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Final report of the scientific monitoring of the “WAY – From Welcome to Arrival. Yallah!” project  
2019 to 2022



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## 1 Introduction

Schwulenberatung Berlin gGmbH (Gay Counselling Centre, hereinafter SB) offers a multitude of topics and projects for the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans\* and intersex\* persons (LGBTI\*). Based on its expertise in social work and its practical experience, it responded to the changed needs resulting from the “Summer of Migration” (2015) by establishing low-threshold settings, such as the Café Kuchus drop-in counselling centre, where LGBTI\* refugees can meet and talk to employees in a protected environment, or by implementing the complex project entitled **“WAY – From Welcome to Arrival. Yallah!”** (hereinafter WAY). Since January 2019, the WAY project has enabled the SB to improve the services and psychosocial care for traumatised LGBTI\* refugees and to qualify refugees to become colleagues by offering them access to a dual work and study programme and advanced training to facilitate their participation in society using funding provided by the private SKala initiative. The project’s complexity resulted from both its cross-departmental design and the goals of the funding programme, which aimed for (further) intercultural opening (ICO) of the overall organisation beyond the work in and with the various target groups.

For the three-year SKala funding period, we, an interdisciplinary team of researchers at Institut für Innovation und Beratung an der Evangelischen Hochschule Berlin e.V. (INIB – Institute for Innovation and Counselling at the Protestant University of Applied Sciences Berlin), were tasked with the scientific monitoring of the WAY project. Our task was to evaluate the integration steps of the LGBTI\* refugees and their professional support by the SB as well as the further intercultural opening of the organisation in a participatory process, i.e. including not only observing and monitoring, but also making suggestions and ultimately giving an assessment.

In the first two years, we focused on qualitative interviews. We recorded our observations and suggestions on what the “world of the SB” – in particular with regard to intercultural opening – and the process of ICO should look like in interim reports<sup>1</sup>, whose recommendations were already translated into action during the project period – not least at management level. Hence, the results have already changed the practice in terms of “transformative science”, “which aims to accompany and catalyse specific change processes”.<sup>2</sup> In the third year, we collected not only qualitative, but also quantitative data in the form of an online survey in the overall organisation. The results of this survey are not presented in another interim report, but in this final report. Alongside intercultural opening, we also addressed the subject of “political social work”, which seems to represent a constant challenge in the SB’s daily work.<sup>3</sup>

### Challenges and areas of conflict

The complexity of the WAY project kept presenting us, the research team, with challenges, raising various questions: What structures can be analysed in a focused manner despite all the complexity? To what depth are insights into individual departments possible?

Not until after the first year did it become apparent to us that various new projects in the SB frequently give rise to conflicts between “newcomers” and “long-time residents”.

The question of the terms used in the SB also kept us busy, because the SB has not decided yet whether to use the term “inclusion” or “integration” and whether to talk about “intercultural” or “transcultural” opening. We as researchers use these terms in our report as synonyms or depending on the context; we are aware of the underlying scientific discourse<sup>4</sup>. Our partners in the SB use the terms depending on the funding context and identity politics orientation.

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<sup>1</sup> Three reports are available (December 2019, March 2020 and January 2021).

<sup>2</sup> Uwe Schneidewind: “Warum transformative Wissenschaft?” (Nachrichten der ARL 2/2016, p. 13).

<sup>3</sup> Employees take this topic just as seriously as ICO and do not separate the two from each other.

<sup>4</sup> See e.g. Viola B. Georgi (2015). Integration, Diversity, Inklusion; Hubertus Schröer (2015). Inklusion versus Integration – Zauberformel oder neues Paradigma?; Caroline Schmitt (2018). Inklusion als Analyseperspektive in der Fluchtforschung.

Even though some employees criticised the lack of an (internal) definition, we also frequently encountered a certain vagueness in other contexts in the Schwulenberatung Berlin. In a discussion about “mission perspective and standardisation”, for example, it became clear: A hallmark of the Schwulenberatung Berlin’s work is to remain vague to be able to work at all<sup>5</sup>, which we discussed in reference to Richard Sennett<sup>6</sup>. In an organisation that lives and breathes diversity without the necessity of standardisation, a way of working seems to be characteristic where many things evolve “in the process”, combined with a high level of flexibility and the willingness to try out new things.

Eventually, the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic (see below) in early 2020 also fell into the period of the WAY project, evoking memories of the AIDS crisis among some older members of the SB.

## 2 Approach and methodology

The first get-to-know meeting between the INIB team<sup>7</sup> and those responsible for the project took place on 21/02/2019, followed by meetings with department and team managers (in social integration support, the emergency and community accommodation for LGBTI\* refugees, the specialist office for LGBTI\* refugees and language mediation). We always experienced the responsible persons and employees of the SB as being open-minded, professional, appreciative, constructive and flexible.<sup>8</sup>

As part of the first few meetings, the scientific monitoring was agreed to be designed as a participatory process. The SB was open to this approach from the outset. It was willing to learn as an organisation and also enable others to learn from mistakes, which are seen as potential. Another motivation was the desire to empower employees with a refugee background.

In consultation with the project manager, we arranged the goals and tasks for each of the three project years, in each case placing the focus of monitoring on another area of the complex WAY project. In terms of content and methodology, we also chose a different path each year, trying out approaches and discarding them again<sup>9</sup>, experimenting with different methods and analytical procedures<sup>10</sup> and providing ad-hoc monitoring of unscheduled events and activities, such as indicator workshops in June 2020, which were organised as part of the accountability to the SKala initiative to develop further instruments as indicators.

Our suggestions and requests, such as participation in a management meeting to discuss the status quo of ICO on 21/07/2020, were implemented (as far as possible), and suggestions or requests of interview partners were also taken into account, such as the organisation of group interviews to use this opportunity for exchange with each other and for joint reflection or the expansion of the research design. Hence, the methodological approach was adapted several times in a hands-on and participatory approach. We passed the results back to the interviewed managers and subsequently documented them in reports, which then circulated within the SB at team manager level.

Outside the interview situation, we stayed in touch with one student, who presented our evaluation as an example of quality management and needed information for this purpose. We also met individual persons again in other settings, for example at events organised by the SB, such as at a stand at the lesbian-gay community festival in the summer of 2019, at the 2019 New Year reception or most recently in 2021 at the construction site open day for the “Lebensort Vielfalt” (“Diverse Living Space”) housing project in Berlin Südkreuz.

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<sup>5</sup> Minutes of 15/05/2020.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Richard Sennett (2018) *Die offene Stadt. Eine Ethik des Bauens und Bewohnens*.

<sup>7</sup> Initially, the team had four members with different areas of responsibility, then three members. Since January 2021, the team has been working in its current composition; Brigitte Wießmeier and Heike Schimkat were part of the team all along, taking turns as team managers.

<sup>8</sup> Many thanks to all involved.

<sup>9</sup> In some cases, the SB developed instruments itself to enable more insights, because we could not have done it for reasons of data protection (e.g. satisfaction survey in psychosocial counselling for LGBTI\* refugees).

<sup>10</sup> The document analysis of the treatment and rehabilitation plans (TRP) in the second year should be mentioned as an example.

We used a multi-method mix of qualitative expert interviews, focus groups<sup>11</sup>, participatory observation, document analysis and quantitative survey. For the collection and processing of personal data for research purposes, we drafted GDPR-conforming declarations of consent tailored to the research context.<sup>12</sup> Guidelines and questionnaires were developed by the researchers entrusted with this task and coordinated within the INIB team; the questionnaire was developed in close consultation with the WAY project manager. The INIB had the interviews conducted by us (as well as the interviews conducted in social integration support as part of the internal evaluation) transcribed by students. The transcripts were inductively and deductively coded.<sup>13</sup> Since individual persons would still be recognisable to insiders despite anonymisation, the acronyms used in the transcripts are not used in the present report.

Out of the 170 employees, we met **55 persons** in a total of **42** (individual, group and focus group) **interviews**; some of them were interviewed several times. We discussed our result reports for the first and second year of the scientific monitoring – “First interim report: Presentation of the results from 17 interviews within the WAY project”<sup>14</sup> (March 2020, hereinafter: March 2020) and “Second interim report: Presentation of the results from 12 interviews” (January 2021, hereinafter: January 2021) – with those responsible for the project and the advisory board members to coordinate the approach for each following year.<sup>15</sup> They confirmed that we had successfully identified exciting subjects for the discussion. All joint meetings were recorded in minutes; the activities of and the exchange with the INIB were recorded in progress reports.

## **2.1 First and second year of the scientific monitoring (2019 and 2020)**

In line with our task to monitor the intercultural opening of the entire SB and the aspired integration of the persons with a refugee or migrant background hired as part of the WAY project into the SB and society, we placed a focus on the new hires following initial field investigations in **2019**. We conducted a total of 10 individual interviews: four in the accommodation for LGBTI\* refugees (accommodation manager and three social care workers, who attended certification courses within the WAY project) and six with team managers, coordinators and language mediators, who were qualified according to a curriculum developed by the SB.

**In February 2020**, these were followed by two other individual interviews in the accommodation as well as five individual interviews with the dual students in community-based assistance/the daycare centre, who all started their social work studies by autumn 2019 and were accompanied in practice in different teams.

The dual students were the ones we monitored most closely. **In the second year**, we were particularly interested to find out whether the newly established tandem structures (with instructors for the five students in their respective teams) had proved successful as a training support instrument; to this end, we conducted three group and two individual interviews with team managers and instructors in social integration support (with nine persons in total).

With regard to long-term employees and those who organise tasks within the WAY project, we were additionally tasked to examine differences between the teams (for example regarding their way of

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<sup>11</sup> Hella von Unger, Katrin Werwick, Thomas Lichte & Markus Herrmann (2010). Learning about general practice through qualitative interviews: Lessons from a seminar course with medical students, *Medical Teacher*, 32:3, e127-e132, DOI: 10.3109/01421590903449902

<sup>12</sup> The “Declaration of consent to the collection and processing of personal data for research purposes” and the “Declaration of commitment to observing the data protection requirements pursuant to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)” for employees involved in the project were reviewed by the EHB’s Ethics Committee.

<sup>13</sup> The perspective taken by our researchers required individual coding. Some of the transcribed interviews were processed with MAXQDA, a software product for coding, classifying and analysing extensive amounts of data.

<sup>14</sup> The first interim report of December 2019 documented first contacts, initial field investigations, putting together the research team, allocation of tasks, topic areas and evaluations of the first ten interviews.

<sup>15</sup> See the minutes of the discussion of the results on 20/04/2020 and of the discussion of the results of the second interim report on 12/02/2021.

working) that are relevant to the SB and its process of intercultural opening. To this end, we talked to the employees of social integration support in focus groups, where one team included dual students and the other did not.

To identify possible differences between the psychologists of the refugee and non-refugee area, we interviewed them in three focus group and two individual interviews. In connection with the call for tenders for a psychosocial care centre by the Senate Department in August 2020, the process we initiated within the focus groups with the two psychologists of the team was of interest to the SB, which is why the two teams were merged in a third focus group. Shortly thereafter, the State of Berlin accepted the SB's tender for a psychosocial care centre for traumatised LGBTI\* refugees including psychotherapy, which has enabled the SB to expand and consolidate this centre since 01/11/2020. In the second year, a total of 21 interviews were conducted with 31 persons.

## **2.2 Third year of the scientific monitoring (2021)**

In the last year of the scientific monitoring, we placed a focus on the development steps of the dual students, the (consolidation of the) training for dual students, the professionalisation of language mediation and the implementation of ICO. In addition, the idea of conducting a quantitative survey among the employees on these topics as a kind of "mood barometer" was born in a discussion with those responsible for the project on 12/02/2021. The five dual students were interviewed for a second time to document and evaluate their development.

In the area of language mediation, we conducted a group interview with the responsible persons and a focus group interview with three language mediators. The interviews show that the qualification of the three language mediators hired as part of the WAY project is associated with a successful process of professionalisation of their work: They are supporting professionals whose intercultural knowledge can be used in counselling and who have gone through a self-empowerment process within the WAY project which qualifies them to serve as instructors for new language mediators.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, four individual interviews were conducted with the managers.

Between April and August 2021, we conducted a total of 11 interviews with 14 persons. Since no interim report was prepared in the third year of the scientific monitoring, we discussed the interviews and the results of the online survey with the SB's managing director and department managers and addressed open questions.

Moreover, an extensive dialogue on "consolidation of the training for dual students" developed with the responsible persons in 2021. Our daily project work also included several hours of communication within the INIB team as well as additional email correspondence and phone calls with team members.

During the project period, we had a total of 30 team meetings.

## **2.3 The advisory board**

The four-member advisory board was responsible for the professional monitoring of our research process; it had the task to watch out for any matters that may have been overlooked and suggest course corrections, where necessary. The panel of external experts<sup>17</sup> was established at a meeting on 11/10/2019, where we presented the tasks of the evaluation and the participatory approach. At

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<sup>16</sup> With effect from 01/01/2022, language mediation will be promoted by Aktion Mensch. The curriculum will be continued. It will be arranged with the Senate Department that the language mediators be also available to other LGBTI\* projects/organisations in the field of HIV/healthcare.

<sup>17</sup> Many thanks to Ingrid Meyer-Legrand, Phil Langer, Jan Hutta and Sebastian Sierra Barra for their inspiring contributions that enabled us to gain a deeper understanding.

this meeting, contextual resonance was already mentioned as an aspect to be considered and reflected on by us researchers. The next two advisory board meetings (on 15/05/2020<sup>18</sup> and 19/03/2021) served to provide feedback on and discuss the two result reports<sup>19</sup>.

The exchange between the advisory board members, the INIB team and the project manager was stimulating and constructive not only for us, but also for the project manager, by his own account. He regularly attended the meetings, because he found the discussions to be productive. They offered him a space for reflection outside everyday events and us external feedback and input on research and literature<sup>20</sup> as well as collegial suggestions regarding areas of conflicts and methods.

The advisory board members' keen interest in multi-method approaches led to the fourth meeting being held on 22/10/2021 in the form of a research workshop, where we jointly discussed and contextualised material (such as interview excerpts).

At the **INIB's research workshop**, our team benefited a total of four times in 2019 and 2020 from the joint analysis and the collegial suggestions for evaluation as well as the possibility of discussing methodological questions regarding our role and experiencing collegial coaching (for example, to make an imminent loss of distance productive for the process of gaining insights by changing the perspective).

## 2.4 Impact of the coronavirus pandemic

Starting in March 2020, the coronavirus crisis changed daily work routines all over the world, impacting both our survey and communication structures and in particular the vulnerable groups that are supported by the SB's various departments.<sup>21</sup> Many of our meetings in the SB (to discuss the results, with the advisory board, etc.) were held in a hybrid form or online. In the third year of the scientific monitoring, individual and group interviews were also increasingly conducted online, demonstrating that the SB is experienced in digital communication.

Only members of the management were explicitly interviewed about the impact of the pandemic on the SB's daily work, but this topic was still present in interviews and discussions. The dual students in social integration support, for example, reported without being asked how the COVID-19 crisis affected their studies and daily practice, while the instructors explored options to provide useful training sessions to cover the lockdown period.

