some women begin to open up about their respective experiences of addiction, violence, and exploitation, and seek further support. In this way we reached some women who had been victims of trafficking. In 2016 we were in contact with a total of 327 sex workers through streetwork.

Thanks to our relatively simple system for taking new clients on, we were also able to reach women in seemingly hopeless situations and with abysmal health conditions. In these conversations during streetwork it became clear that many sex workers had very little knowledge of their rights or duties. Authorities had demanded that they pay incomprehensible taxes (“entertainment tax”, income tax, revenue tax). These women also often paid a regular blanket tax to the owner of the brothel, but received no receipt and so couldn’t validate these payments. This often leads to problems when the

women wanted to stop working as sex workers, as they couldn't produce any proof of income. Indeed getting out of sex work constitutes presents women with considerable problems. Nearly all of them become homeless, since after stopping sex work they no longer have any possible accommodation. They also have no savings, and thus no means to support themselves.

During counseling and support it was made clear to all women that they had been affected by a multifaceted form of discrimination. Women who could not work due to pregnancy were often given insufficient care for their work by authorities. For example there were women who suffered miscarriages, followed by months of bleeding, who were forced to keep working without any consideration given to their individual mental and physical condition. In addition, many pimps put pressure on these women to work without condoms, in order to earn more money. Many of these women couldn't afford health insurance, and without access to benefits systems they also had no access to sufficient treatment.

We had to apply for temporary decrees for all of these women at the social welfare court of Cologne, as neither the Jobcenter nor the social welfare office recognized their status as workers. We even had difficulties in making the social welfare court understand their particular individual situation.

3.4 Tandem Project

In "Tandems", two women meet regularly to enrich themselves with different interests, experiences and knowledge from each other. This Tandem program offers support that both participants can benefit from. This is often in the form of exchanging small tricks and tips that might be obvious for us, but have a great impact on their lives. These tricks should not be understood as one-sided assistance. Rather, they are part of this mutual exchange. Our voluntary Tandem partners especially appreciated the friendships they built, that enabled them to see their own city and culture through new eyes, or learn or improve a new language. Through this exchange the Tandem partners were able to discover completely new, exciting interests. The aim was not only to enable women to share tips between friends, to enable them to better fulfill their wishes, but also that they would have a nice time together, that both women would have fun together and that they would (re)discover life in Cologne.

In 2016, five Tandems were arranged, and according to their feedback, both women mutually benefitted greatly from this project.

3.5 Empowerment Weekends

For refugee women, the lack of information and free time at their disposal is very stressful in addition to the already-stressful accommodation situations in homes and collective housing. This circumstance aggravates and exacerbates the living situations of refugee women and their children. The Empowerment Weekend project aimed to enable them to have free time and a chance to relax, but also, importantly, to access important information. Longer term we hoped this project would achieve clarification, empowerment, and a sense of connectedness for the women. With the support of “Redistribute funds!” and the “Prevention of Sexual Violence against Young Refugees” project, funded by the ministry for family in North-Rhine-Westphalia, we were able to offer two empowerment weekends in 2016, one from the 7th to the 9th of October in Mendig in the Eifel, and one from the 2nd to the 4th of December in Ruhrberg in the Eifel. In total, 65 women and children signed up for them and spent a weekend in nature, with hiking, free time and childcare all offered. A WenDo Workshop was offered and women were informed about their rights. The participating women had a real thirst for knowledge as well as a great desire for calm and a retreat. We wholeheartedly encouraged the women to connect and interact with each other, and the joy at the change from their everyday life in collective accommodation was very high amongst both the women and their children. We very much hope to be able to offer similar excursions next year, as the value for the participating women and children was inestimably high.

3.6 Other Activities

In 2016 agisra offered many different activities, such as German conversation courses, a weekly sport course, and a yoga course. Additionally we offered several free trips to Phantasialand.



Stall at the human rights festival, June 2016

Report from the Women in Exile Bus Tour

Women in Exile e.V. is a group of refugee women who engage themselves in issues surrounding the rights of refugee women. From the 24th of July to the 8th of August in 2016, this bus tour was led all across Germany, and from the 2nd to the 4th of August they were in Cologne. The women aimed to connect with other women, with the motto "Refugee women are getting louder!", in order to discuss problems specific to women and declare demands.

Various groups in Cologne prepared for the visit. As the only organization in contact specifically with refugee women, agisra played a huge role in the preparation. A few weeks in advance, Elahe Sadr contacted refugee women, particularly at Heerstraße in Zündorf and on Westerweldstraße in Gremberg.

On the first day of the bus tour's visit to Cologne, Elahe collected many women there and brought them together to the rally at Rudolfplatz. There they could talk to each other about their living situations and gave interviews. The main theme was the

difficulties surrounding accommodation, in particular in sports halls, but also in other emergency accommodations. Then there was a communal dinner in Rom e.V.'s rooms, before the women were accompanied late in the evening back to their accommodations.

The next morning the women met up and visited several refugee homes together, to speak to women in situ and tell them about the meeting and the workshops at Rom e.V. Many women were then present on this day to participate in workshops and interact with each other. Women in Exile e.V. and Medica Mondiale each ran a workshop that was translated into several languages. The atmosphere was very good, the women were motivated and engaged, and difficulties and challenges were reported in detail, and they tried to instill courage in each other. Finally there was another communal meal before everyone said their goodbyes.

The verdict from Women in Exile and the organizers from Cologne was very positive, many women were reached and the participating women were very satisfied too, and wished for more frequent events like this. In response to this wish, a monthly cafe for refugees was set up. Once a month the women now organize a cafe for women and children. They cook together, chat to each other, and make connections. So far the meetings have taken place in Allerweltshaus and in Klosterstüffje.

