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Models of Co-operation
between Local
Governments and Social
Organizations –
Migration: Challenges
and Solutions

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Vulnerable Groups – Agisra e.V.

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The Research Project

Models of Co-operation between Local Governments and Social Organizations in Germany and China– Migration: Challenges and Solutions (LoGoSO Germany China) is a comparative research project of the Freie Universität Berlin, the Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster and the Chinese Academy of Governance, funded by Stiftung Mercator.

This comparative research project looks at the co-operation between state and social organizations (SOs) in China and Germany. It focusses on social service delivery in the area of integration of migrating populations with special attention to the fields of education, employment, vulnerable groups and social assistance (incl. legal aid) as a crosscutting issue to all of the fields. Within this subject area, the project wants to identify different models of state-SO co-operation and analyze which models are successful and why and where this co-operation is problematic. It aims to capture the different models of co-operation in Germany and China, to analyze and compare the underlying structures and to show potentialities for development.

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1 Introduction

Agisra started in the 1980s as a self-help group of migrant women. Over the years, it has developed into a professional information and counselling service for female migrants and refugees, women of color and all those who experience racism in any form. At the same time, the organization has become an important political actor voicing claims to strengthen the rights and opportunities of women and migrants on all federal levels.

The report will be structured as follows. In the next chapter, the development of the organization, its internal structures, general activities and relationships to other actors will be described broadly. The second chapter then focuses on the activities of the organization for refugees and its co-operation with the local government in more detail. It will demonstrate that the relationship between the public administration and the organization has changed from a conflictual to a trustful mode. Agisra is valued for its high expertise and partisanship for migrant and discriminated women. At the same time, the account will show the difficulties the organization has in accessing funding and dealing with discriminatory practices of some public employees. Finally, the effectiveness of Agisra's work will be analyzed and some conclusions regarding collaboration in the policy field of vulnerable groups are drawn.

2 Information on the organization

2.1 General information

The abbreviation Agisra stands for "Arbeitsgemeinschaft gegen internationale sexuelle und rassistische Ausbeutung" (Working group against international sexual and racial exploitation). In 1983, a small group of women, from different nationalities and ethical backgrounds, started to offer counselling and mentoring for women suffering under discrimination and racism (A_MT). At first, the group mostly functioned as a self-help group (OSS). After ten years of voluntary work, the city of Cologne began to finance two counselors of the organization via a job creation scheme and provided the organization with a small office (Agisra 2019). This marked the official start date of the organization as a registered association (ibid.).

Since then, the organization has developed from a grassroots association to a professional counselling service with more than a dozen employees. Its philosophy is to empower women to lead a self-determined and independent life. To achieve this aim, it uses a feminist, and resource-oriented counselling approach, that aims to strengthen the material and immaterial capabilities of women (A_MT). Simultaneously, the organization considers itself as a political advocate for the rights of women. It is concerned with the human rights of female migrants and refugees and their equal treatment in law and society. All activities of the organization follow the credo "learning by doing" which it understands as combining professional knowledge with plenty of optimism and practical engagement (Agisra 2019).

2.2 Activities

The activities of the organization can be grouped into three fields, namely counselling work (in the form of consultation hours and street work), support and facilitation of women's self-organization and political advocacy. This section will present the first two activity fields in more detail, while its role as an advocate for the rights of women will be elaborated in the subchapter on networks (2.4).

The organization offers free-of-charge and voluntary counselling in its facilities to help women escape difficult situations and empower them to make their own decisions (Agisra 2018: 14). Counselors also accompany clients to authorities, physicians and courts (Agisra 2018: 14). A member of the managing team of the organization describes the advantages of the counselling approach as follows:

Most of us are also affected. We are all women and the majority of us have experienced flight and migration. The self-affection is therefore very pronounced among us and that creates a lot of trust. The women come to us because they trust us. We support them as much as possible. (A_MT).¹

Next to general counseling and supervision, the organization offers specialized psychosocial support for traumatized women, as well a family and couple counselling (Agisra 2018: 16). In some cases, voluntary therapists provide psychotherapy for those women that have limited access to the regular health care services (ibid.). Usually, the counselling sessions take place in the organization's office located in the city center. In order to provide a sheltered place where women can open up and tell their stories, men are prohibited in this location (YWO_ES). As the counsellors come from various nationalities, and the organization relies on voluntary translators, Agisra can speak to clients in their native language (Agisra 2018: 14). The majority of clients live in Cologne, however, some come from other parts of Germany. For those in foreign countries, the organization also offers counselling via phone (Agisra 2018: 16).