We learnt about how the lockdown affected the daily work of clients or employees in counselling and the associated uncertainties<sup>22</sup> mostly through second-hand information in interviews and conversations.<sup>23</sup> The coronavirus situation was still a constant issue for employees in early 2021.<sup>24</sup> The lack of social contacts was a problem, but the SB found digital solutions. One manager summed up things as follows:

The organisation did not suffer any financial loss. In contrast to the private sector, the social sector came off pretty well ... And the good thing was that the SKala initiative provided extra funds to boost digitalisation, which was totally useful for us as mobile assistants. That really was an actual help. (I 11b no. 54 ff.)

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<sup>18</sup> This meeting allowed the SB's managing director, the WAY project manager and the advisory board members to get to know each other.

<sup>19</sup> March 2020, January 2021.

<sup>20</sup> In connection with the maritime images we used, Melody Jue (2020). Wild Blue Media. Thinking Through Sea Water deserves particular mention.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. the 2020 Annual Report regarding the work in the accommodation for LGBTI\* refugees, which was dominated by the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (p. 20), the daycare centre, which was open to a limited extent, but without offering group events (p. 23), and Café Kuchus, which mostly remained closed (p. 25 f.).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Luise Reddemann (2021). Die Welt als unsicherer Ort. Psychotherapeutisches Handeln in Krisenzeiten (Corona-Praxisbuch); Reddemann deals with the pandemic-related challenges for society in general and psychotherapy in particular, addressing relationships, contact with other people, trust in others and in the world as well as self-confidence in uncertain times.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. "Working during the lockdown" (2020 Annual Report, p. 17).

<sup>24</sup> Discussion of 20/01/2021, progress report.

The additional funding granted by the SKala initiative enabled the SB to swiftly implement digitalisation, which had been planned for quite some time:<sup>25</sup> “It allowed the colleagues in social integration support to work from home”, the 2020 Annual Report states.<sup>26</sup>

Due to the pandemic, however, some meetings had to be rescheduled and ideas for a collaboration between the “traditional” psychologists in counselling and the psychologists of the specialist office<sup>27</sup> could not be further pursued at the time under the conditions of the coronavirus crisis.<sup>28</sup>

The SB’s Annual Report (2020, p. 5) nevertheless states: “2020 was an eventful learning curve. Now we know for sure that we can rely on and support each other within the organisation in times of crisis.”

### 3 Training of dual students in the SB

We closely monitored the training process of the dual students in community-based assistance during the three-year WAY project period, since those responsible for the project were particularly interested in this topic from the outset. As an employer and training provider, the SB saw it as its duty to establish structures to guarantee the training success. Therefore, we were tasked to examine and monitor the establishment of such structures and the implementation of the new task of providing instruction to trainees. In doing so, we also addressed the question of how theory and practice can be combined and how the students’ perspective can be used for this purpose.

#### 3.1 Tandem structure and other instruction settings

The tandem model, where each student is assigned an instructor, is designed to guide and support the students on their way into practice and during their studies. We examined whether these structures actually contribute to the training success from the perspective of the students (2020, 2021) as well as from the perspective of the instructors and team managers (2020). While analysing the interviews with the instructors, team managers and team focus groups (one team each with and without students), it became clear that the tandem structure as well as the two-on-one or three-on-one settings (see below) within the tandem structure were decisive for their inclusion, that they were integrated in the team from the very beginning and that the SB context with its communication structures contributed to their arrival. In addition, two typical ways of working or principles became apparent: 1) parental care in the instruction and 2) flexible framework in daily work. On the one hand, the principle of parental care became evident from the manner in which the instructors described the support and the development of the students (*pampered, gets good marks, etc.*). On the other hand, the principle of a flexible framework was repeatedly addressed, a specific way of working or approach in the SB (for example to new projects) that relies on trial and error. These two principles and the method of *going with the flow* for implementing the tandem in the teams led to the interim conclusion that the tandem model is suitable.<sup>29</sup>

Various instruction settings evolved from the dynamics of the teams and their development processes. The (individual) needs were taken into account, such as the preferences of the five students and their teams, so there were tandems as well as two- and three-on-one settings (consisting of one student and two or three instructors).

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<sup>25</sup> Discussion of 17/07/2020, progress report.

<sup>26</sup> 2020 Annual Report, p. 5.

<sup>27</sup> The results were presented in a videoconference on 16/11/2020. Our recommendations from the focus group 3 were made available to the SB.

<sup>28</sup> Minutes of the meeting of 12/02/2021.

<sup>29</sup> The tandem model has so far worked within the WAY project as intended and seems to be suitable for implementing the project goals (January 2021, p. 23). In addition, the recent study “Overcoming the crisis in tandem” should be pointed out: It demonstrates that this model facilitates overcoming uncertainties and the organisation’s work during the COVID-19 pandemic. See Martin Krzywdzinski, Svenja Christen (2020). Im Tandem durch die Krise: Arbeit im Jobsharing während der COVID-19-Pandemie. Discussion Paper SP III 2020-303. Berlin Social Science Center.



In April 2021, the students were asked to indicate their preferences for the instruction settings. The most popular choices were the tandem (i.e. a one-on-one setting) and the two-on-one setting, in some cases with the instructors taking turns at defined intervals, e.g. a one-on-one setting on an alternating basis, where there are changing instructors over the course of the training (*three years – three instructors, change every six months...*) or on a rotational basis, where there is a different instructor every week (*very beneficial, multiperspectivity*). Adaptations were only made to the one-on-one setting, whereas the two- and three-on-one settings remained constant: The two-on-one setting was rated as *very good*, but the *complementary* division of tasks between practice and studies did not work – both are intended to support the students during their studies. The three-on-one setting was criticised for *sometimes lacking focus if there are three different perspectives*. Several students argued in favour of making professional multiperspectivity experienceable through the form of the instruction setting.

### 3.2 The tandem as a kayak

At the end of the second year, we selected maritime images for the training success. Using the analogy of a tandem kayak, we saw the students safely navigated by their tandem partners and the SB benefit from the input of the “newcomers” (with diversity competence) in the teams in line with the tandem concept. In the report of January 2021<sup>30</sup>, we put it as follows:

“To stick with the analogy of a river (*going with the flow*): The new dual student colleagues are safely navigated by their tandem partners in a tandem kayak (in their training, studies and practice). They need to properly coordinate things with each other to head to the same direction in the tandem. The concept of a tandem in the working environment is based on quite similar principles, because both partners equally contribute to boosting their careers while enabling their company to fill a position with twice the expertise.<sup>31</sup> The SB already benefits from the diversity competence of their “newcomers” within the WAY project by receiving input for the teams. The flexible completion of tasks also characterises the tandem within the WAY project, enabling the student employees to reconcile their studies and practice. The experienced tandem partners steer the kayak from the back, making sure to familiarise their students with the peculiarities of the water (support in case reviews, etc.) and teach and “instruct” them how to navigate independently (knowledge and skills). In this phase, it seems logical that the experienced persons refer to themselves as instructors and are also called that way by most dual students<sup>32</sup>. ...At present (i.e. in the second year), the students sit in the front in the tandem kayak until the instructors let them take the helm more and more often, acknowledging their independence. They can then become equal partners in the tandem, in which the positions can be switched depending on the required skills.”

So we were interested to learn to what extent the students are considered independent in the third year and in what position they see themselves.

From the department manager’s perspective, the students sit in the front in the tandem kayak. He believes that the task of the training supervisors is to *assist them*:

That’s more than just saying: “You can do your practical training here, so get started with your studies. We were aware that it would take a bit more attention or care. **So, I think it’s right that we are still steering the boat, but in consultation with the co-paddler.**

However, this isn’t something that’s hard to do for us, because Schwulenberatung works the same way. We always get together to decide how to do it and always try to include others. **So it’s not like there is somebody saying: That’s the way it’s done.** (I 1b, no. 311 ff.)

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<sup>30</sup> January 2021, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> In addition, the independent and flexible management of working hours enables them to better reconcile their job and family or, in this case, their studies; cf. <https://www.tempo-team.com/jobs-und-berufe/job-tandems.html>

<sup>32</sup> The project term “tandem” was not used by the students, with one exception. They talked about instructors, instruction and instruction sessions (cf. March 2020, p. 51–52).

In line with the SB's principle of a flexible framework, the kayakers can navigate various bodies of water. Individual managers believe that they should still *do the steering* and *give much more instructions* to support the student employees. The person sitting in the front in the tandem kayak takes the role of the pacesetter and beat generator; the person(s) in the back must hit the beat that is set in the front.<sup>33</sup> It requires coordination to instruct or correct potentially unexperienced pacesetters or beat generators or counterbalance their movements. Steering the tandem kayak is a challenge<sup>34</sup> that requires a high level of experience and independence, which the dual students are not yet acknowledged to have by the managers. Coordination (keeping the beat and pace) is equally important to move forward in the tandem.

The responsible persons have the training in mind, rather than the tandem relationship in daily practice. When asked about their **position**, the dual student colleagues focus on their daily work in the team<sup>35</sup>. They report about their current navigation and steering skills and their views on an equal tandem partnership (as well as their independence).<sup>36</sup> The images related to steering, beat and coordination in the tandem selected by the students consistently show that they have left the position of beginners. They can now switch positions, but their level of independence, steering skills and willingness to steer vary.

The first student is more cautious:

Yes, I could also navigate and steer, and also lead. Yes, exactly, because I always contribute my experiences to the team whenever a colleague discusses a case like that with *us*. (I 2b, no. 481 ff.)

The second student wants to sit at the steering position while preferably also dictating the beat, but recognises the importance of coordination:

But I'm also told other things like: Watch out, there's a rock! Paddle a bit faster or harder here! I'd like to do that too, which is what I do now. So the main thing for us is to agree on a common goal. I think that's most important. (I 5b, no. 520 ff.)

The third student easily switches positions, coordinates things and takes breaks:

Or taking a break sometimes, stopping, exactly – and then switching positions. Yes, maybe because I sit in the front, I can already see what could happen or I already have a vision. I can imagine what the work will be like in the future. With some colleagues or clients. And in the back, because I think I sometimes also have some input, output or ideas that can be helpful for the team. (I 4b, no. 419 ff.)

The fourth student feels sufficiently backed by the experience of his professional colleagues to make independent decisions and take the helm:

I would say, in the back, because they can discuss in front of me how to go about it and share their experiences and things like that. But in the end, I make the decision. (I 3b, no. 401 ff.)

The fifth student colleague also makes decisions and takes the helm, but needs more consultation at the right moment in individual situations. He is still overwhelmed with the task of steering independently in individual situations, such as in a multilingual counselling setting with several persons:

My tandem partner arranges the situation so that I can steer and make the decisions the whole time. And I ask when anything is needed. ... Sometimes I would have preferred to preventively say in advance: That would work better. (I 6b, no. 498 ff.)

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<sup>33</sup> The beat generator has to find and keep a rhythm. The challenge for the back seated paddler is to hit this beat while steering the kayak (wellenliebe.de, accessed on 20/06/2021).

<sup>34</sup> In a tandem kayak, the more experienced, heavier and stronger paddler should sit in the back. The person in the back takes on the role of the helmsman/helmswoman. For this task, you have to paddle more powerfully. It is better for the driving characteristics if the weight rests on the rear. In addition, the navigation of the boat requires experience (wellenliebe.de, accessed on 20/06/2021).

<sup>35</sup> In the 2021 individual interviews with the five students, they were shown two photos of a tandem kayak and then asked: *Based on the maritime images of the second interim report: What is your current position in the tandem kayak?*

<sup>36</sup> As it turned out, the understanding of how a kayak is steered could not be taken for granted. The interviewer explained that the kayak is steered from the back. The image also had to be transferred from tandem to three- and four-man kayaks.

In the analogy of the tandem kayak, the students no longer see themselves as beginners, but switch positions, attesting to their development. Their personal and professional development leads to the acquisition of navigation skills, which includes mastering the basics of social work. In this respect, their tandem analogies are indicative of the future training success.

Their self-assessment and the external assessment of their position in the tandem are different, because the dual students see themselves as colleagues in everyday team work and perceive differences among them as having been largely levelled out by now, whereas instructors and department managers also always have their training and training success in mind.

### 3.3 The SKala group

The so-called SKala group, which is funded via the WAY project using SKala project funding, is a forum for the dual students and all colleagues working with them. Since the obligatory mobile assistance in the various teams of community-based assistance makes collegial exchange difficult, the necessary meetings, including staff meetings and supervision sessions, are held in subject groups. The SKala group was established by the SB to prevent the dual students from being singled out not only in the various teams, but also in the various study programmes/universities.

The department manager says the following on this:

... **we understand them as a group, but they don't see themselves as a group at all.** ... They often affiliate themselves with their team or their instructor, but not with each other. But it took me some time to become aware of this. If I had realised this before, I think I would have done a bit more to make them feel like a group, because I think they can **benefit from each other** – more than they do at the moment. (I 1b, no. 363 ff.)

The various participants have in common that they acknowledge the SKala group's **potential** for self-empowerment – instructors and department managers earlier, students only in the third year. The SKala group is also a place of exchange for the instructors: *I think the SKala group is very important. It makes it possible to synchronise things and coordinate what's going on in your area.* Although the instructors were not explicitly interviewed about the significance of the Skala group, it was definitely mentioned and addressed in the interviews. The SKala meetings serve the instructors to examine *what is going well, what could be done differently and how it's done by the others.* One of instructors puts it this way: *I believe it just gives us structure.* Some instructors already argued in favour of giving more instructions in 2020 and saw it as their **task to sometimes set the agenda, even though the students might not directly see the point in that.**<sup>37</sup>

#### 3.3.1 Task: Revision of service contracts

To strengthen the SKala group and intensify the still weak relationships by working on a task together, the managers tasked the students to revise service contracts. The instructors approved of the *task*, hoping for new dynamism. However, the task did not have a team-building effect, but was perceived by most of the students as an *extra task*, which was ultimately completed by only one of them. The department manager recognised that they were overwhelmed with the *task*. From the perspective of the managers and the instructors, the task was nevertheless a *nice collegial conflict* and a *great training ground*, which led to *exchange*. Initially, individual instructors had the impression that the challenge of working on the *joint task* in the SKala group across teams initiated a learning step for the group, that *the work process is likely to have been productive* or that *it boosted motivation*<sup>38</sup>. The students did not see it that way and reported little about their learning processes; the set *task* met with *resistance*. One student even said that it was counterproductive for the mutual relationships. The “chronicler” of the student group describes it like this:

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. January 2021, p. 15–17.

<sup>38</sup> January 2021, p. 21.

Yes, there was sometimes **a lot of resistance**. **Why are we supposed to do something like this?** What does this have to do with us? And so on. In our experience, we're not ready yet to do group work together. **We feel like there are a lot of uncertainties in our communication. That we were not allowed to say things openly.** We were inhibited. **But we still tried to make the best out of it.** No matter how many kept up with the task. (I 5b, no. 429 ff.)

As in the previous year, the feeling of getting together in the SKala group under lack of time and pressure as well as scepticism about the methods or the lack of a *suitable concept* remain until the end. However, we hear positive comments for the first time; individual students are starting to discover the group as a place for interesting exchange and learning processes.

**Yes, but we're cool people.** I mean we talk nicely with each other, **we all benefit** from each other. (I 6b, no. 553 f.)