Women in Exile also wrote up a positive summary of their visit to Cologne, which is available to find on their homepage. (see: www.women-in-exile.net/)

4. Educational work, lobbying and public engagement

We were often invited to introduce ourselves and our work last year. We gladly took up these offers and presented the work we do at agisra, in many different cities and at various organizations.

4.1 Internal Training

The internal training of our employees is there to ensure the standard of our work. Last year agisra provided internal training to all our employees, volunteers and interns on the following topics:

- Women and migration
- Counseling skills
- Consulting with interpreters
- What is Trauma? Raising awareness amongst our counselors when working with traumatized women
- Forced marriage and violence within families
- Open Q&A session

Additionally, twice a year we invite volunteers, interns, the auxiliary association and the board members for a full day exchange meeting with a thematic focus.

Between July and December 2016, six group counseling sessions took place for our volunteers and interns. The counseling is conducted voluntarily by psychologist Gerda Reiff. Within this framework the women have time to reflect on their work and to talk about difficult topics and experiences. There was also the opportunity for the women should they wish to, to have a one on one counseling session. This offer was taken up by the women and was a good place for discussion to take place between them. With this in mind we would like to thank Gerda Reiff once again for her volunteer work, these counseling sessions would not be able to take place if it was not for her.

4.2 Seminars on rights

In 2016 we conducted two seminars on rights, one of them was in partnership with the labor center in Königswinter. The seminars were mainly for social workers and supporters of counseling centers, women's shelters, and other relevant institutions.

Our seminars on rights take place twice a year together with our speakers and legal expert, Professor Dorothee Frings from the university of applied sciences in

Niederrhein/ Mönchengladbach. From a legal, political and social perspective, relevant issues are compiled, explained and discussed.

The seminars on rights in 2016 dealt with the following topics:

08.04.-09.04.2016: Seminar - “Recent Developments for Female Refugees” in partnership with the labor center in Königswinter with Professor Dorothee Frings and a thematic input on female specific reasons why women flee by Behshid Najafi.

04.11.2016: Seminar - “The recent development implications of the asylum package II and integration law” at the MÜTZe community center in Cologne, with Professor Dorothee Frings.

4.3 Demonstrations / Campaigns

Demonstration against Violence against Women, in the vicinity of the Cologne Cathedral on the 05.01.16. Speech given by Behshid Najafi.

Demonstration “Our Feminism is anti racist” for International Women’s day, 12.03.2016. Speech given by Elahe Sadr.

Speech for the “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” On the 21.03.2016 in Cologne by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

Women in Exile Bus tour 2016 “Refugee Women are Becoming Louder!” from 02.-04.08.2016 Welcome speech, workshops, and accompanying female refugees from and by Elahe Sadr.

4.4 Events on the topic of “Female Refugees”

Series of Events “Fleeing - Isolation - Prospects” organised by Antifa AK Köln. Event “Women Seeking refuge” by Behshid Najafi on the 18.01.2016.



Demonstration in front of Cologne city call on 28.06.2016

Film forum "Europe - A Land of Transit" in cooperation with the Cologne film initiative on the 21.01.2016. Panel discussion on the documentary by Paolo Martino at the Ludwig Museum Film Forum. Discussions with, among others, the director, Rahel Lorenz (from the refugee council Leverkusen) and Behshid Najafi.

Participation in an expert discussion on "Female Refugees and Local Politics" on the 25.01.2016 hosted by the Helene Weber Kolleg (a platform for politically engaged women), Behshid Najafi

Speech "'Illegalized' - Living Without a Regulated Residency Status" at the Allerwelthaus Cologne on the 29.01.2016 by Behshid Najafi

Speech "Female Specific Reasons to Seek Refuge" at the women's information center Unna on the 11.02.2016 by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

Event of a series of seminars "Fleeing and Here" on the 24.02.2016 in Oberhausen. Speech by Behshid Najafi.

Women and Fleeing - Event for International Women's Day for Equality in the Göttingen district on the 07.03.2016. Speech by Behshid Najafi.

Workshop and speech on "Illegalized female migrants in Germany" on the 15.03.2016 at social center Käthe in Heilbronn by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

Speech “Fleeing, Admission and Protection of Women” on the 16.03.2016 at the refugee council in Cologne by Shewa Sium and Denise Klein.

Speech “Women Seeking Refuge” on the 16.03.2016 at the refugee center in Fliehkraft by Shewa Sium and Denise Klein.

Speech “Women and Migration” on the 21.04.2016 for teachers and social workers at the TAS Cologne by Shew Sium.

Series of events on seeking refuge and refugee policy at the Technical University of Cologne. Speech given on the 26.04.2016 on the topic of “The Circumstances of Refugee Women and Girls in Cologne” by Behshid Najafi.

Humanity in Action, Berlin Fellowship. From the 27.05. To the 26.06.2016 International program for students and graduates . Contribution by Behshid Najafi.

Feminist Study Day on the 14.07.2016 at Frankfurt University. Workshop by Behshid Najafi.

Women’s Forum 2016: “Arrival and stay - Refugee Women and Girls in NRW” on the 10.09.2016 at the Horion-House of the Rhineland Assembly of Municipalities (Landschaftsverband Rheinland) in Cologne. Input and lectures by Behshid Najafi and Denise Klein.

International Conference “Refugee Women - Roaming Between Multiple Discriminations” from the 13.-14.10.2016 in Lisbon. Workshop and presentation by Behshid Najafi.