Additionally, the organization engages in street work for female sex workers that have become victims of sex trafficking and forced prostitution (Agisra 2018: 16f.). Social workers and counselors approach them in bars, clubs, brothels and the red-light district in the south of Cologne (ibid.). They try to gain their trust via information and conversations on the relatively neutral topics of health care and residency status (ibid.). After a confidential connection between counsellors and prostitutes has been established, the organization tries to improve their situation and enable them to abandon sex work i.e. by finding an affordable accommodation for them (ibid.).

The second pillar of Agisra's activities is to spread knowledge to reduce the structural discrimination of women and to assist their self-organization (Maisha 2012; Agisra 2018: 20f.). Representatives of Agisra give seminars and workshops all across Germany to employees of similar counselling agencies, women's shelters and migrant organizations (Agisra 2018: 20f.). Frequent topics are legal issues for female refugees, self-empowerment, forced marriage or domestic violence.

2.3 Internal governance structures

Agisra is a nonprofit registered association according to the German fiscal code (*Abgabenordnung*). Registered associations must consist of at least seven members and are governed by an executive board (*Vorstand*) and the meeting of members (*Mitgliederversammlung*). In the case of Agisra, this executive board is voluntary and consists of four women (Agisra 2018: 34). The operative work of Agisra is currently done by a team of 17 women (ibid.). These are social workers, psychologists, social pedagogues and translators who are employed on a part-time or honorary basis (ibid.: 35). Flat hierarchies are a cornerstone of the organization's structure and for a long-time major decision were made jointly by all members of the organization (A_MT). As it became difficult to reach consensus

¹ "Die allermeisten von uns sind auch betroffen. Wir sind alle Frauen und die allermeisten von uns haben auch Flucht- oder Migrationserfahrung. Deswegen ist diese Selbstbetroffenheit bei uns sehr stark. Und das schafft auch sehr viel Vertrauen und die Frauen kommen zu uns, weil sie Vertrauen zu uns haben. Und wir unterstützen sie, soweit wie wir können."

among a growing number of employees, starting in 2016, the employees elected a managing board of four women (ibid.). Figure 1.1. presents the organizational structure of the organization.

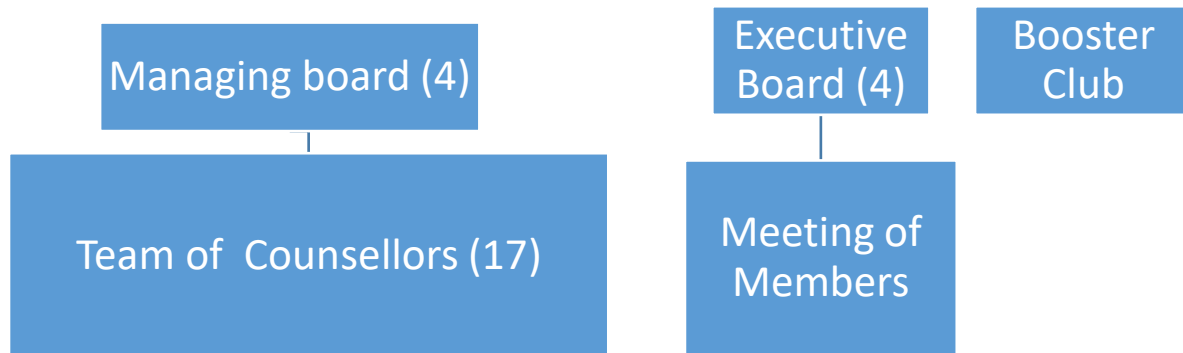


Figure 1.1: Organizational structure of Agisra. Own representation based on Agisra 2018: 34-37.