### 3.3.2 Supervision

The instructors took the conflict about the task as a basis to develop the idea of introducing supervision as a new method in the SKala group. The individual students are soon noticing changes. One of them also thinks they are making *progress* in their ability to work as a group:

**There have now been some changes over the past few months.** We as the SKala group are doing supervision, because we somehow belong together after all, or are supposed to belong together, as the Skala group. ... So the instructors had the idea to do supervision together ... discussing cases will give us the feeling that ... we belong together! ... Exactly one year ago, when we were not making any progress with this task, it was kind of difficult or impossible to work together somehow. But now things look different. ... what we have accomplished today is definitely progress. Exactly. (I 5b, no. 445 ff.)

Another student attends the sessions and finds the exchange useful, *even though sometimes it's too much and he sometimes ... just feels overwhelmed*. He perceives the newly introduced supervision as a positive change:

**And, yes, we now have supervision in the SKala group. I'm happy about that, I finally have the feeling that I can learn something new.** (I 3b, no. 448 f.)

Despite isolated criticism, all dual students talk about the newly introduced supervision in the SKala group in the interviews. They now have the impression that topics they are all interested in are being addressed, in particular topics referred to by them as *intercultural*, which they also suggest themselves:

(Name of a student colleague) suggested a topic for us to discuss. **About smiling in a cultural context.** He talked about our culture. Smiling is always good, but when you smile here in Germany, you may not be perceived as being serious. We discussed our intercultural understanding and how we work with it in a counselling setting. **That was definitely an interesting topic.** (I 4b, no. 536 ff.)

Other topics from their daily work are addressed in the spirit of an intercultural opening process, e.g. *a different way of dealing with rules, communication with colleagues* – topics they are otherwise afraid to address openly so as not to offend colleagues. In addition, one student suggests in connection with his client that the topic of (dealing with) homosexuality be introduced in the SKala group.

The possibilities of mutual exchange are becoming visible. Apparently, the students are just starting to discover the potential of this group as a forum they can shape themselves and use for their own topics. Some of them develop first ideas in the interview – demonstrating that they are reflecting on their professional self-image and expanding their scope of action.

The intention to expand their scope of action by group work was already addressed in the 2020 Annual Report; the instructors saw far more potential and resources in their interactions in the SKala group than the students did, namely in connection with the development of a professional habitus or professionalism that understands communication, reflection and emotionality as a specific quality of social work.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See also: Silka Brigitta Gahleitner (2017). Soziale Arbeit als Beziehungsprofession, p. 16.

By recognising the potential of the SKala group and its professional use as an individual resource, the students accomplished another step of arrival. **The SKala group as a forum for exchange contributes to personality development and the development of a professional habitus.** There are quite a few reasons to speak in favour of continuing this group beyond the SKala funding period. The funding enabled the students to start their dual studies and arrive in Germany (and the SB to implement the training). For content-related and formal reasons, they all pursue a different goal with their training as social workers than other colleagues: The training allowed some of them to obtain a residence permit; they all intend to acquire the German citizenship. Some already decided to pursue a future career in the SB.

The SB is planning to continue the SKala group until the end of the training. At the same time, it wants to consolidate the training in community-based assistance and recruit two additional dual students per semester starting in spring 2022. The question of a viable model for a joint group remains open for the time being. Whether new students will form their own group in the future will depend on the size of this group. Perhaps they will participate in the recently initiated “newcomers’ round” or “newcomers’ group”, within the scope of which all new employees across departments go through a one-year group process after starting their work in the SB.

### 3.4 Consolidation of the training

The phase of reorientation and change, in which structures such as the tandems were set up flexibly and successfully in response to the situation and various instruction settings were developed, led to a phase of consolidation in the third year. It became apparent that the method of *going with the flow* also involves the risk of *being lost*. Individualised problems of the dual students require a solution (cf. chap. 3.6).

The question of what role the collaboration between the universities and the training provider plays in that is examined based on the theory-practice transfer. Our tasks included to examine the question of how **theory and practice** can be combined in the training of dual students. We interviewed both the students and the managers on this question. The responsible managers are aware of the difficult framework conditions, such as finding a place at university and the collaboration with three different universities, but they emphasise that the WAY project was their chance to initiate the training in the first place. The fact how *new* the collaboration with universities was to the SB was repeatedly underlined at the 2021 management meetings; however, the main focus was placed on what this collaboration could look like in the future.

### 3.5 Collaboration between university and practice: Constructive theory-practice transfer?

In the following section, gaps in the collaboration with universities are addressed from the perspective of the department manager and the students’ perspective on the theory-practice transfer (significance for the learning success, unsuitable concepts, etc.) is evaluated and presented.

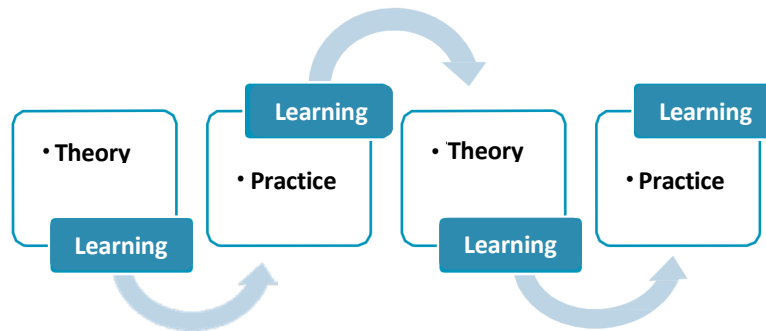
In the department manager’s opinion, the experience with universities shows that the SB’s field of work is given little attention at the university and that the *model of dual studies* does not include a constructive theory-practice exchange:

I think it’s unfortunate that there is the model of dual studies but there aren’t **more ideas for collaboration between practice and universities**, meaning that this is not a part of it. For example, it would be imaginable for universities to invite all training providers twice a year to talk a bit about their curriculum or to make sure everyone is on the same page, but that wasn’t done. (I 1b, no. 208 ff.)

The lack of coordination between the curriculum of the universities and that of the training provider has a negative impact on the instruction that usually works well, because the students bring their unresolved individualised problems with them, sometimes leading to demands on the part of the students. The universities and the training provider should agree on the responsibilities so that the tasks become clearer for all involved:

What are our tasks and what is his task, meaning what does he personally have to accomplish or provide, perhaps together with the university? That's not quite clear, [because] ... **the interplay of theory and practice, meaning the interface, is actually missing.** It's both done in one week, but there is actually no exchange and no coordination. I think that's actually a bit of a shame. (I 1b, no. 222 ff.)

Since the *interplay of theory and practice, meaning the interface*, is a central aspect, the *collaboration* between the universities and the training provider remains *desirable* for a constructive theory-practice exchange and transfer, as illustrated below<sup>40</sup>.



Source: Beaugrand, Andreas, Latteck, Dörte-Änne, Mertin, Matthias, Rolf, Ariane (2015). Methodengeleitete Explikation von Wissen aus beruflichen Situationen (presentation available online at [http://www.stifterverband.de/duales-studium/latteck\\_mertin.pdf](http://www.stifterverband.de/duales-studium/latteck_mertin.pdf)) p. 1, in: Sigrun Nickel, Vitus Püttmann, Nicole Schulz. Trends im berufsbegleitenden und dualen Studium. Hans Böckler Stiftung Study No. 396, September 2018, p. 71

According to the department manager, the *practical part* and the *theoretical part* each for itself have so far gone *quite well*:

In response to the question, “How did it go?”: I think it went quite well. In my opinion, the practical part is going quite well. The theoretical part is going quite well since everybody is making progress in their studies and in the exams they have to take. **But there is no collaboration between theory and practice. That would be desirable.** (I 1b, no. 235 ff.)

In April 2021, the five dual students were interviewed for a second time. To some extent, their perspective confirms the assessment that the *practical part* and the *theoretical part* each for itself are going well, since all students were able to implement the theory-practice transfer in the second year and described the exchange as being beneficial to their professional and personal development.<sup>41</sup> When asked to comment on the figure showing the process of theory-practice exchange in dual study programmes, most of them give detailed descriptions of practical transfer examples (e.g. *four-ears model by Schulz von Thun, active listening, change in perspective*). Conversely, they describe theoretical references (e.g. social politics, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) to professional practice and report that they are encouraged at the respective universities to *incorporate* learning contents *into practice at the end of each task*:

That also helped, of course. So it's always a linking point: How could I incorporate this paper in combination with practical examples? (I 6b, no. 178 f.)

The students were able to productively use the learning contents in their work with clients. One student describes how he successfully implemented the theory-practice transfer in his work with a client on the basis of Paul Watzlawick's “When the solution is the problem” (cf. 1987 YouTube): *It depends on the client's topic. And then I try to change the perspective.* Individual modules not only allow him to interact with his client in a more constructive manner, but even enable him to better understand the German society:

<sup>40</sup> During the interview, both the department manager (he is referring to that here) and the students were asked to comment on the figure.

<sup>41</sup> Whereas the students had to take a moment to come up with examples when asked about the theory-practice exchange in the first interviews in February 2020, they readily gave such examples without being asked in the 2021 interviews to describe their personal and professional development.

And then I also have the case work, counselling and communication module. My main subject was Paul Watzlawick, that was totally helpful and interesting, and I learnt a lot and finally understood why depression is a widespread disease here in Germany. In my country, where there is war, we don't have that topic very often. ... Someone quoted Paul Watzlawick, ... "People with empty bellies never despair of the universe, nor even think about the universe, for that matter." Those people are just trying to survive (laughs). That's it (laughs). (I 3b, no. 90 ff.)

Others give further examples of their practice-oriented study programme, such as how they practiced methods in counselling settings and learnt technical terms during their studies, for example in psychology and social medicine. For example, one student recognises a lot of personality disorders in his *difficult* clients in practice. In addition, he can address theories and subjects in his studies that are important to him personally and professionally (e.g. intersectionality and multiple discrimination). Overall, a deeper understanding of the theory-practice exchange became apparent; the students gained more professional security and experienced personal development, enabling them to adopt a professional attitude.

However, gaps in the studies regarding their field of work became apparent as well: Their professional practice is not reflected in theory. Two students, who had no difficulties with the theory-practice transfer in 2020, but then (2021) placed a focus on structures and systems, reported about such experiences. In the first interview, one of them called for more support by the university and the organisation and described how he got it from both a student counsellor and a team manager in the SB. In the second interview, he addressed the divergent *focus areas* at the university and in practice as a structural/systemic problem:

What's perhaps not quite right is that our lecturers, of course, have their own focus areas. For example, one of the lecturers works in children's aid and always gives such examples in theory. But you just always have to transfer them to your area: Okay, how would that work with adults or how would that work in addiction counselling. (I 4b, no. 139 ff.)

The other student described a similar problem in response to the question of how theory and practice complement each other:

What can I take away for my practice? And I also often try to communicate with the lecturers with that ambition in mind ... sometimes I also get an interesting answer that expands my horizon. And, for example, I learnt a methodological approach, **solution-oriented communication**, and then realised: Okay, how is it done with cognitively impaired people? I have a client with a cognitive impairment and what is ... I mean how does the crisis intervention work **when you communicate with such a person**? And I didn't get any material ..., but the lecturer promised to send me material if he can find some, and found it interesting to broaden his own horizon a bit as well. (I 5b, no. 139 ff.)

His example illustrates that the curriculum at his university is not matched with his professional practice of social work (e.g. working with cognitively impaired persons) – which is a fundamental problem. Despite having requested it multiple times, he has not received the material to this day.

Finding individual solutions to close gaps (requesting appropriate material, etc.) should not be left to the students. It would be helpful for the students if the universities and the training provider agreed to address the SB's fields of work (and focus areas) at the university, which, as implied here, would also be beneficial to the lecturers and an interesting addition to the curriculum of the universities.

### **3.5.1 Comparison of five BA study programmes at Berlin universities**

In May 2021, **research on five selected BA study programmes** was carried out at Berlin universities. The results are summarised in a comparison table.<sup>42</sup> It gave us a first impression of which university should be preferred by the SB for what reasons (major fields of study, financial and content-related reasons):

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<sup>42</sup> Simultaneously with the research of B. Wießmeier, the SB decided to continue the training in the SB's social integration support. When we heard about that, we forwarded the comparison table to the managers.

The “winners” of the research in terms of the major course of study were the Alice Salomon University of Berlin (ASH) and the Paritätische Akademie. The International University (IU) did less well, because it has management as an additional area of specialisation. Financial reasons speak in favour of the Paritätische Akademie. Although the ASH remains interesting in terms of contents, the Paritätische Akademie offers the best contents to dual students on taking a closer look (see *Module Description of the Paritätische Akademie*). Hence, other universities than the IU are preferable among the three current universities.<sup>43</sup> The students’ experiences regarding the theory-practice transfer between the universities and the training provider as well as gaps in the curriculum were confirmed by the results of the research.

The actual teaching and examination methods were not apparent from the research, which is, however, important for reconciling studies and practice. In the interviews, the dual students took a clear position on the requirements in connection with the teaching and exam situation. The two students of the ASH both reported about experiencing a lot of stress (*fear of burnout, in desperate need of holiday*):

**I’m just trying to pass my exams. Passed, check, next, passed, check, next.** So, that was the rhythm after one month, for example, when I looked back and realised: Um, I actually didn’t take away very much! And I also communicated it that way. (I 5b, no. 40–51)

Both students report that they talked about their challenges with fellow students and especially with the student coordinator. Support services offered to them, such as submitting papers to the lecturer in advance for proofreading, did not work. Both tried to find individual solutions. They are willing and required to solve these problems in the existing university structures themselves.

### **3.5.2 Individualisation of structural problems**

The analysis of the interviews with the students revealed the full picture of the problems behind the criticism of the teaching and examination methods: **Structural problems at the university are being individualised.** We discussed with experts of our advisory board (22/10/2021), who shared their experiences at the universities with us, to what extent the universities are at all able to respond to the training of bilingual social workers in a structurally appropriate manner: Ideas failed due to the legal form, low-threshold programmes did not work, the modular structure of the study programme made it impossible to place the focus on one supervisor. The (structural) problems are being individualised, resulting in a high dropout rate. The situation described by the students raises further questions: What support do the universities offer to students exposed to excessive psychological stress as well as to non-native speakers in drafting scientific texts?

The interviews with the students show that structural problems are being individualised not only at the university, but sometimes also in daily practice (e.g. when working with particularly difficult clients). The students’ perspective offers a source of information as to how the training could be improved at the university and in practice: To avoid individualising the problems of students at the university, the responsibility for their handling needs to be transferred to the instructors (and instructors must be trained accordingly) and the collaboration with the universities must be improved. The students’ special situation and what they have to accomplish must also be taken into account in practice; this is the only way to protect them from excessive stress.

The results from the interviews with the students led to the suggestion of a three-day instructor training to also support the instructors in the process. This suggestion of the INIB met the desire of the responsible managers to improve the communication with universities.

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<sup>43</sup> The Hochschule für angewandte Pädagogik (HSAP) and the EUFH – Hochschule für Gesundheit, Soziales, Pädagogik (at which currently none of the students is enrolled) focus on social education in schools or clinical work and are therefore not considered.