Speech “Rights of Refugee Women” on the 25.11.2016 from the Aachen city region for the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women by Tatjana Kirnich and Denise Klein.

Extract from a speech by Elahe Sadr at the Human Rights Festival on the 25.6.2016 - Part I

[...] Having arrived in Germany, getting sex-specific reasons for fleeing recognised in the asylum procedure always proves very difficult. Refugee women are also subjected to various forms of violence and human rights violations in Germany.

They are housed in refugee camps, where there is no private sphere for traumatised women. Asylum seekers and people with very short term residencies are subject to residence requirement, a law that drastically limits their freedom of movement, as it obliges them to remain within the precinct of the branch of immigration authorities responsible for them. They are subject to structural violence, racism, and

discrimination at bureaus and authorities, day in day out. From this already difficult starting point, they also have uncertain residency statuses: temporary permits renewed every month for years, that drive many people to ill health during the process from the constant fear of the threat of being deported.

The potential power of caretakers and security staff in camps is very high due to the structures of the camps. There is therefore a danger of them taking advantage of the women there in unprotected rooms. In cases of violence within refugee camps it is very difficult for women to get places in women's refuges, even if their residence requirement ends after three months. The protection against violence laws have no use in practice for refugee women, and the authorities make very little effort to hold the perpetrators to account. [...]

4.5 Events on the topic of “Gender-related Violence”

Lecture series on “Gender and Violence” from the Gender Studies in Cologne. Panel discussion on the 28.01.2016 with Behshid Najafi.

Symposium “Improving the Sexual Health of Migrants” on the 26.02.2016 in Berlin at the Federal Centre for Health Education (BZgA). Workshop on “Sexualised Violence Against Women in the Process of Migration” by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

A day of special interest “Effective protection and safety against gender specific violence for refugee women” on the 21.04.2016 in Leipzig. Presentation on the topic of “Empowering Refugee Women” by Behshid Najafi.

Workshop “Human Trafficking for the Purpose of Sexual Exploitation / Work by KOK (a German NGO network against human trafficking) and specialised information centers, a cooperation between counseling services and prosecution authorities” with KOK e.V. and Valentina Maradjieva on the 12.05.2016 for training at the Federal Chancellery (BKA).

“Somos Iguales. An Exhibition about Sexism in Germany and Nicaragua.” Organised by the by the information office Nicaragua e.V. at the MütZe community center in Cologne. Presentation on the 27.07.2016 by Denise Klein and Rose Kapuya.

Specialist event “Protecting Refugees from Gender-based Violence” on the 23.09.2016 from the Women's Coordination e.V. in Berlin. Workshop “Sensitivity when interacting with traumatised refugee women” and a panel discussion with Denise Klein.

Workshop on “Self-determination for young female migrants against forced marriage and other forms of family violence.” A four and a half hour Workshop with

a focus area on explaining what inter family violence is and the circumstances and opportunities in supporting those who are affected by it, on the 26.02.2016 and 09.09.2016 with Behshid Najafi and Denise Klein.

WAVE (Women against violence in Europe) - Conference from the 19.-21.10.2016 in Berlin. Presentation of a workshop: Protecting asylum seeking and refugee women from violence. Leading a workshop on: Access of undocumented migrant women victims of violence to justice and to services. Behshid Najafi.

Extract from a speech by Elahe Sadr at the Human Rights Festival on the 25.6.2016 - Part II

The situation in the accommodations is precarious. The inhabitants live in undignified conditions with very little room. The sanitation facilities are often unable to be locked. There is no private sphere. Neither for families, nor for people travelling alone. Men and women seldom have separate bedrooms, let alone wash facilities. In addition to this, the people suffer from their traumatic experiences of discrimination, violence, war, and fleeing their homes.

The living conditions are thus characterized by permanent stress and pressure. Such an environment creates tension, conflicts and violence between the refugees.

The populists from Pegida use these conflicts to support the violent anti-refugee rhetoric they spread. They instrumentalize vulnerable people to reinforce the racism that already exists in society. Their racist rhetoric is a strategy to legitimize dangerous spiritual arson, gross bodily harm and even murder. Pegida, Hogesa and Kögida are racist anti-human rights groups who oppose a democratic fundamental order. Those who march with these groups are no longer followers, but active opponents of freedom and democracy.

So far this year there have been over 500 violent attacks against refugee accommodations, mostly in NRW. This rightwing violence strengthens the propaganda of racist groups and politicians, and begs the question:

What kind of a democracy do we live in, where politicians, police officers, and courts can passively allow racists to commit such violence and abuses of human rights, and then march in their masses unpunished, to spread further their racist crimes on the streets, under the guise of freedom of opinion?

If we live in a constitutional state, then racism must be consistently and efficiently prosecuted and crushed, and the human rights of refugees supported! We cannot allow racist, right wing extremist violence and propaganda to exist and spread in our society. We must recognize the structures and positions within politics responsible for racism and discrimination. Responsible, above all, for inhumane compromises in

asylum rights. We are plainly and clearly opposed to all compromises of asylum rights and to the categorization of countries as safe countries of origin! [...]

4.6 Events on the topic of “Domestic Violence”

Symposium on Fleeing-Women-Violence: “Ways out of violence in the district of Steinfurt” On the 05.10.2016 a ‘Round Table’ in the district of Steinfurt on domestic violence. Presentation by Behshid Najafi.

NRW Network and the intervention against domestic violence on the 08.11.2016. Input towards “Those affected by domestic violence in refugee accommodations” in Düsseldorf with Denise Klein.