The major share of the nonprofit's expenses are financed by contributions from the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, the city Cologne and the European Union (Agisra 2018: 34). These cover costs that are equal to six full-time employees. Since the 1990s, the city of Cologne provides lump sum funding to local associations that provide social services to women (OSS). Via this scheme, Agisra receives 42,000 Euros per year (ibid.). The remaining share of funding is chiefly made up of time-limited project grants or measures of employment promotion. For instance, the local Jobcenter finances one employee on the basis of a job creation scheme for workers that have difficulties to find a job on the regular labor market (OSS). As the organization has to provide significant co-payments to the projects, it is dependent on donations, which it receives from a small number of associations with similar goals. These are Soroptimist International, a service club for women in leadership positions, or the Lohmarer Institut für Weiterbildung (*Lohmarer Institute for Further Education*), a local provider of professional training and lifelong learning. Donations from individuals are raised via a booster club (Agisra 2018: 37).

As these funds are insufficient to cover the demands for the organization's services, the professional counsellors are supported by approximately 30 volunteers and several interns, usually completing an 8 week apprenticeship.² Both, volunteers and interns, are involved into a broad range of activities. They accompany clients to public institutions and lawyers, observe counselling sessions, conduct language courses and assist the campaigning and public relations work of the organization (Agisra 2017: 37). In exchange for their engagement, they are invited to join internal trainings and the annual team-building excursion (Agisra 2016: 23).

2.4 Networks

Agisra considers itself, not only as a provider of professional counselling and street work, but also a political advocate that tries to draw attention to the legal situation of female migrants and endeavors to shape the political and public discussion on their behalf. For this reason, the organization is involved into several working groups and roundtables (Bucher 2015):

² For further information on voluntary work and traineeships at Agisra see https://agisra.org/index.php?de_praktika, last accessed 30/01/2019.

We are well connected on the local, state, federal and European level and we talk about our work, i.e. we give presentations, seminars and workshops. It is important for us to change the society.³ (A_MT).

On the level of the city Cologne, there are eleven working groups and forums such as the working group violence against women (*Arbeitskreis Gewalt gegen Frauen*), working group sex work (*Arbeitskreis Sexarbeit*) and the Cologne Appeal against Racism (*Kölner Appell gegen Rassismus*) (Agisra 2018: 28-30). Additionally, Agisra has extended its lobbying activities to improve the situation of female refugees in recent years. It is a member of the working group asyl (*Arbeitskreis Asyl*) which was initiated by the city administration to bring together employees of refugee accommodations and relevant social organizations in Cologne (A_MT). Further, it became a member of the newly established working group stay (*Arbeitskreis Bleiben*) (Agisra 2018: 29). Following the international movement of Solidary Cities,⁴ Agisra and other participating organizations, organized several events to demonstrate against the deportation of refugees (ibid.).

On the state level, the organization is a member of the umbrella welfare association Parity (*Deutscher Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband*) and participates in the association's working group of women's organizations (ibid.: 30). Moreover, the organization is one of eight specialized counselling services for women who are victims of trafficking in North Rhine-Westphalia (ibid.: 31). These organizations exchange information on their counselling concepts and jointly lobby the state government.

On the federal level, Agisra takes part in networks of organizations fighting trafficking and forced marriages. Furthermore, in 2016, it initiated an umbrella organization for migrant self-organizations dedicated to female migrants and refugees (Agisra 2017: 32). Finally, on the EU-level, Agisra participates in the International Platform for International Co-operation on Undocumented Migrants. It is comprised of several non-governmental organizations lobbying for the improvement of the human rights of this group (ibid.).

Agisra attaches great importance to its presence in the local and supra-regional media in order to draw attention to its work and put pressure on policy makers. Nonetheless, it sees it in a critical light that the media is often not interested in the work of Agisra as an organization, but tends to focus on individuals and presents them as victims (A_MT).

3 Information on the program and its co-operation with the local government

3.1 Agisra's activities for refugees and their development

This subchapter will illuminate how the organization was affected by the recent arrival of refugees and to what extent it has altered its service portfolio in reaction to it (2.1). The following subchapter will then turn to the ways in which Agisra co-operates with the city administration in this field and analyze its role as a political advocate for female refugees (2.2).

³ „Wir sind sehr gut vernetzt, kommunal, landesweit, bundesweit und europaweit. Und dann reden wir über unsere Arbeit, d.h. wir halten Vorträge, halten Seminare und geben Workshops. Das ist wichtig für uns, die Gesellschaft zu verändern.“

⁴ Solidary City is a network of 14 European cities that oppose the isolationist refugee policy of the European Union and want to aid migrants regardless of their residential status (Scherr/Hoffmann 2018: 870). The movement is inspired by the idea of Sanctuary Cities. These are American and Canadian municipalities that in the 1970s began to resist the central state and did not aid the deportation of migrants (ibid.)