### 3.6 Transformative practice

In the 2021 discussions and interviews, the managers expressed keen interest in establishing and consolidating the training. Our research on the BA study programmes and our suggestions (e.g. instructor training) were welcomed; the first steps for the future collaboration between the training provider and the universities were planned at a joint meeting concerning instruction training in November 2021.

The managing director, the department manager and two instructors of the SB, the INIB team and responsible persons of the EHB's office of practical training discussed the question of how structures can be established without losing flexibility, how the instruction can be organised and what lessons can be learnt from previous experiences, addressing how the instruction can be structured and the collaboration with the universities can be negotiated. One suggestion was to share the task; one instructor suggested overall coordination that keeps track of the individual students, and it was examined with advisory board members whether a mentor could also discuss other types of challenges (e.g. emerging conflicts) with the students. Two instructors favoured a line-up of two persons to cover any cases of illness. It is also important that instructors know the accompanying team well and that two instructors pull together like *parents*. It was also discussed how the instructors should be selected and what the remuneration system should look like (e.g. different remuneration of the instruction task or a different salary group) and whether the instructor training should be included in the personnel file – in other words, how the SB can motivate employees to take on the role of instructors.

In connection with the development of an organised guidance, first contacts were made and views were exchanged on offering a two- or three-day instructor training in the future. Hence, the next step in terms of transformative practice was already taken before the end of the WAY project.

**Our recommendation:** In the future, all dual students of the SB should study at the same university. This would allow the SB to establish collaborative relationships and the students to exchange experiences, as already practiced by the two students of the ASH and the Paritätische Akademie. The results of the research concerning the content-related, temporal and financial aspects of the individual BA study programmes and the experience of the students with the teaching and examination methods (see above) clearly speak in favour of the Paritätische Akademie, especially because the SB already has points of contact as a member of the Paritätischer Wohlfahrtsverband (Parity Welfare Association).

## 4 Development steps: From beginning to arrival

Our task in the third year was to document the development steps during integration/inclusion in light of the intercultural opening processes (ICO) in the Schwulenberatung Berlin (SB), to evaluate the instruction settings and to assess the training topic for the SB beyond the WAY project. To this end, we already conducted a first interview with the dual students in February 2020, when they started their training (studies/practice). This was followed by a second interview in April 2021 to once again document their perspective in their function as new employees as well as their development. In addition, we conducted final interviews with the managers from spring to summer 2021. In these interviews, the dual students were referred to as the most important group and the group with the highest visibility within the WAY project, because the mechanism of opening processes in the teams can be described in the context of the successfully initiated training of the five student colleagues.

And I think the work of the social workers has the highest visibility, because ... it can be presented well. Inclusion, we train our own staff, they are part of the team and they bring about change on so many levels, that's what the training is about, it's not just a certificate. You can tell a good story about it. And that's what we do and that's good, and that way the visibility is once again increased, I think. (I 10b, no. 366 ff.)

### 4.1 The beginning: Job interviews in 2019

In the interview, the department manager expresses appreciation for the students who came here *via different paths...and with different ideas in mind*. The *application process was individual from person to person*, e.g. one of the applicants was *very ambivalent* about becoming a social worker, another one

had previously been tested on an internship basis. One of the criteria was to assess whether the applicants meet the prerequisites for *attending a study programme*. The significance of their outing through their work in the SB was mentioned as another important aspect:

... when working in a gay counselling centre, they **automatically come out** at least in their **working environment**. I mean everyone will assume that you are a gay man. We've talked about that, we found it important, because that's not obvious for all applicants –... how big this ambivalence is and whether it's acceptable for us. (I 1b, no. 147 ff.)

In addition, the SB employees virtually took parental responsibility for the students' decision regarding their professional path:

Well, during the job interviews, we felt responsible for the applicants' decision, because it's an important one. We didn't want them to go for a study programme or a career that doesn't suit them at all. (I 1b, no. 151 ff.)

That was *important* to them. It sounds like the "welcome" in the project title, which expresses that their decision-making was successful: *I'm glad ... that they are here*.

## 4.2 Analysis of the individual interviews with the dual students

The transcripts of the 2021 interviews with the five dual students were initially coded with regard to the categories of personal and professional development (in studies and practice) that had already been developed in the previous year. The following was additionally coded: the theory-practice exchange, the professional contact (work with clients and use of language skills), their perspective on the tandem structure, the instruction setting, the SKala group, their integration into the team and the SB and their perspective on the process of arrival.<sup>44</sup>

All five have in common that they are integrated in their teams. Their different processual paths towards their positioning within the organisation were analysed, classified and described in condensed form. In the following sections, we trace their respective paths, reflect their (individual) development processes and present how the process of arrival takes place in the SB and how they see their role in the process of intercultural opening and in society.

### 4.2.1 Student A

In the job interview, the decision-making process *took the longest* for this student, because it was questionable whether his language skills would be sufficient for attending a study programme. From the managers' perspective, the dual student colleague took a leap forward in development between the job interview and 2021, now being *open, audible and self-confident*. A comparison of the two interviews confirms a tremendous progress in his personal and professional learning process. In the second interview, he describes the close relationship between practice and studies and is already developing his bachelor's thesis based on this subject. He managed to successfully implement the theory-practice exchange: He is applying the module contents in daily practice and the basic principles of *Paul Watzlawick* helped him better understand the German society (cf. chap. 3.5). Compared to other refugees (*who still have problems with the language, the culture, with everything*), he describes his development process since his arrival as follows:

... well, I've been living in here in Germany for two years, **but I can handle all my stuff**. ... I mean not only **my work – but also my private life**. ... And, what's more: Yes, really, **I've found myself here in the Schwulenberatung** (laughs). Yes, it really helped me a lot. (I 3b, no. 273 ff.)

He was supported by his two instructors and the entire team right from the start and was immediately included. His instruction setting remained constant throughout the period under review.

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<sup>44</sup> The typological analysis was preceded by a content structuring coding.

Well, I feel in good hands with the team. They understand my needs, when I have stress at the university, and my German, too. ... I have two instructors in the tandem, that means two instruction sessions a week, and the three of us meet once a month. ... I talk about everything and we discuss everything. My studies, my personal attitude, my private stuff, my work, my clients ... really everything. (I 3b, no. 293 ff.)

He is *very happy* being part of a caring team. The constant support of his tandem partner allowed him to understand the *community*, arrive in the SB and quickly find his place in the community, the Schwulenberatung Berlin and society. Language plays an important role for him, especially his interaction with the German instructors. He finds their open discussions on cultural differences and political correctness very helpful. He has a positive attitude towards the WAY project, which he sees as an integration and inclusion project:

Well, to be honest, I've thought a lot about that and I think this WAY project is awesome. I'll just take myself as an example: I'd been living here in Germany for 10 months when I started working in the Schwulenberatung. That helped me a lot to quickly understand the community, with the language, with everything. I constantly notice that the Schwulenberatung is open to everything that's new. ... I can feel the interaction and I think this project is great for integration or inclusion – whatever. Every one of us has two or more instructors and I can talk to my instructor openly. As I said, we discuss everything: cultural issues, what's acceptable and what's not. What's politically correct and what's not. .... And having two German instructors helped me understand more quickly how the community works here. And somehow that also helps me in my private life. (I 3b, no. 575 ff.)

The model of bringing together people with a migrant and refugee background and people who were socialised in Germany in the SB and creating an environment for open discussion works well for him.

When selecting personnel for the SB, some departments deliberately pay attention to having a *mixed* team (cf. chap. 5.3) by continuously integrating “different” and “new” people. This gave the dual student colleague the opportunity to find his place in the Schwulenberatung Berlin and in society. He is grateful for that *opportunity*. At the last management meeting, his journey was appreciated as a *huge step*, given that he had left behind *his whole life*, his country and with that a homophobic society. As a future social worker, he sees himself hold a special position in the SB to support clients with similar backgrounds in dealing with their homosexuality.

In his opinion, cultural differences play a role for his homosexual clients who do not accept themselves as homosexual Muslims. He sees himself as an expert, because, due to his own experiences in life, he understands their situation better than his instructors, whose suggestions would not be accepted by the clients. *It's really, really, really difficult when someone is religious ... and I understand what it means*. He seeks practical solutions and possibilities to discuss homosexuality as an intercultural topic in the SB (cf. SKala group, 3.3.2). This reveals another development step: He has found his place in the SB, the LGBTI\* community and society. He appreciates the SB as an employer and a discrimination-sensitive environment and therefore wants to stay in the SB. As an organisation that relies on the *LGBTI\* culture* in its public image towards its clients, where intercultural differences are of secondary importance<sup>45</sup>, the SB gained a new colleague in him who is motivated and capable of taking a differentiated approach, because he found a way to accept his sexual orientation in the first step. He could not return to his home country, where he did not have a coming out. Due to his language skills, he sees himself in the ICO process as a *gateway* and argues in favour of consolidating the training of dual students with a refugee and migrant background in the SB. He hopes *that this project will continue. I mean not with us, but with other students*. He even goes one step further: **Yes, I wish all organisations in Germany had projects like this. Yes, really (laughs).**

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<sup>45</sup> See the SB's diversity brochure entitled “Diversity is our strength” (2nd edition, 2021).

### 4.2.2 Student B

In the job interview, he was the most ambivalent about studying social work. He already had professional qualifications in social science and humanities, which he acquired in Germany in the form of a master's degree. Practice was a bigger challenge for him than the study programme. Initially, he had difficulties bringing together theory and practice, where he was supported by his tandem partner and his five-member team. He learnt to act professionally predominantly by *shadowing* colleagues and watching challenging situations. He already expressed his *happiness* about working in the SB in February 2020: *It feels like home; it's work, but still, I feel accepted*. One year later, he reflects on his progress and his personal development in daily work and within the team and the *many things that have changed*:

In a positive sense, because when I started working in the Schwulenberatung, I was very reserved and introverted. **And I was also afraid to come out of my shell, because I didn't have any experience in that area – I mean in social work.** And that has definitely improved through my studies, because I always get praise in my team and from the other clients that I'm different now. (I 2b, no. 21 ff.)

His personal development and dedication is generally appreciated in the team and highlighted by the instructor and the team manager. Compared to the previous year, he does not only feel *accepted*, but also *settled in*. He has become independent and expresses his satisfaction about it: *Yes, I'm very happy about that. And I've kind of found my place*. He returns to this topic several times during the interview. First of all, he describes his **professional arrival**, how his learning process was promoted by the theory-practice transfer (cf. chap. 3.5), allowing him to adopt a personal and professional attitude. In retrospect, he describes that he was initially somewhat disconcerted, because he comes from a different subject area, but has now *become a social worker*:

That was a bit overwhelming, but yes. I've grown into it and think: **Okay, now I'm a social worker.** So I take care of people. I'm learning a lot about people and myself. In the beginning, I was wondering: Can I really make it? ... Now I also take care of my stuff myself. (I 2b, no. 230 ff.)

Given the practice-oriented study conditions and moderate exam modalities at his university, he is successfully reconciling his studies and practice (cf. chap. 3.5.1). He appreciates the practical orientation of social work for his personal development. He compares his initial lack of knowledge with that of a child and is proud to now conduct *initial counselling sessions on his own*:

Anyhow, the nice thing is ... it's practice-oriented. So you definitely learn a lot. I've now experienced this development first hand. When I started out, I didn't have a clue. ... I always tagged along. And I was a bit overwhelmed. And I just saw myself like a little boy. And now I've thought to myself: No, I'm going to do the initial session on my own – I'll make it! And I did. And my client is also satisfied and, yes ... (I 2b, no. 291 ff.)

He only works with German clients, but he does not see this as an ICO competence. Unlike the other dual students, who also provide counselling to clients in their native language, he has so far not used his language skills (and impressive multilingualism) in his work with clients. *Sad stories* of clients are still emotionally challenging for him: *They really get to me*. In demanding situations, he still sees himself as a *career jumper*. In such cases, he seeks support in the team, where he feels in good hands, supported and treated as an equal. His professional fresh start was not always easy for him: *I was already at the top, and now I'm starting all over again, that drives me a bit crazy sometimes*. Still, he is a grateful career jumper, who wants to stay in the SB after the end of the training. In light of his experiences in life (*I came here because I'm different and because I want to be integrated and want to fit in*), working in an organisation that advocates for the LGBTI\* community is important to him. He describes and sums up his personal development as follows: **I think working in the Schwulenberatung has made me a different person, more mature**. Arriving means to him: He wants to *give back* what he has *experienced and learnt*.

### 4.2.3 Student C

He is seen as a dual student colleague who *can absolutely make it*, although he had *the most difficulties*, because the structures presented him with challenges. He came into contact with the SB when working as a language mediator. Due to his experience in the social area as family assistant, social care worker and language mediator, he deliberately chose the dual social work study programme. He had already started a different study programme in his home country, which was characterised mainly by didactic methods organised along school lines. The challenges at the university were enormous: *At the beginning, I wanted to give up*. His resilience as a refugee (*staying alive*), the perseverance he learnt on his flight, his motivation (to become a *state-approved social worker*) and his capability of self-reflection helped him stick it out.

In the first interview, he reflected on his own development since the beginning of the training in September 2019, describing specific learning steps he had accomplished since then. He repeatedly mentioned his initial problems and insights, e.g. that he had to first learn to check back: *At the beginning, I guess I was too shy to check back*. In addition, he was not used to learning independently without instructions and initially experienced this freedom as unsettling, which was later on resolved in the team. In the interview in April 2021, he once again refers to his initial problems in the practical training and at the university, but reclassifies them according to the working principles of the SB:

At the beginning, this learning by doing was a total chaos for me, because I didn't know what I was doing. What's BEW anyway<sup>46</sup>? What does it mean to counsel people, or ... And then attending university at the same time. I had a very hard time at work. ... I just couldn't do it all at once. (I 6b, no. 17 ff.)

He sees his development in better understanding the profession and, in the face of *time pressure* ... having *developed the discipline* to reconcile practice and studies. His self-organisation skills were once again put to the test by the pandemic, when not only his academic life, but also his counselling sessions and his private life took place online. He is successfully mastering his studies; he *completed all modules* and *did not have to repeat any of them yet*. However, there were *ups and downs*. He managed to resolve individual problems, such as an accusation of plagiarism, but not the structural problems, which took more time for him as a non-German and non-native speaker. The model offered by the university, where his paper is proofread by the lecturer two weeks before the deadline, creates *additional time pressure* and does not solve the problem. The structural problem becomes an individual one.

Unfortunately, I couldn't find a solution, so I kept stressing out, working and getting help from others. (I 6b, no. 78 f.)

The teaching and examination methods of his university are particularly challenging. This could not be resolved in the current form of the instruction – this realisation has led to the introduction of instructor training sessions in the SB (cf. chap. 3.5 and 3.6). He found that the learning contents of the first two semesters were not very helpful in professional practice, but he is able to productively use the learning contents of the second academic year in his practical work. He has been working with a German- and Arabic-speaking client for one and a half year, which is working out very well: they have achieved the set goals and he has learnt a lot in the process. However, he considers counselling clients in his native language to be problematic, because it makes him and his clients less motivated to learn German.

I don't know if that's ideal. ... **80% of the counselling is done in Arabic** ... That's kind of a **help service rather than capacity building**. ... But as long as the clients expect me to translate and say what has to be done and fill out the application forms and stuff like that, I'm more of a **family helper than a social care worker**. (I 6b, no. 247 ff.)