Invitation to a “Round table against domestic violence” On the 02.11. in Ratingen with Valentina Maradjieva and Denise Klein. On the 15.11. in Menden with Shewa Sium and Denise Klein. On the 14.12. in Mainz with Tatjana Kirnich and Denise Klein.

4.7 Events on the Empowerment of Migrant Women

Wendo self-assertion and self-defense for women. Nine two hour workshops at the Vocational College Humboldtstraße in Cologne. Trainer: Elahe Sadr.

Wendo self-assertion and self-defense for refugee women in Heimen. Two workshops with childcare. On the 22.07. for Arabic speaking women and on the 29.07. for Persian and Dari speaking women. Trainer: Elahe Sadr.

Empowerment weekend for female refugees and their children in October and December. Each one was a three day excursion with activities and workshops by Elahe Sadr and Shewa Sium.

“STEM-female migrants and female refugees rising up!” Informational event on the 15.06.2016 for the education and professional integration of migrant and refugee women and girls in STEM fields. Podium discussion with Behshid Najafi.

Lecture: “Self-Organisation - Refugee Women fight for their Human Rights” on 29.06.16 in Osnabrück, by Behshid Najafi.

4.8 Events for Educators

All-day training: “Anti-discrimination and the Cultural Environment with FGM” on 19.01.16 in the school for midwifery in Bergisch Gladbach, by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen and Shewa Sium.

Workshop: “Sexual Violence against Women in the Process of Migration” as part of the specialist conference “Improving the Sexual Health of Migrant Women and Men” on 26.02.16 in the federal center for health information in Berlin, by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

All-Day Training: “Anti-Discrimination and Culture” on 18.01.16 in the school for midwifery in Bergisch Gladbach, by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen and Alexandra Gajek.

Educators’ Seminars: “Supporting Refugee Women in cases of Female-Specific Violence”. Four hour workshop with the following focusses: female-specific reasons for fleeing one’s country; situations in refugee accommodations; the situations of women who are pregnant, travelling alone, or victims of domestic violence. The seminars on 19.02.16 and 22.04.16 were supported by the DO foundation, the seminars on 16.09.16 and 09.12.16 by the citizens’ foundation of Cologne. Led by Denise Klein and Shewa Sium.

Studies Day: “Strengthening and Encouragement: Work with Refugee Girls and Young Women with Experiences of Violence and Trauma” on 02.02.16 in Düsseldorf. Lecture by Behshid Najafi.

17th LEFÖ Training Seminar: “How do you spell ‘stereotype’? Role Models in early Education and Counseling of Migrant Women” on 15.04.16 in Vienna, by Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

Workshop: “Women and Seeking Refuge”, as part of the team training day for the family program and mY Kita on 20.05.16, with Shewa Sium and Valentina Maradjieva.

Political Specialist Discussion: “Possibilities for Supporting Girls’ Work and the Women’s Project for Girls and Women with Experiences of Fleeing their Homes” on 07.06.16 in Stuttgart. Speech by Behshid Najafi.



12.03.2016 "Reclaim Feminism – Our Feminism Remains Antiracist" Demonstration

Extract from a speech by Elahe Sadr at the Human Rights Festival on the 25.6.2016 - Part III

[...] While the protection of refugee women is not legally enforced, the problem of sexual violence has been publicly discussed in Germany since the New Year's Eve Attacks against women.

These attacks were naturally awful and contemptible. However, is it appalling that people have publicly discussed the attacks in Cologne while violence against refugee women, in their homelands as well as in Germany, has been completely ignored, and the particular vulnerability of refugee women who have been victims of violence remains unrecognised!

It is lucky, in a way, that the attacks against these women were committed publicly, and were widely discussed and condemned in the media. It is noteworthy that the women who went public about the attacks were taken seriously. Women and women's organisations have fought long and hard for public acknowledgement and support for women in cases of sexist and sexual violence. But what was it about this very case at this very time that attracted so much attention?

Presumably the identities of the perpetrators in this case were paramount. For the fact that the incidence on New Year's Eve is now being used as a justification for cheap racist propaganda and attacks shows just how the attacks are perceived. Now, at last, we must begin to discuss misogynistic behaviour and attacks, and not about the supposed nationalities and ethnic backgrounds of the perpetrators. There are perpetrators of all nationalities, ethnic backgrounds, religions, classes. Attacks happen everywhere, whether on the street or in the form of domestic violence. Attacks go

largely unreported, and when they are reported, they are usually met with a tired smile at best, since the woman must produce proof.

We hoped, after the New Year's Eve incidents in Cologne, that the issue of the sexual violence women experience every day would finally be publicly addressed. Instead we are now up against the scandalization of "residency status" and so-called "background". What did these debates end up being about? The issues of sexism? The violence women are subjected to day in, day out? More rights for women? No.

On the contrary, the issue was exploited, to discuss how to quicker enforce "Asylpaket II", exacerbating yet further the situations of refugee women, and thus to legitimise deportations and thus racism. Now even refugee women who are highly traumatized and in medical treatment can be deported by this fast track process. The possibility of reunifying families has been grossly limited. Asylum applications can be rejected when the applicant doesn't adhere to their residence requirements. On these grounds, the asylum applications of refugee women can be automatically rejected if they are forced to leave their precinct and seek refuge in a new one due to domestic violence.

All of these violent practices are implemented in the name of the supposedly democratic and pro-woman values of Germany.

As long as Germany continues to trivialize, legitimize, perpetuate, and reproduce racism and sexism, there is a fracture in Germany's constitutional state. A discrepancy between the values they propagate and the values they represent.