Since the beginning of 2015, many female refugees began visiting the counselling office of Agisra in the city center (Agisra 2016: 5). A project grant by a private foundation enabled counselors of Agisra to regularly go to refugee accommodations for three months and to offer their services on site (Agisra 2016: 18). In the beginning, the core needs of female refugees pertained to their residence status, the German asylum system and how to obtain schooling for their children (Agisra 2016: 9; A_MT). At the same time, Agisra assisted many traumatized refugees. As these basic needs have now been solved, many female refugees coming to Agisra are currently searching for an apartment as they want to leave the shared accommodations or no longer live together with an abusive partner (A_MT). Due to the tense situation in the housing market and discriminatory practices of landlords, they have difficulties to find a flat in Cologne (ibid.). Agisra helps women who are victims of domestic violence or human trafficking with finding a place in a women's shelter, but stresses that it would overstrain its capacities to also help women that are not in an emergency situation (Agisra 2016: 6). While at the beginning of the 2000s, Agisra often tried to support all women in finding a flat, it has now shifted its strategy and concentrates its resources on lobbying the city administration to provide more social housing (A_MT). Refugees in search of a flat are sent to specialized services such as the program "Auszugsmanagement" which is organized by the city administration and three other social organizations (ibid.).

With the goal to achieve a quick repatriation of asylum-seekers from Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia in 2015, the federal laws defined these states as safe countries of origin (Aumüller 2018: 177). Agisra assists many women who left these states to escape forced marriages, blood revenge, domestic violence or structural oppression (Agisra 2016: 10). The more restrictive law prevents them from accessing social benefits and integration measures and despite the help of Agisra their chances of obtaining a right of residence are limited (ibid.: 15). Those that are not repatriated often stay in Germany with a toleration or as undocumented migrants (ibid.).

Many refugee women have left the group accommodations and overcome the most pressing questions pertaining to their residency status. They want to become self-sufficient and find an occupation. For this reason, two counsellors of Agisra recently started to dedicate their counselling hours to providing information on access to the labor market and relevant contacts to find vocational training and employment (Agisra 2018). These counselling offers, however, are not financed by any institutionalized funding or project grant, and therefore can't provide as much support as similar offers by Rheinflanke or the network Chance+.⁵ In contrast to these programs, Agisra does not make appointments with employers and clients are not accompanied to public institutions (ibid.).

Apart from its counselling services, Agisra started two small projects particularly for refugees. First, it offers so called empowerment weekends (*Empowerment Wochenenden*) for female refugees living in shared accommodations (Agisra 2017: 10). These weekends take the form of two-day trips to nearby youth hostels and offer sports and creative activities for women and their children (ibid.). A further goal is to inform the refugees in trainings and workshops about their legal status and build trust and connections among them (ibid.). Second, in 2016 Agisra initiated the project HaPiEnd (spoken "Happy End") which stands for "mit Hammer und Pinsel – endlich angekommen" ("with hammer and paintbrush – finally arrived") (A_MT).⁶ It helps refugee women renovate their flats before moving in. To this end, it connects them with motivated craftswomen or volunteers and provides the necessary

⁵ Rheinflanke and the network Chance+ are also case studies analyzed in the LoGoSO project. For further information see Deliverable XX and XX on <https://logoso-project.com>, last accessed 28/01/2019.

⁶ For further information on the project see <https://www.betterplace.org/de/projects/37651-fluchtlingfrauen-hapiend-mit-hammer-und-pinsel-endlich-ankommen>, last accessed 18/01/2019.

materials and tools. The project is largely financed by donations, particularly collected via the crowdfunding platform betterplace.org.

Finally, Agisra is a member of the local working group asylum assembling workers of refugee accommodations and counselling services for refugees. Due to a high demand for Agisra's expertise on the topic of violence against women, the organization offers trainings and seminars for social workers and volunteers (Agisra 2016: 34; Agisra 2018: 29). The seminars are financed by a private foundation. However, as the funding amount is rather small in contrast to the demand, there is currently a long wait list for a place in these seminars (ibid.).