The *extra service* rendered by him and other dual student colleagues through their diverse language skills is acknowledged and appreciated by the SB. To what extent his support plans with the clients will involve the gradual gaining of independence including German language courses remains to be seen.

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<sup>46</sup> Individual assisted living

In any case, he wants his efforts in reconciling studies and practice to be noticed. In the course of his studies, he got to know new interesting fields of work and wants to learn other new things by shadowing in other departments. He deals with the training, for example with the concept of instruction sessions and the SKala group, in a responsible and critical way. He questions the student-teacher relationship, which he considers imbalanced and would like to be designed more as a mentoring or coaching programme, being *preventive* rather than *reactive*. In addition, he argues that the SKala group requires a *suitable concept*. The fact that he calls for more structure to counteract excessive stress can be seen as a responsible action for himself and for others. If the training is to be consolidated, he wants to become an instructor himself to instruct dual students with a refugee and migrant background in the future. He derives this suggestion from his experience with the WAY project, which is *important* to him professionally and personally, because it *gave him opportunities*, so he would like to support it in return. He sees his present role in the WAY project as a *cultural and language mediator*:

... well, since I was born and raised in X, I know the culture in that country, and **since I've been living here for some time and have become familiar with the laws and rights in my studies and work, I now better understand the infrastructures that make up ... the country.** How it all works, organisations, institutions or authorities. And my role is to mediate, being a mediator. **Not only a social worker, but a bridge or mediator ...** (I 6b, no. 478 ff.)

His view of social conflicts during the pandemic (against the background of the controversy over a video called "Alles dicht machen!" ("Shut down everything!") posted by several actors and actresses) shows that he sees himself as part of a society that has to face problems together. He regards social consensus or the joint approach to solutions as the support he needs to follow his path in Germany in difficult times:

It has shown that all people are very stressed out these days. And that's a bit overwhelming. I understand and it would be nice if other people would also ... understand that it's hard on all of us. ... and **that we can be there for each other.** Then it gets easier. (I 6b, no. 460 ff.)

#### 4.2.4 Student D

According to the department manager, he had the easiest path, mastering the training *confidently*. When his visa as an Erasmus student expired in March 2019, he submitted a speculative application, which gave him the opportunity to start working in social integration support as early as April 2019. Being a skilled information scientist, he brought experience in education and interest in social work. The model of dual studies suits him well. At the time of the first interview, he was the only one to have nearly completed his second semester; after reflecting on the **beginnings** and the associated difficulties in retrospect, he concludes that he is **happy** with his decision.

He already found the **theory-practice exchange** beneficial in 2020. Learning contents, such as professional field development, the history of social work, law or psychology allowed him to gain a better understanding of the practical work. He found it helpful to learn practice-oriented methods of social work. In the second interview, he placed more focus on the system of collaboration between universities and practice: Although the study programme is practice-oriented, encouraging students to combine theory and practice, the theoretical focus areas at his university are not suitable for his work in social integration support. The key contents are not coordinated either in practice nor in the study programme, so it is up to him to translate the contents for his practical work in the Schwulenberatung Berlin (cf. chap. 3.6).

Since his first semester, he has been successfully working with an Arabic-speaking client he "took over" from a colleague and can better approach in Arabic. He experienced language barriers himself when he worked with clients covering for colleagues on holiday or sick leave. Since he mainly works with Arabic-speaking clients, he sometimes wished he had a language mediator for visits outside the SB (police, doctor, etc.) to help out with medical or legal terms. He himself keeps being pushed into the

role of a language mediator by the clients: **Am I an interpreter or a social worker?** In the 2020 interview, he reported about his difficulties making a distinction when visiting a doctor with his Arabic-speaking client. In the following year, he expanded **his professional** role by role-playing with his client as a *form of empowerment* prior to visiting a doctor. He addresses his own learning process and professional development himself based on the counselling work of the last two years; for example, he reports about conducting the initial counselling session for the first time. In the 2021 interview, he supposes that the tips and support he receives from the team are good for him and probably also for his clients. He would prefer to eliminate the division of responsibility for university and practice between two instructors, as envisaged in the two-on-one setting in the tandem, to receive more support for his studies from both instructors (specifically proofreading of papers). However, he seems to have taken a development step here almost without having noticed it himself. Since he cannot have every paper proofread, he submitted them without support and got very good marks:

That's probably why **I'm more self-confident now**. I say, okay, if they have time, I'll send something, if they don't, that's okay as well. Whether you get a 1.0 or 1.3 – a pass is a pass (laughs). (I 4b, no. 380 ff.)

In the tandem kayak analogy used in the interview to find out in what position the students see themselves, he interprets his own development as a switch in positions and believes that he is capable of steering and dictating the beat (cf. chap. 3.2). He feels that he is contributing something to the team, which is confirmed by his team colleagues in the 2020 focus group interview. His systemic realisation that *nobody knows everything* acknowledges a normality in the SB's daily work where individual persons can take the role of students time and again and there is a need for mutual support in a complex, constantly changing system. Perhaps this is the reason why he seems to identify more with his team, his student colleagues and the WAY project than with the complex organisation of the SB as a whole. He again gives a systemic answer to the question of where he sees himself in the process of ICO:

Well, I think the Schwulenberatung is already in this process, not only because of the SKala projects, but also because of the language mediators. ... And I think I'm part of this process. What I can contribute here is, of course, my language skills, which not everyone might have, but you also don't need to be a foreigner for that. German people might also speak a (foreign) language (laughs). (I 4b, no. 640 ff.)

He thinks of ICO as a mutual process. He points out that in his daily work with colleagues he finds himself in situations where he does not understand how processes, rules, hierarchies, etc. are dealt with in a way he considers *typically German*:

Well, I think we're all grown-ups and can resolve issues ourselves rather than ask our department managers or managing directors every time. **And I think people here are perhaps more rule-oriented. I mean they have a different perception of rules.** And we settle things spontaneously. We go about them spontaneously. But might also need the rules, okay. (I 4b, no. 671 ff.)

He is not used to that and sometimes has difficulties with it, although he has come to understand a lot since he discovered the term *culture of discussion*. Nevertheless, he has not yet discussed this experience of distance and difference with colleagues, except with other student colleagues:

... because sometimes when I'm with (name of student colleague), we talk with other colleagues about such topics. **What the Germans do that we think is strange or funny. Exactly, but we smile about it. But such topics should perhaps also be included in the integration process or discussed openly. I'm afraid to say it because my German colleagues might feel offended. Even though I don't mean it that way. I just think it's funny, unusual, not quite normal, that's why I say it.** But I don't mean to attack other people or other cultures or other backgrounds. Or laugh about them. Not at all. (I 4b, no. 690 ff.)

He understands the others, but is worried that they might not understand him (cf. chap. 5.3). In the interview, he first develops the idea to introduce such topics as part of the integration and inclusion process in the SKala group, which he thinks is the appropriate setting for this purpose (cf. chap. 3.4.2). Having an open environment to address such topics is important to him. In the future, he sees himself as a German social worker, possibly working in international projects in his home country.

#### 4.2.5 Student E

He had already been working in the organisation before starting his training in June 2019; he was approached by the department manager whether he would be interested in the SKala project. He already had experience in the social area and in adult education; among other things, he had worked as a social care worker (without qualifications) in a refugee accommodation during the 2015 migration crisis. The prospects of better career opportunities (than with his original academic qualification) and a meaningful practice-oriented job as a social worker led to his decision to study social work. He would wish for everyone to study one or two semesters of social work to improve their social interaction skills. In the first interview, he described his personal and professional development as follows:

... I'm learning a lot about myself, what makes me more relaxed in dealing with people. And that's particularly attributed to this approach of solution-oriented counselling. And then I thought, okay, I can even use this method in my private life. (I 5b, 167 ff.)

In the first academic year, he already found it easy to combine theory and practice and made an effort to adopt a professional attitude in his daily work. In the feedback process with his instructor, he recognises the methods (such as instructed change in perspective) that support his own reflection and learning process: *Then I feel at home in this process*. He receives support from the team, which is interested in his learning contents and gives him a lot of appreciation. Since he feels confident discussing everything and expressing his wishes in the team, he already draws a positive conclusion regarding his studies and work in the first interview in 2020. His **satisfaction**, which he emphasises several times, results from his experience that the things he learns at the university and at work are beneficial to his **personal development**.

Right from the start, "flexibility and structure" in connection with the WAY project has been a key issue to him: Even though he recognises and acknowledges that this is how things work in the SB's new projects, he would have preferred having more structure at the beginning of his studies:

This project is new. We don't have so much experience with it, I mean no experience at all. ... And that's what I think was lacking a bit in the beginning, because I personally can work better with a structure, rather than being told "you are free, be creative, just do it the way you think is best". (I 5b, 319 ff.)

But he learns to *come to terms with this way of working quite well* by making use of the benefits of this style of development, leadership and support with flat hierarchies and by approaching instructors, team and department managers as well as the managing director, for example concerning a paper about the organisation.

And, therefore, I sometimes enjoy this flexibility ... at the beginning of my studies, it was more of a burden for me. This flexibility, because I didn't have a structure. ... And because it also takes time to organise things. ... Some kind of daily structure. (I 5b, 90 ff.)

In the 2021 interview, his development is also reflected in the fact that, as an employee who identifies with the SB's work, he has adopted a different attitude towards having a "flexible framework". Perhaps this is how he reacts to the WAY project seeking to establish structures in its consolidation phase. He points out individualised problems in studies and practice and is increasingly giving thought to organisational structures and organisational development in the SB, i.e. to how processes and typical ways of working in the SB (with regard to his training and working environment) can be designed and changed. He combines his ideas with arguments for comprehensive quality management.

He himself recognises his professional development by the fact that he has been able to improve his communication with clients and colleagues in his daily work or, as he remarks elsewhere, that the *way he sees his clients has completely changed*. His studies have *brought him forward*. He has come into contact with the subject of management, which he wants to explore in more depth to be able to take over management tasks in the future: ... **to ... stir things up a bit in the structure**. From the quality management perspective, he strives for more commitment when dealing with delays and more transparency when departing from rules.



He particularly values the *support* and *appreciation* he receives from his team in his daily work: *Everything I wish for is already in place. He feels in good hands* with the SB and distinguishes between everyday racism on the streets (the public space) and the SB as a discrimination-sensitive environment. He assumes that his German language skills are the reason why he *did not feel like someone with a migration background*. He does not reflect on the “LGBTI\* bracket”. He perceives the organisation as being open, addresses the recent discussions about postcolonial and *critical whiteness* theories and reflects on them in relation to the SB. He thinks that the managers, who deal with the topic in a *very open* and *very supportive* way as *big white men*, are called upon to reach out to the people who left him with *question marks*. He speaks out for in-depth sensitivity and further training. In his opinion, this may be the only thing missing in the SB. At the end of the interview, he emphasises that he considers implementing quality management and adopting a more independent attitude in daily work to be even more important than intercultural opening processes. In retrospect, he expresses an urgent need for a change in attitude and for action based on his experience as a dual student employee. A quality manual would have been really helpful to him *at the beginning*:

**Yes, some kind of booklet**, for example. Basic knowledge, basic framework. Knowledge about our work. ... Whenever you have any doubts or you're stuck, you take a look at this booklet. **Oh, there's an explanation!** (I 5b, no. 713 ff.)

He does not want any parental care in the training: Well, I don't like constantly reaching out to people if I have any questions. In his opinion, quality management is the solution: It would be helpful in both my training and daily work – as capacity building. He wishes to improve organisational processes in daily work in general and to work his way into management tasks in the future – ... *if I could head in that direction after finishing my studies, that would make me happy*. He aims for an executive position in the SB or a similar LGBTI\* organisation.

#### 4.3 Conclusion and outlook

In retrospect, all dual students have overcome the initial hurdles and mastered their studies and practice. They are *satisfied* with their decision, *grateful and happy*, have gone through learning processes in practice and studies and made noticeable progress in their overall personal and professional development, while gaining more self-assurance and self-confidence on their way. Their self-assessment is consistent with the assessment of the responsible persons. Their positive changes, including more self-confidence, are noticed by the team, team managers, department managers and the managing director. They have overcome stress using their own resources and with the support of experienced persons. At the beginning, they often seemed overwhelmed, some even considered giving up, but they kept their end up. In the managers' opinion<sup>47</sup>, they can all make it, have become colleagues of the team and are doing well in their jobs and studies as well as their private lives.

Not all students seek guidance and support in the form of parental care in their teams. The process of arrival in the SB and their role in the process of intercultural opening and in society are linked to their efforts to become social workers and provide input to clients (from their home country), the WAY project or the organisation. In their daily work, they address cultural differences in areas where they reach their limits in the practical work with people. Some are dedicated social workers, others see the training as a source of gaining more professional security and/or a career perspective. One manager remarked in the interview: *We roped them into it*. Some student employees see their professional future as social workers in the SB, attesting to the successful selection and promotion of junior staff.

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<sup>47</sup> See the minutes of 18/11/2021.

## 5 Intercultural opening in the SB

According to the application, the SB aimed for further intercultural opening (ICO) with the WAY project, which was to be scientifically monitored by the evaluating INIB team. In the course of the three-year process, the team met a great number of employees in various settings and interviewed them, including about the complex subject of ICO. We were interested in previous experiences, ideas for future changes as well as examples of definitions. A random document analysis concerning the use of the terms inter- or transcultural opening led to the development of new hypotheses that had to be tested. Our perspective on ICO in the SB changed through the departments, institutions, teams and persons we came into contact with; our results are described in detail in the interim reports. Finally, an online survey among all employees in the last half-year of the monitoring enabled us to reflect on the previous individual impressions. On this basis, a conclusive assessment of the opening process is provided below.

### 5.1 Intercultural opening – direct or indirect? (2019)

During the 2019 period under review, first results concerning the three groups of the new employees with a refugee background were formulated (social care workers in the accommodation, language mediators in social counselling as well as dual students in community-based assistance).

The **accommodation** for LGBTI\* refugees we examined was referred to by the **accommodation manager** as an *intersectionality lab*, because the social care workers do not see themselves primarily as points of contact to “their” compatriots or speakers of “their” language, but oppose the culturalisation of the problems to be tackled by them. The accommodation manager fears that a mosaic of specialised responsibilities will ultimately develop:

... the gay colleagues only take care of gay men and the trans’ colleagues work with trans\* people and people with a migrant background with those with a migrant background. But then, of course, the trans\* people with a migrant background only take care of trans\* people with a migrant background and that is ... Do we really want to do it that way? (I 5, no. 502 ff.)

Her vision of ICO is different:

Well, you’ve only accomplished real intercultural opening when employees with a migrant background, or whatever ... with that background also take care of all the other clients. And the Germans or the employees who were born here are also able to take care of clients who came here from elsewhere. (I 5, no. 492 ff.)

The interviews with the newly hired **social workers** suggest that although they know their task within WAY, they do not necessarily find it acceptable, but a *bit awkward*. They do not believe that *social work ... is about cultures*, certainly not in Berlin and Germany. It also becomes clear how they see their own way of dealing with diversity within the organisation (which is reflected on several occasions, but barely underpinned in theory). Since they quite often provide counselling in several languages and thereby reach a lot of people, some assume that they need not know anything about their (cultural) backgrounds to be able to support their causes in Germany. This leads to a universal principle as the ideal: *Accepting people as people is very important to me*. The HOW remains unclear, since no communication or counselling skills are discernible yet in an intercultural context.