We demand human rights for everyone. [...]

4.9 agisra in the Media

At the beginning of the year we were very busy reacting to the events of New Year's Eve 2015/2016. Intranational debates about sexual violence and racism, and the planned changes in the law that accompanied them, always necessitated internal discussions and public statements. Furthermore we were contacted by the press from all over the world. Below is a compilation of interviews and articles in which agisra was represented in the media in 2016, either directly or through alliances and focus groups.

January 2016: research journal on social movements - "Fleeing, Gender, Human Rights" with Behshid Najafi.

14.01.16 Deutsche Welle: Interview with Behshid Najafi about New Year's Eve in Cologne.

21.01.16 Réforme: The Law on Rape must be Changed (“Il faut modifier la législation sur le viol”) - interview with Behshid Najafi.

22.01.16 DGB Magazine: “Women Seeking Refuge: Intolerable Conditions in Accommodations” - Interview with Shewa Sium.

26.01.16 L’Humanité: “Feminism and Antiracism are inseparable” (Le féminisme est indissociable de l’antiracisme” - interview with Behshid Najafi

February 2016 SoZ - the conversation: “The Police and the Justice System must become more sensitive”. Interview with Behshid Najafi

February Stadtrevue: “A Night and its Consequences” - Report on New Year’s Eve in Cologne. With Denise Klein.

14.02.16 FAZ: “The Limits of Justice” - on the issue of violence by diplomats. With Behshid Najafi.

20.02.16 BR: “Immunity protects Perpetrators. When Diplomats Abuse their Employees.” With Behshid Najafi

21.02.16 Welt am Sonntag: “The Mob and the Truth.” With Behshid Najafi.

22.02.16 Kölner Stadtanzeiger: “Dangerous Places We Cannot Control. Reports of Refugee Women against Firefighters”. With Denise Klein.

March 2016 Der Paritätische - monthly magazine: “Life without Violence”. Interview with Behshid Najafi and Shewa Sium.

March 2016 Stadtrevue: “No Means No - Sexual Violence against Women”. Interview with Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen.

02.03.16 Mündener Allgemeine: “Women Seeking Refuge” - on the event for International Women’s Day.

04.03.16 Süddeutsche Zeitung - “Allegations without Victims”. With Denise Klein.

08.03.16 Stadtradio Göttingen: “Women Seeking Refuge”. Interview with Behshid Najafi.

07.04.16 Die Zeit: “What’s right for her?”. Interview with behshid Najafi.

15.07.16 Platzjabbeck guest article: “agisra introduces itself”.

18.07.16 Kölner Stadtanzeiger: “Famous Guests aboard the MS Rheinenergie” - on donating to agisra and the drug advice available at the ‘Kölner Lichter’ event.

August 2016 StadtRevue: “Double Excess” - report on the discourse on New Year’s Eve in cologne. With Denise Klein.

03.09.16 Süddeutsche Zeitung “Borderland” - commentary from a client of agisra.

26.10.16 ARD Contrast on the Issue of Violence in Diplomat Families. Interview with Behshid Najafi and a client of agisra.



20.10.2016 Presentation of the “Springer Charity Award”

4.10 Press Releases and Statements

29.04.16 Signing of the Open Letter to Chancellor Merkel and the German Parliament: A “große Koalition” (large coalition - coalition of germany’s two biggest parties, the CDU and the SPD) for a big reform of sexual criminal law.

4.11 Publications

Contribution by Behshid Najafi and Hannah Farhan on “domestic Employees of Diplomats as Victims of Sexual Violence” In: Writings on psychosocial health. “Sexual Violence. International Studies, Results and Care, Reports of Experiences.” Editors: Barbara Bojack and Tanja Heitmeier of TKS publishing.

Journal on migration and social work: Issue - “Political Participation by Women with Migration Backgrounds:” Interview by Prof. Shahrzad Farrohkzad (TH Köln) with Behshid Najafi.

Kirnich, T., and Klein., D (2016). Women Seeking Refuge. -The right to protection from violence must remain inalienable and universal - including for women and girls in refugee accommodation. In: Drücker, A., Seng, S., and Töbel, S. (editors). Refugees, Fleeing and Asylum. Texts on societal frameworks. The realities of life and seeking refuge, racist mobilization, self-organization, empowerment, and youth work. (pages 46-50)

5. Networking and Committee Work

For many years agisra has taken part in various focus groups (“Arbeitskreisen” - AK), roundtable discussions and networks on issues relevant to our work on community, state and national levels. In this way we insert ourselves into public and political discussions, raise awareness of current legal situations among these networks, and try to work towards improvements for migrant women*.

5.1 Community-Level Networking

AK Sex Work

In this AK, organizations and institutions who work with issues surrounding sex work in Cologne come together to discuss the situation of sex workers and try to improve it.

AK against Violence against Women and Children

This AK meets four times a year. Among the parties involved are counseling centers, justices, the police, the health authorities, emergency accommodation centers for women and girls, and clinics. In 2016 the AK provided flyers and a security point for Carnival. Additionally the AK supported the action “Walk Strong for Life” (“Lauf-Stark-Fürs-Leben”). On International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the AK organized a human chain on Hohenzollern Bridge. At the Christmas market the AK had an information stall. Borne out of the AK was the initiative “Cologne Initiative against Sexual Violence”, whose principal aim was to confront violence in the public sphere.