Taken together, the arrival of refugees has led to an increased demand for Agisra's counselling offers, particularly on the topics of asylum law, psychosocial counselling, housing and, more recently, access to the labor market. Moreover, the definition of certain states as safe countries of origin has made it very complicated to help women from these areas. In response to this heightened demand for its counselling activities, the organization has started two small projects exclusively for female refugees and began to share its expertise on violence against women to employees of refugee accommodations.

3.2 Co-operation with the local government

Agisra considers itself to be an independent organization and does not provide any services for the city administration on the basis of a contract (YWO_EA). Usually Agisra and the public administration co-operate on a case-by-case model. Counsellors of the organization enter into contact with public agencies and apply for support and funding of their clients. For example, Agisra contacts the housing department if women are searching for a flat or need a certificate stating that they are eligible for public housing (A_MT).

The relationship between the organization and the city administration has changed from confrontational to co-operative over the years. An employee of Agisra said that in the beginning the organization was seen as opposed to the administration and was criminalized by it:

I can say that it [the public administration] has become more sensitive. [...] But I would say, 15, 10 years ago it was much more difficult. In 2003, 2004 the immigration office of the city of Cologne even reported us for aiding illegal residence because we supported an undocumented sixteen-year-old girl. They wanted to deport her, but they could not reach her. They accused us of hiding her. We said: No, we don't hide her, she is with a friend. [...] They wanted to silence us. (A_MT)⁷

Over the years, the work of Agisra has become more and more accepted and valued by the single departments of the city administration. Nowadays employees of the youth welfare office, the equality body, the health authority, the local integration center and other departments send their clients to Agisra or invite representatives of Agisra to join conversations as counsellors or interpreters. (YWO_EA; YWO_ES). For example, the division for early support of the youth welfare office takes care of pregnant women in refugee accommodations (YWO_ES). If women are reluctant to attend medical examinations, counselling provided by Agisra in the women's mother tongue can help them and diminish their fears (ibid.). Furthermore, if the suspicion exists that women suffer from genital mutilation, Agisra's

⁷“Ich kann sagen, dass sie sensibler geworden sind. [...] Vor 15, 10 Jahren war es viel schwieriger. 2003, 2004 hat die Kölner Ausländerbehörde Agisra sogar angezeigt wegen Beihilfe zum illegalen Aufenthalt, weil wir damals ein sechzehnjähriges Mädchen unterstützt haben, ohne Papiere. Sie wollten sie abschieben, aber sie haben sie nicht erreicht. Die haben uns beschuldigt, dass wir sie versteckt haben. Wir haben gesagt: Nein, wir haben sie nicht versteckt, sie ist bei ihrer Freundin. [...] Die wollten uns leise machen.”

counselors are the right people to contact (YWO_ES). As genital mutilation can be a reason for asylum, the counsellors can help the women to see gynecologists and lawyers experienced in these cases (ibid.).

Next to this co-operation on a case by case basis, the work of the organization is also valued by the highest levels of the administration. Lord Mayor Henriette Reker invited the organization to the town hall to celebrate its 25th anniversary and proclaimed: “Nobody else except them can build such a close relationship to the women. We continue to co-operate.”⁸ (Frangenberg 2018). First forms of an institutionalized co-operation model can be also seen, as in July 2015 the organization was selected as one of five of Cologne’s official counselling services for undocumented migrants and receives an annual lump sum funding for its services (Agisra 2018: 34). Further, in 2016 the city started to finance one employee of the organization to provide counselling to female refugees (Agisra 2018: 34). Representatives of Agisra consider this as a change in the public administration’s attitude towards its work and a clear recognition of it: “We were given the responsibility by the City of Cologne to support her [the refugee woman]. This is different from being criminalized and being punished for it.” (A_MT)⁹ With the help of this funding, Agisra was able to enlarge its team and employ two more staff members (Agisra 2014: 28; Agisra 2018: 34-35). Furthermore, the health department and the organization plan to set up a joint project for women suffering from genital mutilation (YWO_ES). Nonetheless, due to the absence of a contract the public administration and Agisra do not stand in a hierarchical relationship. Instead, it is stressed that Agisra can decline enquiries for consultation at any time (YWO_EA).