A few sentences further, *shared experience* is seen as the basis for effective social work:

... as a migrant and a person who has been through that, who experienced flight ..., I can be much more sensitive in particular situations than a person who does not have that experience ... So, the experience of migration itself is already very helpful in approaching the residents in a sensitive way. (I 6, no. 145 ff. and 196 ff.)

According to the **social worker**, the accommodation is dealing with two contrary opening processes that are taking place simultaneously, because the SB *has committed itself to the mission of ICO* and wants to meet the requirements by having more and more queer people in their drop-in centres, including with the help of the WAY project, for which purpose it has to change its structures in a second

step. Ultimately, this may involve inviting people who have inhibitions or are even affected by depression and cannot yet accept this invitation. As a result, the planned networking, especially including within the organisation, cannot (yet) be implemented as intended. Why exactly is that? In the interviews, we quite often hear: *Yes, no ... Yes, but ... or No, exactly ... Yes, no, of course, that's how I see it, too.* Are there two or more contradictory sides? Is the subject of ICO being addressed on various communication levels? Constructive communication (cf. Schulz von Thun) requires an encounter on the same levels; the knowledge of that is taken for granted in the SB's team. Corresponding team meetings seem to be helpful to reach the desired consensus, because (as remarked by the social worker) *in a way, you are also sending a signal to your target group.*

The evaluation of four interviews with **language mediators**, which focused on integration processes, revealed three different categories that could not always be clearly delimited from each other: intercultural opening (ICO), intercultural competence (ICC) as well as professionalism and ICO. Questions about the aspired intercultural opening of the Schwulenberatung Berlin were rarely answered directly, but very often indirectly. It is often stated that the Schwulenberatung Berlin is open to all new arrivals seeking help and support in the context of LGBTI\*. ICO is apparently being assumed; further training offered in this area is considered to be additional proof thereof. ICO requires language and cultural mediation, learning from each other and mutual recognition within the team as well as multilingual brochures to facilitate arrival. A development towards integrating the clients into society to enable encounters in the long term is considered to be ideal. Within ICO, intercultural communication plays a significant role for the interviewees. Social standards require reflection on both sides. The tolerance of ambiguity expected by them requires support through cultural mediation and sensitivity training to ultimately strengthen intercultural competence. Professionalism and ICO were also regarded as an area of conflict, because a long-standing professional attitude as part of ICO requires change that can be seen as departure from or abandonment of the existing counselling and therapeutic approach. Ultimately, this may even cause them to deny their own professionalism. Topics such as dealing with scheduling appointments and reliability/punctuality, flexibility in using foreign languages and interaction with colleagues whose professionalism is unclear are mentioned and to some extent pointed out as problems.

A language mediator, who has apparently been dealing with the subject of ICO for many years, expresses ideas such as expanding the fields of work of the language mediators or offering advanced training to the other colleagues<sup>48</sup>, because, in the second step, she dreams of

the Schwulenberatung being a place where different, let's say cultures, identities and so on, can meet and exchange experiences. That might sound a bit ... yes, a bit like social romanticism. ... Exactly. Yes, well, I think there would be quite a lot to do if we really wanted to look into it. (I 7, no. 379, 394 f., 483 f.)

Among the **dual students**, ICO was mostly a closing interview topic and often had to be explained in more detail, suggesting that it previously had barely been addressed in theory and practice. In the interviews, however, we did hear indirect statements, which were classified into two different categories: personal background experience including educational path and intercultural opening including intercultural communication. The personal background experience distinguishes students whose migration seems to be of a long-term nature, who were already seeking international contacts in their home countries and tend to be multilingual, from those students who had to leave their professional path behind as refugees to find a new path in a foreign country with a foreign language. The answers emphasise the opportunities offered to them; they want to pass on their positive experiences via an interculturally open organisation that represents their interests. Some feel well prepared due to having completed a master's programme or are deepening their interest in international issues. Others are looking forward to the changes they were seeking and to now being able to choose what is right for

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<sup>48</sup> I mean things like critical whiteness, for example. Is there anything that could still be improved? So that people who are not white and German can feel comfortable here as well. (I 7, no. 259 f.)

them in a new environment. A more cautious and sceptical answer points to the risks of too high expectations on the part of the team, to imminent re-traumatisation when confronted with the topics of the clients and, due to the not very school-like structure of the study programme, to the necessity of having tandem partners (see more on this in chap. 3). Differences experienced in the way of communication are perceived as unsettling, also because the individual – cultural – personality threatens to change; one student wants to preserve the instilled respect for older people, which can contradict a partner-like working relationship. They are impressed with and gladly embrace the collegial and collaborative communication, which is new to them; ICO is welcomed, but is combined with the demand that the instructors need to learn more as well. As a role model for their compatriots, they will need to develop more distance in their interactions, including in their role as future professionals. In their opinion, ICO by having *more people of colour* and *better complaints management* could bring improvements for clients.

The start of ICO has been made and all interviewees with their different tasks address it either indirectly or directly. According to their practical experience, the language mediators consider intercultural communication, including language and cultural mediation, to be necessary in the SB. ICO is ultimately a subject among many others; when they work with refugees, they are already intercultural, and, conversely, an opening process is not intercultural if it is not inclusive. The ideal solution would be integrating the clients into society to enable encounters.

In 2019, we gained the overall impression of having a group of highly motivated students who appreciate their position as the “chosen ones” to participate in an innovative and interesting project and want to seize the opportunity offered to them. The backgrounds of these students and colleagues reveal varied potential, which is indispensable for reflective intercultural competence in opening processes of social organisations.

## 5.2 Intercultural opening as lived reality: Competencies and differences (2020)

In the second year, we turned our attention to the long-term employees of the SB in **social integration support** and **psychological counselling** to recognise possible differences compared to new WAY employees regarding intercultural opening processes. How do these respondents, who we interviewed in focus groups and group interviews, see the ICO of the Schwulenberatung Berlin and where are competencies and differences apparent?

In all interview settings, most interviewees talk about a *normality* and a *lived reality* of opening processes in the SB<sup>49</sup> or even in society. Language and language mediation plays a central role for all interviewees. Multilingualism is seen as an important element of ICO and welcomed as an asset. By contrast, language mediation – after initial unsettling experiences in an unexercised language mediation process – is seen sceptically and services offered in the native language are occasionally even considered to involve the risk of contributing to the isolation of refugees. The long-term employees associate ICO with hopes for better visibility, but also see the risk that it could be instrumentalised for image cultivation.<sup>50</sup> The WAY project is perceived as promoting the process of ICO, because it makes available funds for new employees and their training.

**Differences** between the interviewed groups can be recognised in the styles of communication within the teams and in different lengths of employment in different departments of the SB. For example, we met two groups of psychologists who had a lot in common, but also showed differences in attitude and motivation, which can be subsumed under the labels of “enthusiasm and curiosity” as well as “disappointment and interest in common elements”.

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<sup>49</sup> The opening of the SB to heterosexual women is reported to have already been accomplished years ago.

<sup>50</sup> This concern is in no way confirmed by a random document analysis, where only marginal references to ICO are found.

Differences also exist due to different age and education biographies, sometimes also migration biographies. They become apparent, for example, in a group interview in social integration support, where the equality and inequality of people is touched upon. One employee sums up: *Somehow I haven't met anyone who was somehow different* (I 3a, no. 838 ff.). His colleague cautiously disagrees: *... it's different when you're living in a country where you don't speak your native language, where you're doing a job in a foreign language. So, I do believe that there are differences* (I 3a, no. 862 f.).

At the same time, the team is also perceived to be homogenous to a certain extent, which is rather attributed to many years of being part of the team and to the shared professional mandate.

**Competencies** of the newly hired employees are recognised in the teams and seen as being helpful for ICO. The role of the students in their teams is addressed in almost every group and the comments are extremely positive in all (!) groups, expressing praise for their personalities (*a cheerful, outgoing guy*), their professional commitment (*new input through the study programme*) and their ability to work in a team (*is good at mediating*). Ultimately, the instructors agree that the students play a major role in the SB's ICO, because they *introduce different perspectives, opinions and topics* (I 3a, no. 800). Personal interests, especially in learning new and different things and languages, are important and enriching additions.

The WAY project and further training sessions support the already started process of ICO, for which the SB consistently receives praise. This raises hope for further transformation steps and that previously unfruitful ideological dialogues and discussions will thereby be turned into professional and productive discourse, which would also avert the danger of ICO being instrumentalised for image cultivation of the SB.

The intercultural competencies encountered are highly different, which manifests itself in the collegial exchange as well as through insights into the specific case work. Intercultural sensitivity and competence must be developed further – with a view to finding or establishing things that people arriving have in common. The awareness of the power of cultural values and traditions as well as their variability by social structures should be raised further, because, from our point of view, this is a key competence that is essential for the work of an interculturally open organisation; focusing on an anti-racist perspective in the further training sessions offered is not sufficient in this case. Instructors, quite often team members with a multicultural background, show educational creativity in interacting with the dual students entrusted to them, which can also lead to a new level of satisfaction within the whole team.

The interviewed long-term employees of the SB also see ICO as normality and multilingualism as its element. They are already treading the path from an in-depth understanding of inclusion towards diversity mainstreaming, meaning they review internal action by the aim of an organisation that has *living diversity* as its keynote and awards the seal of quality “Lebensort Vielfalt” (“Diverse Living Space”) for culture-sensitive care. This is confirmed by the managing director's statement *We are more interculturally open than it seems*, which was understood by us as a sign of a still unsatisfactory exchange among the employees and at the same time prompted a document analysis. Overall, the identity-forming power of a future-oriented Schwulenberatung Berlin by and for peers still seems particularly strong to us. The employer gets praise as well:

I think its super-exciting for the Schwulenberatung to have employees who are well trained and can accelerate this process. (I 3a, no. 655)

### **5.3 Intercultural opening requires strategic action (2021)**

The third year of evaluation was to examine the impact of the opening steps so far taken and supported by the WAY project – in terms of resonance experiences of refugees, migrants and employees in the Schwulenberatung Berlin as a resonance space.<sup>51</sup> This summary is based on the results of the individual

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<sup>51</sup> Cf. Hartmut, R. (4th edition, 2020). Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung. Suhrkamp Verlag.

and focus group interviews with employees from different areas of responsibility as well as a final survey (see chap. 6). The focus of the interviews and the survey was placed on assessing the status quo of the (assumed) intercultural opening as well as the SB's personal experiences with and interest in ICO.<sup>52</sup>

The following three complexes can be derived from the online survey among all employees:

- Many respondents emphasised that **any form of intercultural opening is beneficial**. Additional cultural backgrounds contribute to *enriching the perception of the clients, the city, the world and themselves*.
- The **Schwulenberatung Berlin** is on the **right track** as far as intercultural opening is concerned: *In fact, I don't know any other organisation that is doing such a good job managing this mix, despite all shortcomings in the details*, one person says. The organisation is described as being largely open to all cultures, gender identities and sexual orientations.
- Suggestions made include a **productive approach to the (still) missing inter- and transcultural competencies** and **stronger structural embodiment of this subject**, for example by sensitivity and (mandatory) internal advanced training activities. However, this requires additional resources. Other calls relate to enhancing diversity in personnel selection and personnel development, reducing access barriers for the clients, public relations work and appointing a person of trust or diversity officer.

#### Perspective of the managers<sup>53</sup>

A person who is responsible for language mediation in the entire organisation will probably have developed a different perspective on the process of ICO than a person who has direct contact with clients or a person who has to approach funding bodies with material demands (in this case: additional expenditure resulting from the process of ICO).

In the first case, the position of language mediators to be strengthened is trained in the joint work in various counselling settings with colleagues who typically have different interests, which supports ICO.

In the second case, the collaboration with clients, new students (with a refugee background) and employees is fostered, the goal to be accomplished being the intercultural opening of the team. The SB has always taken an interest in working with people who have different cultural backgrounds. Ten years ago, it was still discussed whether colleagues are assisted in drafting German texts; today, they all agree that such assistance is provided as a matter of course.<sup>54</sup>

In the third case, it is about stabilising the already started process of ICO by obtaining approval from the funding bodies to cover the additional expenditure.

The question of how the SB recognises or measures its intercultural opening ultimately remains unanswered. One of the managers expresses his views on this implicitly several times (and explicitly in a more questioning way): Is it a sign of intercultural opening when the dual students with a refugee background say that they want to work interculturally – meaning also with German and German-speaking clients – rather than monoculturally – with clients who speak their native language and also have a refugee background? Is it intercultural opening when (partial) projects are staffed with an international team and attract international clients or when a distinction between regular and international is no longer made in group programmes, i.e. when refugees also have access to the SB's non-refugee-specific programmes? Is an accommodation for LGBTI\* inclusive and intercultural when it accommodates refugees from 26 different countries, but does not admit queer people from Germany (cf. I 10, no. 782 f.)?

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<sup>52</sup> Since no final annual report was submitted for 2021, the results are described here in more detail than in the 2019 and 2020 summaries.

<sup>53</sup> The following deliberations are based on statements made in individual interviews and management meetings.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. the minutes of 18/11/2021.

The interviewed person, just like other employees, is struggling for a precise choice of words in such discussions. In his opinion, the term “interculturality” involves the risk of simplification. When putting together groups for psychosocial group work, the interviewed person uses the term *international*; the participants should come from *countries that are somehow similar*, but does not specify what this similarity could consist in: language, religion, culture, politics ...? The essential connecting element should be homosexuality and the associated problems, such as coming out. The participants should be addressable in a common language or should not have a refugee background; ultimately, *similarities [...] in their biographies* should be apparent.

Another person sees linguistic dishonesty looming in many areas, which he describes as “political correctness” and which, in his opinion, claims prerogative of ideological interpretation.

Another manager sums up things elsewhere as follows: The SB wants to reach out to refugees without barriers so that a gay man can recognise: *there are the others of our kind*. He talks about an LGBTI\* culture, as opposed to interculturality.<sup>55</sup>

For the interviewed managers, ICO plays an important role not only in their daily work but also personally. Out of 90 respondents, 88 percent agree with the statement “ICO plays a role for me personally”; cf. Fig. 1:

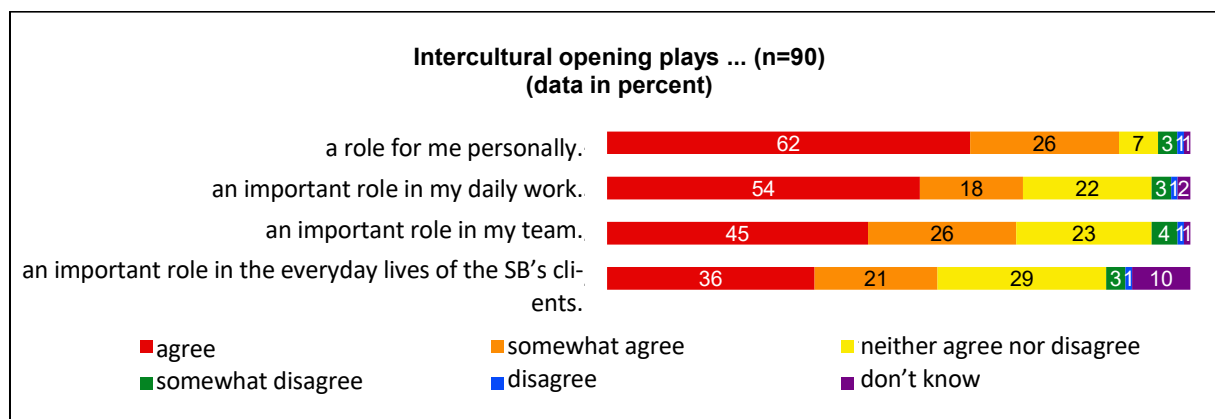


Figure 1

As far as the **practical implementation** of ICO is concerned, one of the managers with extraordinarily long professional experience in the SB claims that the necessary joint commitment is missing; for the WAY project, this means: *Such a comprehensive process requires a greater, joint commitment* (I 10b, no. 542 f.).