AK Lila in Cologne - Federation of Independent Women’s Projects against Violence against Women and Girls

This AK meets about six times a year. The projects involved exchange professional experiences and information, make plans, and organize public actions against violence against women and girls. In 2016 they organised a feminist music festival for International Women’s Day, and a “Take Back the Night” protest march on the 25th of November 2016 for International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. The AK also appealed to the Oberbürgermeisterin (the mayor of Cologne) in an open letter and demanded a plan for more security for women and girls in Cologne.

Cologne Network against Domestic Violence

In the Cologne Network against domestic Violence, the implementation of protection against violence in Cologne is coordinated by representatives from intervention centers, protection centers, independent women’s advice centers and women’s refuges, the children’s protection center, the counseling center for perpetrators, the Cologne police, the public prosecutor’s office, and the domestic relations court under

the leadership of the youth welfare office. In 2016, a handbook was developed on the theme of domestic violence within refugee accommodation, which will be completed this year.

AK Asylum

The asylum AK is a meeting of representatives from various counseling centers for refugees and employees at the accommodations. The AK's work includes raising awareness and public education, as well as identifying the need for improvement with regards to the inclusion of refugees in Cologne. In 2016, advisors from the Integration Point, the Jobcenter, the "Schulplatz für Alle" ("school places for all") initiative, the center for public advocacy for refugees, and the refugee coordinator for the city of Cologne were invited to it. In addition, a letter of complaint was written from the refugee advice centers regarding the housing of people with specific protection needs (e.g. heavily pregnant people, women with infants, women with experiences of sexual violence etc.) in emergency and collective accommodations, and presented at the round table discussion for questions regarding refugees. Discussions were also conducted with various people involved in community politics.

AK Social Work for EU Citizens

This AK is made up of representatives from various counseling centers and institutions, as well as institutions of the city of Cologne. These experts are confronted professionally every day with the problems of EU citizens who often have no health insurance, no unified, regulated access to service, and precarious living conditions. They support each other mutually with their specialist approach, to enable them to better complete their respective professional tasks.

In the AK, different advice centers and institutions come together to discuss the situation of people from EU countries living in Cologne: the irregular and in places highly controversial access to healthcare, basic insurance, social help and other services, as well as the precarious work situations.

Advice Network for People without Papers

Five advice centers coordinate in this network, all of which have received financial support from the city of Cologne for offering advice to people without papers, to discuss issues such as professional experience, management of "Armenbett" funds, and improving the situation of undocumented people.

No Human Is Illegal Network

Another network from Cologne, they meet twice a month and has supported refugees and undocumented people for more than fifteen year in their struggle for human rights and human dignity.

In 2016, the helpline Hilfetelefon published a video biography in which Shewa explained about agisra. The helpline sends women to agisra when needed.



Poster campaign in central Cologne

5.2 Statewide Networking

Women's Specialist Committee for Equality

The women's specialist committee is made up of various women's advice centers and women's refuges. The members of the committee concern themselves with practical issues within women's politics in NRW, and discuss concerns and cases from their own experiences.

NRW Network Meeting for Specialist Counseling Centers for Victims of Trafficking of Women/Human Trafficking

The specialised counseling centers for victims of women/human trafficking in NRW are subsidised by the state. All eight of these specialised counseling centers are connected by this AK. For many years now the centers offer counseling, support, and accompanying to appointments for victims of trafficking of women. The network meeting is for specialist discussion and developing demands with regards to the support of victims.

AK Women in Distress

The Women in Distress AK is a statewide network made up of various state associations and representatives. The living situations of women in distress is regularly discussed as the central theme of a specialised conference, and political demands are submitted at a national level.

Network for the Autonomy Rights of Young Migrants

This statewide network, co-initiated by agisra, meets twice a year to exchange experiences and discuss current issues. The participants are organizations and nationwide associations working with migrant and refugee women and girls. The main themes discussed in 2016 were: autonomy, defining honor, girls seeking refuge, underage/early marriage, the situations of refugee women and girls, and protecting girls from FGM.

Roundtable Discussion about FGM in Girls

At this roundtable, representatives from politics, ministries, authorities, professional associations, human rights organizations and counseling centers work together to deal with the issue of FGM at a national level. Possibilities for supporting affected women are discussed, as well as the protection of girls from FGM.

5.3 Nationwide Networking

KOK (the Nationwide Coordination Circle against Human Trafficking)

The KOK is an umbrella organization of specialist counseling centers for victims of human trafficking, women's organizations, and other organizations working on the

issue of human trafficking and violence against migrant women. In 2016, the KOK focussed on the following themes:

Fleeing and human trafficking; experiences of the member organizations with the Bamf and other institutions; queries about victims of human trafficking among asylum seekers on behalf of the BLAG for human trafficking; the “Fleeing and Human Trafficking” project; protection and support structures for women and minors; developing educational materials; new forms of exploitation; psychosocial support during trials; implementing the EU guidelines on human trafficking and the legal changes resulting from them; the protection laws for prostituted people and trafficking of children.

From mid 2014 to mid 2016 our colleague Valentina Maradjieva was a board member of the KOK.

Integra: the German Network for Overcoming FGM

In the Integra network, 28 organizations and individual members are currently engaged with regards to their respective objectives in Germany and/or worldwide for the eradication of FGM. One of the main themes in 2016 was the development of a study on FGM. The aim of the study was to publish statistics on women in Germany affected by or in danger of FGM, but also to comment on the practicing communities and their needs. agisra contributed qualitative interviews with Eritrean, Somali, Kenyan and Ethiopian communities in Cologne. The study is available at www.netzwerk-integra.de.