Although the co-operation between the city administration and Agisra is described as working well in general, employees of Agisra perceive it to be problematic that single employees of the city administration show resentment and xenophobic behavior towards the organization and its clients (A_MT). Agisra usually reacts to these incidents by filing complaints to the higher ranks of the administration (ibid.). In doing so, the organization does not want to punish the behavior of single employees but contribute the sensitization of the whole department and induce structural improvements in the treatment of refugees (ibid.).

Apart from its counselling activities, Agisra vehemently advocates on different political levels for the rights of female refugees. In 2014, the organization stated publicly that shared accommodations are problematic for female refugees as they endanger the health of women and their children and increase the chance of sexual abuse (Agisra 2016: 8) At the federal level, it demands the implementation of the EU Reception Directive (2013/33/EU) and corresponding clearing procedure to identify vulnerable groups. Since the Istanbul Convention was ratified in October 2017, it wants to ensure that this convention does not remain a paper tiger. In this regard, it demands the creation of more women’s shelters and suitable accommodations for victims of sexual abuse, increased financing for specialized counselling services and low-threshold access to medical and therapeutic care (Agisra 2018: 12). Furthermore, representatives of the organization voiced their concerns against the categorization of states as so-called safe countries of origin and the resulting consequences for women on public demonstrations (Agisra 2016: 32).

⁸“Die direkte Beziehung zu den Frauen, die kommen, könnte niemand so gut aufnehmen wie sie. [...] Wir machen gemeinsam weiter.”

⁹“Wir haben den Auftrag von der Stadt Köln sie zu unterstützen, ist etwas anderes als kriminalisiert zu werden und bestraft zu werden.“

On the local level, the arrival of refugees, and particularly the incident of New Year's Eve in 2015, led to an intensified exchange between social organization and representatives of the public administration via working groups and round tables (A_MT). Agisra uses these to pressure the administration to stop housing of refugee women in shared accommodations, to set up social housing policies and to build additional women's shelters (Agisra 2016: 8; Agisra 2018: 10). Furthermore, noting that the arrival of refugees led to a heavy burden for social organization's like Agisra, it urged the city administration to provide more funding for counselling services (ibid.). Agisra also voices these demands via less institutionalized forms of advocacy such as writing protest letters to local politicians and the city's refugee coordinator or by joining demonstrations (Agisra 2017: 10). The political engagement on the local levels seems to bear fruit. In reaction to the protests of Agisra and similar organizations, the city administration installed separate facilities for women and their children (Agisra 2016: 9). Furthermore, the fact that the organization now receives a lump sum grant from the city administration to offer counselling to undocumented migrants and traumatized refugee women, can be seen as proof of its influence on local decision makers and the administration (Agisra 2016: 9)

In sum, co-operation with the local government and public administration has changed over the years. In the beginning the organization was criminalized for supporting migrants without documents, whereas nowadays it is valued for its encompassing support of migrant women and its vast expertise in these fields. The co-operation takes three major forms. First, the local administration and Agisra work together on a case-by-case basis dependent on the needs of the individual client. Second, the arrival of refugees led to an increased need for Agisra's services. The city administration thus provides yearly lump sum funding for its counselling work for undocumented migrants and female refugees. Third, the exchange between the local government and Agisra in political fora and working groups has intensified. Agisra seems to have influence on the public administration as it was able to improve the accommodation of female refugees and boost its own financing by winning additional grants from the city administration.

3.3 Assessment of the effect of the program

The effectiveness of the organization should be measured according to its goals. Agisra has devoted itself to the empowerment of women. To this end, it engages in counselling and political advocacy. The annual reports of the organization document that the it has reached over 1,800 women in more than 11,000 counselling sessions in the last three years (Agisra 2016: 14; 2017: 16; Agisra 2018: 16). Numerous refugees among them (ibid.). The most frequent topics in 2017 were mental and physical health, asylum and protection, social assistance and help for women during their visits to court and authorities (Agisra 2018: 15). In terms of policymaking, Agisra organized more than a hundred workshops and symposia and took part in manifold demonstrations (Agisra 2016: 22f.; Agisra 2017: 22f.; Agisra 2018: 22f.).