**In terms of content**, the person sees ICO as a subject among many others, which per se offers potential for disappointments and conflicts, but also potential for successful implementation (ibid., no. 892 f.).

**In economic terms**, ICO requires a lot of staying power on all levels of the SB, for example because crucial positions are often restaffed after elections and it is not uncommon for budgets to be frozen or refinancing to be jeopardised, especially in the case of assistance services like language mediation, which are relatively new, but have now been recognised (I 10b, no. 611 ff.).

**In structural terms**, ICO is controlled by the management team: By selecting personnel skilfully, teams are set up to be diverse, but should also always *include Germans who were born here* (I 10, no. 1010). *There has to be a good mix*; however, there are no quantified targets for that. It is acknowledged that language mediators can play a very important role in enabling intercultural opening processes in the Schwulenberatung Berlin, since people seeking advice in counselling centres often prefer talking to compatriots (cf. I 10b, no. 970 ff.). *However, that's not an appeal to them, but an appeal to us as a gay*

<sup>55</sup> Cf. ibid.

counselling centre to give them this freedom of choice, because there are still limitations to that, the manager says (I 10b, no. 977 ff.).

The implementation of dual education also shows that the desired ICO requires **strategic action** in the SB. Dual education seems to be the best instrument to achieve the aspired long-term *expansion of diversity and competencies*, which is why the training is intended to be consolidated.

### Perspective of the students

The **students** describe a positive personal development and a positive development in the SB’s inter-cultural opening, which still requires disseminators like themselves for consolidation. ICO is desired and aimed for by the respondents; their well-being is their benchmark for a successful ICO. A glance at the results of the online survey among all employees reveals that these students work in an environment (community-based assistance) where most of the respondents (33 out of 37) agree or somewhat agree with the statement “ICO plays a role for me personally” (cf. Fig. 2), even though ICO is far less relevant to them in their professional context (cf. chap. 6).

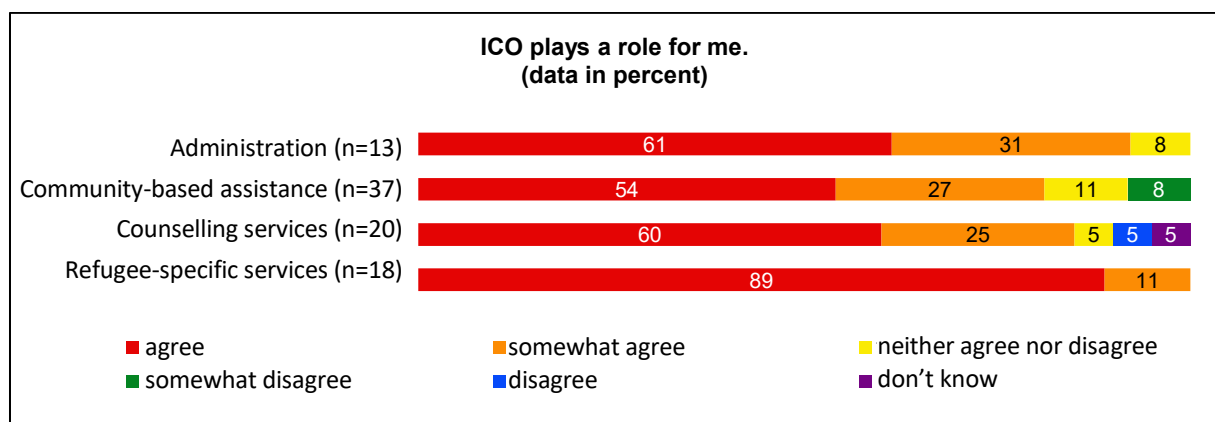


Figure 2

However, two statements of students may suggest that their well-being is limited. Although one respondent considers himself a representative of ICO, he recognises cultural differences in the work process, which he is afraid to address, because he does *not want to attack* anyone. This anxiousness or inhibition should not go unnoticed, because we are dealing with a relationship of dependency with the instructor or an intergenerational conflict against the background of a cultural understanding of authority (see above).

The lack of reflection on interculturality in the counselling setting also deserves attention: If a counsellor who has been socialised in Germany describes his work with migrant clients as intercultural, but a German-speaking colleague who was raised in Maghreb, for example, does not refer to his work with a “German client” as intercultural, it remains to be clarified what understanding of intercultural work (personal, in the team, in the SB) this is based on.

### Perspective of the language mediators

When asked about their experiences with ICO within the SB, the three **language mediators** talk about *not many* to a *great deal* of changes experienced in the opening process: Since they work exclusively in fields with refugees, *they are always involved with refugees, which is already intercultural, meaning opening* (I 9b, no. 58 f.). They clearly delimit their fields of work from other fields of work in the head office, *as an entirely different team*, whose conditions are, however, not exactly known to them. They all talk about the improved structural conditions (personal office, ...), which they experience as a contribution to a significant improvement of their situation – from being singled out to now being part of the team: *Well, I have the feeling that a lot has changed. I mean really a lot, as we have mentioned earlier, these further training sessions, supervision sessions, we now even have a holiday leave (all laugh)* (I 9b, no. 976 f.).



The language mediators agree that, alongside language, they also have to mediate “culture” to avoid misunderstandings in the communication process: *Maybe there is no language and cultural mediation, but there is language mediation and meta-information* (I 9b, no. 328 f.). The inhibition or refusal to talk about culture again becomes apparent – it remains unclear what is meant by meta-information.

All respondents confirm that the SB is interested in ICO, which is seen by some as being very successful and by others as not sufficiently progressed. In light of the respective individual motivations for ICO, this difference seems understandable – for example, someone who hopes for more intercultural competence in working with clients by having new team members will probably experience confirmation more quickly than a person who relies on the interest of colleagues in the training sessions he offers, which quite often require structural support (e.g. by granting leave of absence). In addition, it also seems to play a role whether structural change is regarded as a social policy mandate, whether a socio-educational development process of individuals is aimed for or whether the goal is to increase the budget for future tasks of the organisation or the individual work team.

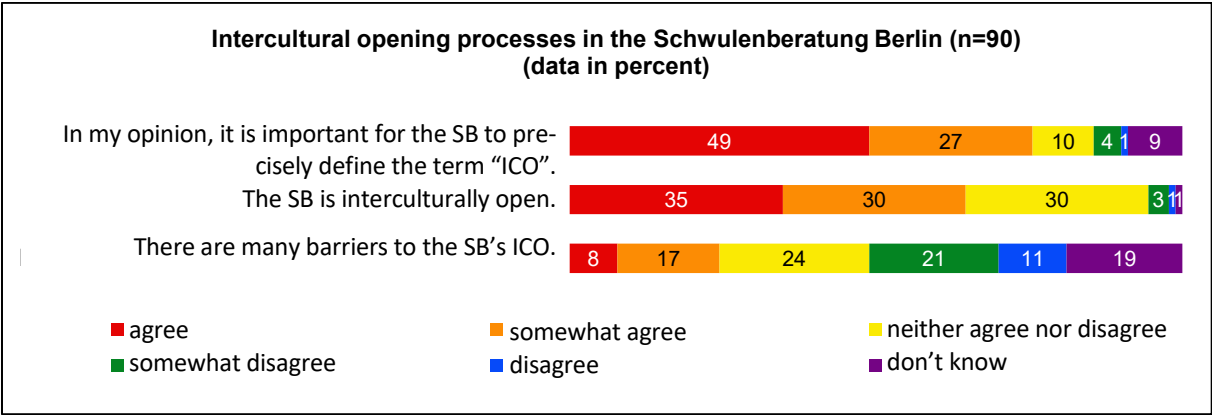


Figure 3

Eight percent of the respondents agree with the statement that there are many barriers to the SB’s ICO, whereas altogether 49 percent at least partly agree with this statement. The breakdown by departments seems interesting, because the lowest percentage of respondents who think that there are too many barriers to ICO is found in the department with the most participants (community-based assistance) (Fig. 3; cf. chap. 6.2).

The respondents see the SB as being interculturally open: 65 percent of the respondents agree or somewhat agree, 30 percent neither agree nor disagree. At the same time, 76 percent are in favour of defining the term ICO more precisely, among whom the teams directly involved through WAY particularly stand out. This request is refused by one manager rather indirectly (*a difficult issue*); he had rather that the employees exchange views on this in honest discussions (I 11b, no. 768 ff).

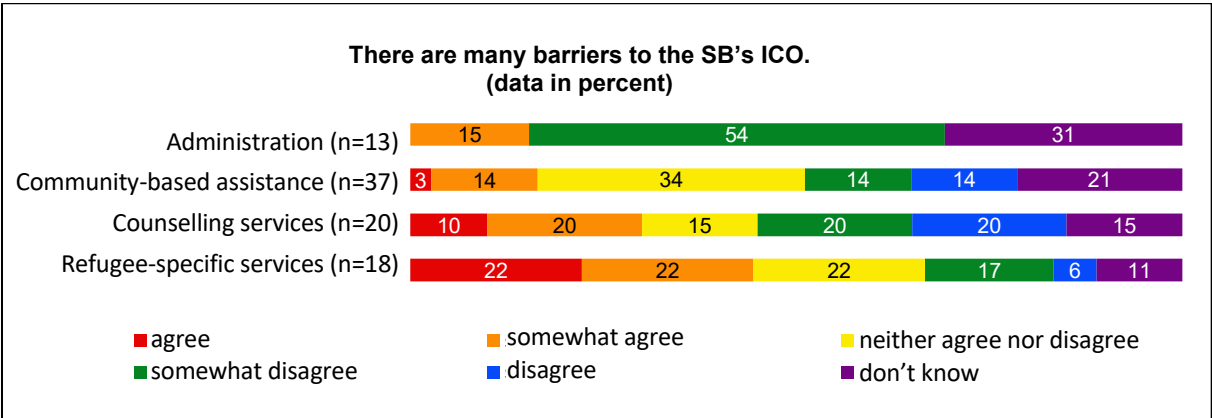


Figure 4

Ultimately, the question of the benchmark for the assessment of intercultural opening remains unanswered: The queer accommodation for people from currently 26 different countries is **not intercultural, because it is not inclusive**, since the heterogenous group of refugees lives there among themselves (I 10b, no. 782 f.), says a person, who shortly thereafter indicates ... that there was an equal, diverse, interculturally open team there ... (I 10b, no. 950 ff.) – in this case, the term “intercultural” was apparently used with a view to the team.

According to the language mediators, the SB should establish a productive approach to the (still) missing inter- or transcultural competencies, anchor this subject more firmly in the structures and hire and promote more diverse, queer personnel to reduce access barriers, advance the appointment of a person or trust or diversity officer and figure out what “intercultural” means to it (the frequently used term “transcultural opening” was also not defined in the monitoring process and was ultimately replaced by the term “intercultural opening”, which has established itself in social work, without this topic having been addressed within the organisation).

#### Interim conclusion

By quoting Pörksen, it should be recalled what it takes to have “a discourse that relies on understanding and communication: delicacy, time, places, clear contexts and direct, socially supported contact, the opportunity for more in-depth collaboration”.<sup>56</sup> Along these lines, the WAY project plays an important role for the interviewed employees, because it enabled additional structures to be established and additional personnel to be hired, supporting and accelerating the top-down and bottom-up process of the SB’s intercultural opening.

In summary, it can be said that the SB has taken steps on the way towards intercultural opening and is seen by the respondents as an organisation that is open to all cultures, gender identities and sexual orientations. Its teams are perceived as being sensitive to diversity, applications for covering additional expenditure for ICO are partly approved by funding bodies, reflecting their appreciation. The SB enables its employees a positive personal development, which has a supportive effect on the aspired ICO.

#### Excursus: A self-portrayal of ICO – a random document analysis

The INIB team also sporadically reviewed publications of the SB for references to the process of ICO. It caught our eye that the 70-page “**diversity brochure**”<sup>57</sup>, the second edition of which was published in 2021 and which is seen by many employees as a good presentation of their work, only contains five indirect references to interculturality, especially to multilingualism. In response to our question at the management meeting, the responsible person explained that he was not aware that interculturality and the term “interculturality” were not included in the brochure, although it did not surprise him: The brochure is intended by the SB to reach clients and the term is not important in the work with them, because, as a low-threshold support organisation, the SB is primarily concerned with fundamental needs, affiliation and solidarity. ICO is a term for specialists and therefore appears in publications such as the Annual Report. A colleague of his added that it is about the *connection* with the target group, *something that is above everything else: We are part of the target group ... and our culture cannot separate us*. LGBTI\* is the *strongest link*, it means being part of a minority – it connects all people who work in the SB. They want to be accessible to refugees without barriers so that a gay man can recognise: *there are the others of our kind*.<sup>58</sup> In the end, an “LGBTI\* culture” is always contrasted with an intercultural approach. Another person also said that ICO as a term involves the potential for exclusion.

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<sup>56</sup> See Bernhard Pörksen, “Gut kühlen”, in: DIE ZEIT of 06/02/2020, page 4.

<sup>57</sup> “Diversity is our strength” (2nd edition, 2021) was handed out in a German and English version, for example at the construction site open day for the “Lebensort Vielfalt” (“Diverse Living Space”) housing project in Berlin Südkreuz in November 2021.

<sup>58</sup> See the minutes of 18/11/2021.

The statement of another person, saying that the illustrations in the brochure could represent a step towards ICO, since not only gay cis men are depicted, was rejected by a colleague, because imagery can only be a first step.

In contrast to the “diversity brochure”, the **anniversary brochure** entitled “**40 years of Schwulenberatung Berlin**” also meets with criticism, among other things because although language diversity is addressed, an overall concept for ICO is not apparent.<sup>59</sup> While reading the 70-page German-English brochure, references to employees with a history of migration (p. 8) and to the desired language diversity (p. 10) catch the eye. As part of the online survey, one person criticised that he sees himself being classified as a person with a migration background in the brochure and has since then felt *singled out: Now I’m something special. An exception to normality. That’s a pity and it startles me.*<sup>60</sup>

Our attention was even more attracted by the frequent use of the prefixes “inter” and “trans” as well as the terms “diversity”, “opening” and “cultural change”, which have a different meaning in the primary internal (LGBTI\*-related) anti-discrimination discourse<sup>61</sup> than in the secondary ICO discourse. “Thank you for understanding this cultural change”, a headline in the brochure reads, and one Lea Marie writes about that: *When you make a transition, it is not only you have to deal with these changes but there are also areas of society that have to deal with them too. There is a kind of cultural change happening and talking to people at Queer Leben also helped me to understand that* (p. 15).