DaMigra (“Dachverband der Migrantinnen* Organisationen”)

DaMigra is a nationwide, female-specific umbrella organization, bearing no regard to country of birth, that represents the interests and demands of autonomous organizations of migrant women* in politics, the public eye and the media. agisra is a co-founding organization of this umbrella organization, and was responsible for their projects from 2013 until 30.09.2016. In 2016 DaMigra began to operate independently in terms of their content and financing. agisra remains a member organization of DaMigra participates in their projects.



PICUM AGM, October 2016 in Brussels

5.4 Europe-wide Networking

PICUM (Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants)

PICUM is a Europe-wide network of NGOs fighting for the human rights of migrants through public actions and lobbying. agisra has been a part of this network for many years and supports the rights of undocumented women. The member organizations are divided into sub-groups working on the following themes: access to justice for undocumented women (agisra), borders and detention, undocumented children, youth and families, access to healthcare for undocumented migrants, and labor rights of undocumented migrants. In 2016 Behshid Najafi was elected to their executive board.

At the specialist conference this year and the plenary assembly, the focus lay on the importance of PICUM for its individual members and visions for migration politics, as well as planning and discussions for the respective focus groups. Additionally, PICUM publishes a regular newsletter about the global situation of irregular migrants.

Story: Child with No Name



This is the story of a client of agisra that was published in PICUM's publication "Hear Our Voices" in November 2016. The series aims to raise awareness of the realities of undocumented children and young people, as well as the situations of their parents and supporting organizations.

Hanna is five years old. She drew this picture of the happy family she wishes she had.

Her mother calls her Hanna but her name is not recognised by the German authorities. She is a nameless child. She lives with her Filipino mother in Cologne. She was born in Cologne and has always lived there. She has never known a country other than Germany but has been considered a migrant without residency all her life.

Hanna's mother Maria came to Germany six years ago to try to make a better life possible for her husband and two children. She was employed as domestic help by a diplomat from the UAE. He raped repeatedly her while she worked in his household. He is Hanna's biological father but has never recognised the paternity and was never held to account, since he was protected by diplomatic immunity from prosecution so long as he lived in Germany. Maria lost her residency status when she fell pregnant and could no longer work. Consequently, Hanna was born without residency status. Maria did not want to tell her family in the Philippines about Hanna, as she was scared that her husband would think she had cheated on him and her family would ostracize her. In the meantime, Hanna's biological father went back to the UAE.

Maria turned to the organization agisra when Hanna was three months old. agisra fights for the rights of migrant and refugee women. agisra helped Maria file a lawsuit on the grounds of rape. This is how she obtained temporary residency in Germany. Thanks to agisra's support, Hanna also obtained a birth certificate. However, according to German law, Maria could not choose Hanna's name without consulting her husband, since Hanna was legally born within a marriage. For this reason, Hanna's birth certificate has no first name, only the surname of her mother. Maria eventually told her husband in the Philippines about Hanna, and begged him to do a paternity test, to prove to the authorities that he was not her father. Her husband subsequently decided to break up with her. According to the UAE embassy, Hanna's biological father could not be found. He has never paid child support for Hanna.

agisra is currently supporting Maria in her attempt to obtain full custody of Hanna, so that the name she has chosen for her child can be legally recognised. They hope to achieve this before Hanna starts school next year, and that Hanna attains residency status in Germany in the near future.

6. How is agisra funded?

The funding for our work comprises of grants from the state and municipality, donations, subsidies from endowment funds and professional fees.

The grants from the city of Cologne cover the rent and office maintenance costs. According to the law of the city of Cologne (§ 67 SGB XII), ambulatory aid is also partially covered.

In 2016 the GEPA ministry of NRW financed one and a half of our paid positions to fund the continued combating of trafficking of women, as well as the project "A Self-Determined Future - against Violence in the Name of Honor". The co-payment of the sections supported by the state of NRW accounted for 15% of personal and material costs.

80% of one position was supported by employment support from the Jobcenter in accordance with §16e SGB II, while the remaining 20% was funded by the city of Cologne as part of "Wir im Quartier".

As part of the promotion of migrant women's self-organization by the ministry for labor, integration and social affairs of NRW, we received a small project grant (0.25% of a section) for our work on the issue "End FGM! - the Right to a Body Intact".

The NRW ministry for health, emancipation, care and age supported a small project for the psychosocial support of traumatized refugee women and a project for outreach work in refugee accommodations and group offerings for refugee women.

In 2016 the financial support for refugee women by the city of Cologne was raised by one position. Furthermore we received a small grant for counseling undocumented people. Since 15.03.16 we have conducted a project supported by the EU (EHAP) for the support of social integration of newly immigrated female EU citizens (BONVENA). We support one section in this way. The civic trust financed the training of a total of four disseminators for support work regarding the protection of refugee women from violence.

As every year we received a donation from the Lohmarer Institut für Weiterbildung for our educational work in schools. In addition to this we receive an annual donation from Soroptimist international, which increased significantly in 2016. A further source of income is the fees we receive for seminars, talks and other events.

We received a generous donation from "Kein Mensch Ist Illegal" for the realisation of new projects, which we will discuss in our next annual report. The Rheinenergie

foundation donated a large sum in framework of Kölner Lichter to support our work. We were also awarded the “Springer Medizin CharityAward 2016”.

The equity ratio for the projects described is high, so we are still depended on donations too. In addition in 2016 we took on our clients’ travel costs and gave a lot out for emergency help for clients in acute emergencies.

Wie would be very happy to welcome you as a member to our organization. Information on participation and our sign up form are available on our website as well as at the end of this booklet.



