

Project overview

- Project / process title: Financing local expenditures for Refugees
- Name/s of the involved institution/s: German Städtetag
- Three-line project description: Due to rising numbers of refugees arriving in Germany a new structure for financing local expenditures for refugee care had to be established.

1. Institutional setting

The poster shows the methods adopted to establish federal finance structures for refugees.

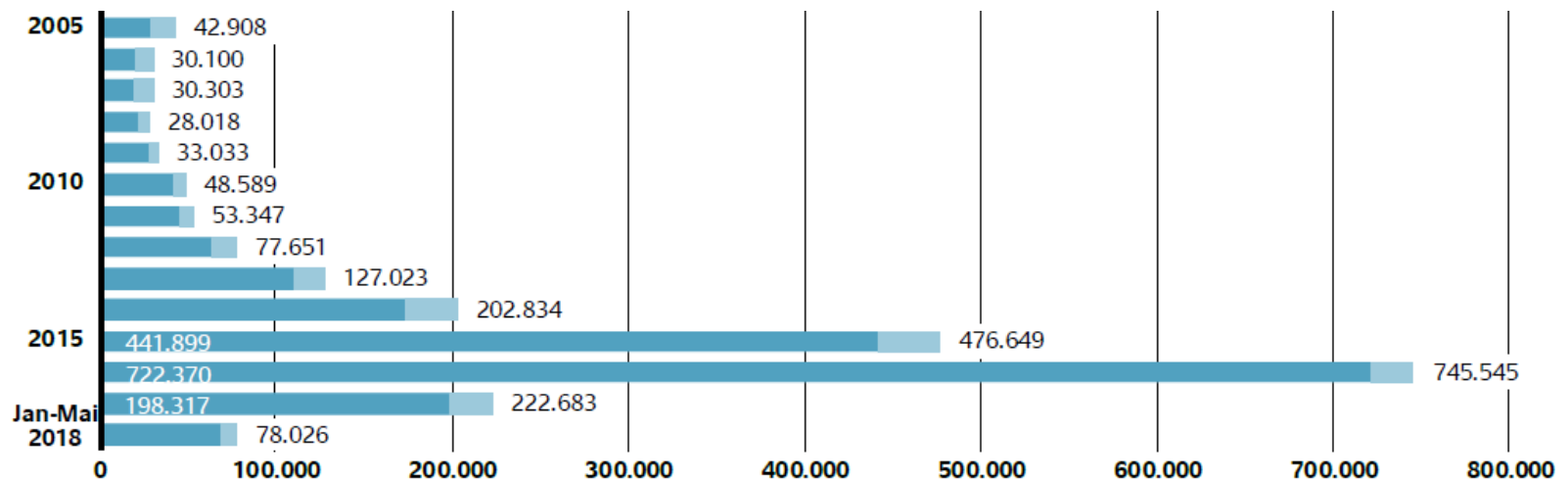
In Germany the possible fiscal relations between Bund (national level), Länder (regional level) and municipalities are limited by the constitution.

The direct financial burden of offering shelter and provision for refugees is placed on Länder and municipalities. There existed limited reimbursement schemes between Ländern and municipalities.

2. Starting point

The numbers of arriving refugees rose sharply from 2013 onwards and reached an unprecedented peak in 2016.

Figure 1: Numbers of persons seeking refuge in Germany



3. Approach

The German Städtetag employed its usual methods adapted to the current situation:

Step 1: Gaining the 'interpretive sovereignty' on the topic

Publication of local costs due to refugees („create your own newslines“)

Step 2: Spelling out criteria for a solution

Internal opinion-forming and publication of criteria and a proposition for a solution

Step 3: criteria accepted in public discourse and national politics

Step 4: Discussion between LGAs and ministries about details of proposed regulations, which fulfill the criteria

4. Outputs

The output was a finance structure that fulfills most of the relevant criteria:

- automatic adaptation to
 - varying numbers of arriving refugees
 - movement of acknowledged refugees within Germany
 - (partly) acknowledgement of different local cost structures, esp. accomodation
- Renouncement of structural changes concerning responsibilities of different federal levels
- Accomodation for differences in the internal organisation of the individual Länder (regions)

5. Lessons

Given their limited political power and limited constitutional rights, LGAs have to use soft ways to pursue their members' goals. LGAs want the national decisionmakers to voluntarily adopt the LGAs propositions.

Therefore, it is advisable to establish a specific interpretation of a given situation / problem.

To achieve this, the political position of a LGA has to be technically sound. It must be formulated in a way that is understandable for the (voting) public. Probably the best way is to formulate criteria, that a solution has to fulfill. As an appendix, a specific proposition should show that the criteria can be fulfilled.

6. Follow up

The approach of 'interpretive sovereignty' demands an environment, in which decisionmaking on the national level is highly influenced by a public discourse and in which the leading media are open to more complex topics.

The institution which seeks to establish 'interpretive sovereignty' on a topic has to actively manage its reputation as a reliable and consistent political player.

Therefore, here are some open questions, which demand country-specific answers:

- Is the method of decisionmaking on national level suitable for the approach?
- Is the institutional design of the LGA appropriate?