Apart from these documentations, no evaluations on the effects and impacts of the organization have been done thus far. However, it can be considered successful based on evaluations by representatives of public administration, policy makers and partner organizations. For instance, its detailed knowledge about the rights of women, its abundant language capacities and willingness to take sides for women are seen as the organization's unique selling point by a representative of the local youth office (YWO_EA). Furthermore, the fact that Lord Mayor Henriette Reker invited the organization to the town hall to celebrate its 25th jubilee, and that the city grants an annual lump sum funding to the organization, demonstrates that it is valued for its expertise and ability to provide expedient services. Representatives of Agisra are also frequently invited as guest speakers or participants of panel

discussions of conferences and celebration hours by similar organizations, which demonstrates its Germany-wide reputation and expertise in the policy field. Finally, the success of Agisra is underlined by several awards with local and national reach. For instance, for its outstanding engagement for the health of women and their rights, it was honored by Springer Medizin, a commercial information portal for physicians (*Im Fokus Onkologie* 2016: 64) and by nuns of the catholic church of Cologne (Beginen Köln e.V. 2019). In 2015, Agisra's longstanding managing director Beshid Najafi was nominated for the TAZ Panter Award, which values voluntary engagement of individual persons (Bucher 2015).

Despite all the recognition of Agisra's services, representatives of the organization and the public administration still see potential for improvement in the capacities of the organization. They are of the opinion that it cannot cover the demand for its services because it lacks an ample number of counsellors (A_MT; YWO_EA). They are convinced that the city administration should provide more funds for the organization and integrate it better into its range of products and services.

4 Conclusion

The case study of Agisra illustrates several forms of co-operation between public administration and nonprofit organizations. First, it arises on a case-by-case basis depending on the living situation and support needs of participating women. In this sense, counsellors of Agisra get into contact with the different departments of the administration to arrange places in childcare facilities, housing allowances or social benefits. Female refugees are confronted with particular difficulties as they are not informed about their entitlements in the German health care system, experience discrimination on the housing market or have limited access to social benefits due to their residential status. Second, cooperation is institutionalized in the form of annual grants. Each year the organization receives subsidies via the public administration's promotion fund for nonprofit organizations addressing the social welfare of women. Furthermore, the arrival of refugees in the year 2015 has once more demonstrated the need for Agisra's services and since then it is provided with subventions for its counselling of traumatized women and refugees. Third, Agisra is a highly political organization standing up for the rights of women on various federal levels. As a member of the welfare association Parity, it benefits from resources that independent organizations do not possess, which facilitates its influence, particularly in North Rhine-Westphalia. On the municipal level, it advocates for the rights of women and migrants in local working groups and round tables. In reaction to the arrival of refugees, it has extended its lobby activities by joining additional working groups aimed at improving the accommodation and health care of female refugees. Furthermore, it continuously engages in less institutionalized forms of advocacy such as writing letters of complaint and demonstrations.

The expert interviews and literature research demonstrate that the work of the organization, and its co-operation with the public administration, is perceived as a success story. Whereas the public administration was highly suspicious of the organization's activities for undocumented migrants during the 1990s, it now lauds its counsellors for their legal expertise and unique ability to gain the trust of migrant women. The uncompromising partisanship for women suffering from discrimination is seen as an advantage of the organization as well. At the same time, Agisra seems to have significant influence on the local government, as it was able to enforce its demands for separate accommodation facilities for female refugees. Despite this co-operative relationship with the public administration, there is some room for improvement. First, the financing situation of the organization remains difficult despite a high demand for its services. It is not a contracted welfare provider on behalf of the public administration and has only a few private donors because it serves a target group that is not easily

marketed to a broad audience. For this reason, several interviewees suggested to increase the local or federal funding of its services. Second, while the cultural candor of the administration has developed positively in the last years, the organization is still confronted by discriminatory practices of single employees.

Interviews:

A_MT	Agisra, employee of the managing team (Agisra, Mitarbeiterin des Leitungsteams)
YWO_EA	Youth Welfare Office Cologne, employee of the emergency alert service (Jugendamt der Stadt Köln, Mitarbeiterin des Gefährdungsmeldungssofortdienst)
YWO_ES	Youth Welfare Office Cologne, division for early support (Jugendamt der Stadt Köln, Mitarbeiterin der Abteilung Frühe Hilfen)
OSS	Office for Social Affairs and Senior Citizens, three employees (Amt für Soziales und Senioren der Stadt Köln, drei MitarbeiterInnen)

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