Presentation of Donation at Kölner Lichter on 17.07.16

7. Personnel

7.1 Employees

From January until the end of May, Behshid Najafi and Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen were the only directors, then until November Behshid was the only one. After an intensive organizational counseling session, we decided to work as a management team instead, comprising Behshid Najafi, Denise Klein, Nezihe Gökkus and Shewa Sium.

Behshid Najafi, the longest term colleague at agisra, is an educator and political scientist. Her professional emphases include management, and psychosocial counseling and support. She represents agisra in the Network for Autonomy Rights for Young Migrant Women* and is on the executive board of PICUM.

Denise Klein has a diploma in education and is a specialised counselor for psychotraumatology. Her professional emphases include psychosocial counseling, support, and trauma-specific stabilization. She represents agisra in AK Asylum, in the Network for Counseling of Undocumented People and in the Cologne Network against Domestic Violence. She has been a deputy member of the Advisory Board for Migrants' Rights in Cologne since November 2014.

Elahe Sadr is a PE teacher, sport therapist and Wen-Do coach. Her professional emphases include psychosocial counseling and support. Additionally she offers a women's aerobics course. She represents agisra in the "Kein Mensch ist illegal" network ("No Human is Illegal").

Halima Abdul has been working at agisra since 2016, supporting counseling sessions, accompanying women to appointments, and interpreting into Arabic.

Jae-Soon Joo-Schauen was one of the directors of agisra until June. She has a masters in education and is a couples and family therapist. Aside from co-directing the team she works in transcultural and systemic therapy, counseling, and educational work. She represents agisra at the Women's Specialist Committee for Equality of NRW and at the Women in Distress AK.

Nezihe Gökkus is our administrator. She is responsible for management and finances.

Rose Kapuya is a rehabilitation educator and worked at agisra for a few months. Her professional emphases include psychosocial counseling and support within the framework of the EHAP project BONVENA.

Shewa Sium has a diploma in education. Her professional emphases include psychosocial counseling and support, as well as streetwork in hotspots for sex work. She represents agisra at AK Sex Work, the NRW Roundtable against FGM in Girls, and in the INTEGRA network.

Soraya Geara has a diploma in education and is a resource-focussed counselor specialising in trauma. She has worked at agisra since May 2016, and her professional emphases include psychosocial counseling and support as well as accompanying women to appointments.

Tatjana Kirnich has a diploma in psychology (specialised in clinical, pedagogical and ethnic psychology) and systemic counseling. She represents agisra at AK Lila in Cologne, as well as AK against Violence against Women and their Children.

Valentina Maradjieva has a diploma in social work. Her professional emphases include psychosocial counseling and support as well as streetwork in hotspots for sex work. She coordinates our interns and volunteers. Until June 2016 she was on the executive board of the KOK and represents agisra at AK Social Work for EU-Citizens and the NRW Network of Specialist Counseling Centers for Victims of Human Trafficking.

Aleksandra Gajek has an MA in German studies and currently studies extra-occupational social work. Her professional emphases are psychosocial counseling and streetwork. She represents agisra at AK Women against Violence, AK Lila in Cologne and AK Sex Work, and has been on maternity leave since March 2016.

7.2 Volunteers and Interns

Our work is constantly supported by volunteers.

We would firstly like to thank our **committee** - Ifeyemi erdmann, Julia Schwieterjann, Muna Terlinden and Zahra Farahzadi - for their excellent work in 2016

The following women supported us as volunteers:

Barbara Jurecka, Catherine Antoine, Christine Gockeln, Derya Durur, Ifeyemi Erdmann, Judith Baumgärtner, Julia Ebert, Julia Lingott, Julia Schwieterjann, Laura Koren, Martine Kayser, Maryam Salehi, Medina Maksuti, Nahmat Khalo, Nicola Deuticke, Sarbrije Rexhei, Sara Farahzadi, Ozra Shahisare, Xanarzu Demir.

The following interns have supported our workforce in 2016:

Adriana Flores Franz, Anastasia Jansen, Anna Huang, Asha Ahmed Ali, Dominique Fileccia, Dorothee Geiß, Jasmin Schüle, Josi Hüttel Laura Mancini, Laura Koren,

Laura Spitaleri, Louisa Klassen, Martine Kayser, Nahmat Khalo Norah Rast, Paulina Kabanov, Sophia Tepper, Svenja Hoffmann.

Our conversational German course for migrant and refugee women* was run pro bono by Ellen Alshut until February. The course was subsequently taken over by Judith Baumgärtner and supported for the first six months by Nicola Deuticke.

We thank the following people for their voluntary services:

Julia Lingott for running our Facebook account, Gerda Reif for the supervision sessions for volunteers and interns, Uwe twelker and Steffi Raack (webdesigners at “eyeliekit - visual solutions”) for supporting our online presence through their creative design for our website, Julia Ebert for coordinating the production of our annual report. We especially thank our long term supporter Professor Dorothee Frings for her tireless willingness to give legal counsel.

We thank all the above named supporters and those unnamed for the wonderful support from the bottom of our hearts.

8. Supporting agisra e.V.

We would like to sincerely thank our **executive board** - Anja Schulte, Sabine Hegerl, Jenny Wittor and Dorothe Hacketal, who stood in for Jenny Wittor in autumn. We also thank Pilar Czoske Theresa Philippi and all other active participants for their committed pro bono work.

If we can convince you to join in with agisra’s work, become a member! Fill in the form on the opposite page and send it to the below mentioned address or by fax to the number 0221 97 27 492. The terms and conditions can be sent to you upon request.

[1]www.uno-fluechtlingshilfe.de/fluechtlinge/fluechtlingsschutz/fluechtlingsfrauen.html