Along these lines, the “Lebensort Vielfalt” (“Diverse Living Space”) and the Schwulenberatung Berlin as a whole could also be interpreted as a “safe haven” offering solidarity and protection from (sea) storms to a great number of individuals and small groups by emphasising the commonalities of the overall global LGBTI\* group. The reluctance to use the term “interculturality” in the brochures then appears in a new light – the SB could even be seen as a lighthouse.

#### **5.4 Imaginations: From a solitary lighthouse to a busy harbour in the social resonance space**

In the statements of the interviewed managers and language mediators, we repeatedly came across images, which we recorded in notes to the minutes and which we would like to share with our readers, because they might be a source of inspiration. It is interesting that such images were not encountered in the interviews with the dual students, where their respective personalities were the focus of attention.

**Imagination 2019:** The social care workers of the accommodation ask us to imagine a colourful tower filled with constantly moving people and a central house in the distance where calm white men are at work. The accommodation director paints the picture of an accommodation resembling a lighthouse that sends its light to other open houses or doors (social integration support, team leaders ...). This light causes the residents’ sense of reality to grow; the central house that previously remained dark is illuminated. The social worker adds: The front door of the central house is open, but not all room doors can be opened. The reason for the locked doors, the NO to opening, is not yet understood. Perhaps the residents themselves do not yet understand it, because it’s too dark? By contrast, the accommodation (lighthouse) of the SB is wide open to refugees (with security guards!); the residents complain about lack of privacy (lockable doors/less light) while the employees complain about having little, very inhibited contact to the outside, especially to the rest of the SB. The language mediators paint a picture of the central house with various annexes and a front door that is wide open, but the doors to some rooms are closed. They are expecting conversion work on the inside so that things “attached” on the outside can move inside the centre, whereas “long-time residents” move into the attic. Perhaps the way to the centre will then become more attractive for people from the outposts (such as the accommodation), because there are no more long distances to be covered and everyone can use everything?

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<sup>59</sup> See interview 7b with two persons.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. the question “What additions do you think can be made to intercultural opening?” in the online survey (an open text box was provided for responses) and the anniversary brochure, p. 8 f.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. Leo Yannick Wild on the SB’s anti-discrimination work in the anniversary brochure, p. 50 f.

**Imagination 2020:** In the second year of research, we find ourselves in a busy harbour with a lighthouse that serves ships as a navigational aid in the surrounding area. Besides houses, we recognise piers for large and small boats, ships as well as containerships in the harbour. We perceive our interviewees' descriptions of the workplaces – on a steamer or containership – as descriptions of proportions, e.g. a department, but also as allusions to the clearly arranged or multiply divided (container) units/teams. To one psychologist, the SB resembles *a containership with many individual units, which sometimes engage with each other, but are still self-contained* (l 8a, p. 25). The water – carrying the vessels – is also increasingly gaining significance. It represents the world's complexity, the ocean of possibilities, where everything is connected and interdependent.<sup>62</sup> We are starting to imagine a fluid society in which a distinction is made between various currents, main stems and tributaries (theories, ideologies). There is concern about the risk of a *ship running aground* if the captains do not pay enough attention. Satisfaction among the crew is seen if the steering is done according to the principle of *going with the flow*. To stick with the analogy: The harbour masters will have their hands full preventing collisions. When the waves surge up, ropes and anchors need to be readjusted and *bridgebuilders* need to provide for the required bridges, piers and pathways between the arriving and departing ships. The SB is situated by this moving water, offering a harbour to people and projects. We recognise still floating and later arriving ships/projects, such as "Lebensort Vielfalt" ("Diverse Living Space") am Südkreuz, see firmly anchored and still loose moorings of boats/teams/trainees and recognise our – still partial – insights into various containers of the SB, because we have so far only met a small number of employees. The necessity of keeping a watchful eye on the ships and the water in a flexibly operated, luminous harbour is thus described from our perspective.

**Imagination 2021:** The image of a harbour is still strongly present, but the luminosity of some of the lighthouses now blends in with the sight of the dominantly rotating cranes and other impressive varied harbour installations. On taking a closer look, we see the large cargo vessels, ships, steamers as well as the small boats and kayaks interact with each other, and the ferrymen, crossing over from one language shore to the other, come into sight. In the harbour, materials are put into and taken out of storage and transferred, staff members come across each other or are replaced, there are locations for get-togethers as well as quiet places; it is difficult to distinguish between impressive construction activities and pure harbour work, because there is a lot of inflow from the landside (resonance space globalised society) and from the waterside (resonance space LGBTI\*) into this wide open harbour, which offers protection for/during transformation as well as possibilities of exchanging information and goods and meeting people. There is still a "but": A ship can only sail as far as there is water, so not only the quality, but also the quantity of the water is important to offer all vessels sufficient room for manoeuvre – both lack of water and floods can pose a challenge.

## **6 Results of the quantitative employee survey on intercultural opening and political work of the SB**

In addition to the qualitative surveys, we conducted a quantitative survey between June and August 2021. The aim of this survey was to find out how the SB's employees assess intercultural opening (ICO), the WAY project, the training situation as well as political work in the SB. In this chapter, we provide a condensed insight into the results of the survey with regard to ICO and the WAY project. We address the results of the survey regarding the SB's political work in more detail, putting it into context along the current professional discourse on political social work. A comprehensive result report was made available to the SB.

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<sup>62</sup> See David Foster Wallace (2008). *This is Water*: "An old, experienced fish is swimming in the sea when he bumps into two young fish. He asks them kindly: 'Hey, you guys, how is the water today?' But the two young fish do not answer, they are stunned – and swim on. After a while, one looks over at the other and asks: 'What the hell is water?'" (quote from: Lotter, W. [2020]. *Zusammenhänge*, p. 35 f. Edition Körber).

## 6.1 Response rate and sample group description

Out of the total of 170 employees of the SB, 101 persons participated in the survey: two of four department managers, 13 of 14 employees from administration, building services, etc., 44 of 84 employees from community-based assistance, 22 of 41 employees from counselling services as well as 20 of 27 employees from refugee-specific services. 90 participants work for the SB as employees, nine as team managers and two as department managers. 15 respondents indicate that their position is (partly) financed with WAY project funding, 66 negate it and 20 do not know whether their position is financed via the WAY project. Out of the 101 respondents, 22 have been working for the SB for less than two years, 23 for exactly two years, 36 for a period of three to nine years and 20 for more than nine years.

The respondents were asked to indicate their relevant qualifications from studies/vocational training, further and advanced training as well as their biographic experiences in four open text boxes. The analysis shows a wide range of qualifications and experiences from construction mechanics and psychotherapy to political sciences as well as a wide range of biographic experiences from LGBTI\* activism and experience abroad to socialisation in various regions in Germany.

## 6.2 Intercultural opening processes in the SB

One focus area of the survey was intercultural opening processes in the SB. Across all departments (administration, community-based assistance, counselling and refugee-specific services), a strong majority of 92 to 100 percent agree with the statement “Intercultural opening plays a role for me personally”. In daily work, by contrast, intercultural opening seems to play an important role predominantly in the departments of refugee-specific (94%) and counselling services (75%) and is considered less important in the departments of community-based assistance (68%) and administration (39%) (see Fig. 5).

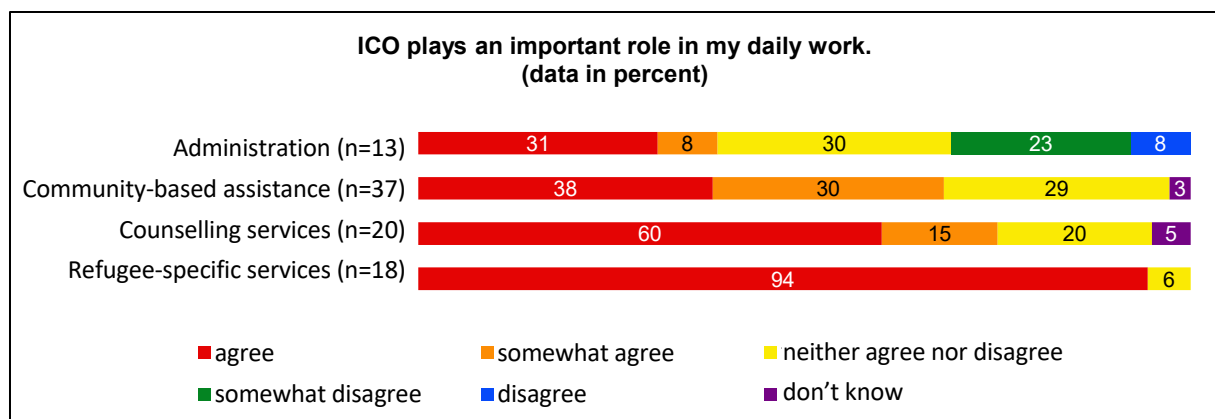


Figure 5

The SB is seen by its employees as being open and based on solidarity: 89 percent of the 101 respondents agree or somewhat agree that the SB accepts different ways of life and 81 percent agree or somewhat agree that their employer shows solidarity and support to disadvantaged people.

Regarding possible barriers, department-specific differences become apparent: Whereas 15 and 17 percent of the employees from the departments of administration and community-based assistance, respectively, agree with the statement “There are many barriers to the SB’s ICO”, the percentage of the colleagues who agree with this statement is considerably higher in counselling (30%) and refugee-specific services (42%).

Differences between the departments are also seen in the central subcategory of multilingualism and language mediation: Multilingualism of employees is apparently particularly important in the departments of counselling and refugee-specific services (see Fig. 6).

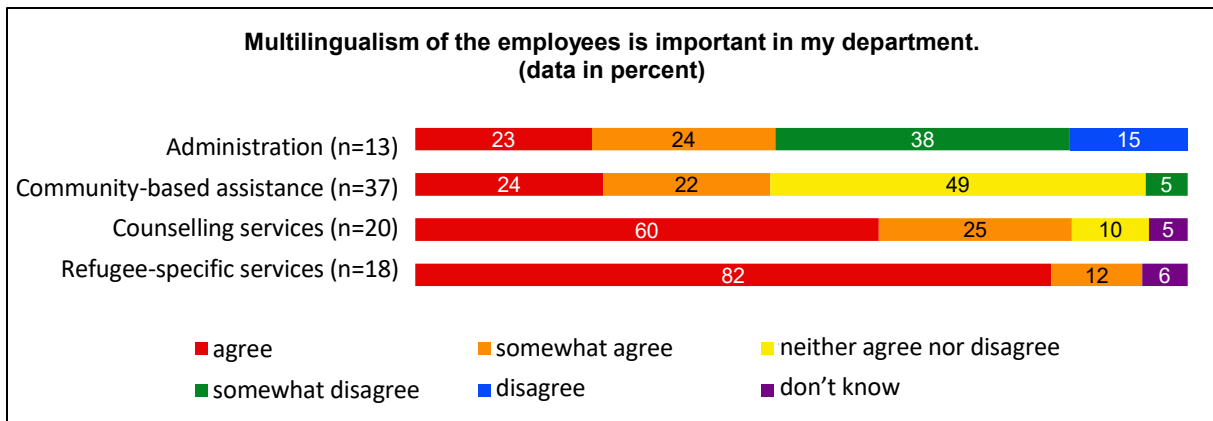


Figure 6

The collaboration with language mediators seems to be particularly intensive in the department of refugee-specific services, where 59 percent of the respondents indicate that they regularly work with language mediators, whereas this figure ranges between only 10 and 15 percent in the other departments. Accordingly, 40 to 61 percent of the employees from the departments of counselling services, community-based assistance and administration respond with “don’t know” to the statement that language mediation is made difficult by organisational barriers. 47 percent of the employees in the department of refugee-specific services agree or somewhat agree with this statement.

In the open responses to intercultural opening, the SB is given an overall good report: “In fact, I don’t know any other organisation that is doing such a good job managing this mix, despite all shortcomings in the details”, one person says. The organisation is described as being open to all cultures, gender identities and sexual orientations. At the same time, however, the term “intercultural opening” needs to be defined more specifically and, as some say, the term “transcultural opening” should be preferred over the term “intercultural opening”. Many respondents encourage more diversity among the personnel at all hierarchical levels. There are repeated calls for hiring “more QTIBPOC people also from younger generations with a different perspective than that of the conventional white cis gay men”. One person refers to the SB as being too white and too European.

### 6.3 The WAY project

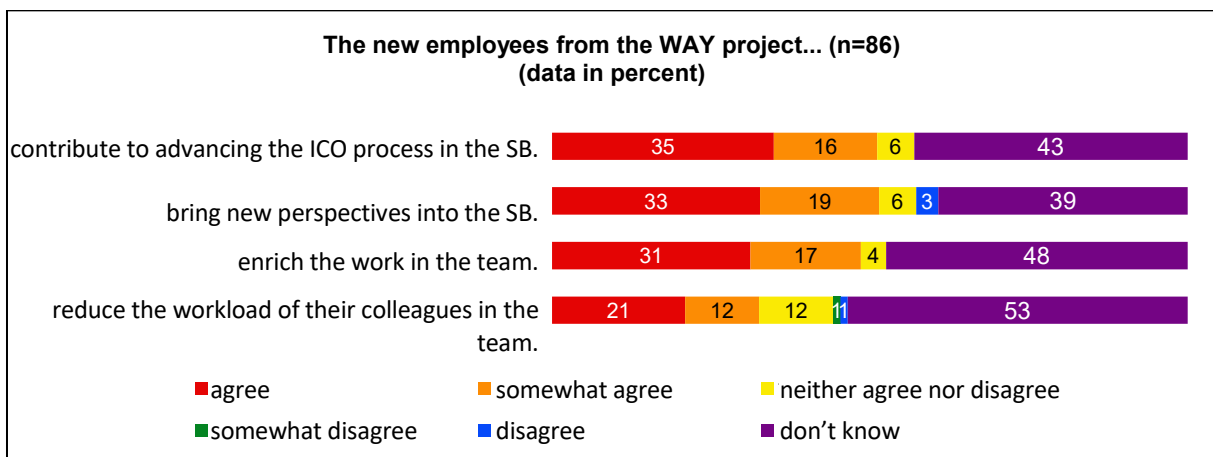


Figure 7

When taking a look at the responses to the questions about the WAY project within the SB, it stands out that a considerable percentage of the respondents chooses the option “don’t know”. This is the case, for example, with the statement “The WAY project has accomplished a lot during the three-year project period”, where 60 percent of the respondents select this option. This can be explained by the fact that many employees are apparently not yet familiar with the goals and activities of the WAY project: 34 percent answer the corresponding question to that effect and 38 percent state that they do not work closely/often with colleagues from the WAY project in their daily work.

Those who are familiar with the WAY project seem to unanimously agree that it represents a gain for the SB: No one disagrees with the statements that the employees from the WAY project bring new perspectives into the SB, enrich the work in the team and contribute to advancing intercultural opening in the SB (see Fig. 7). These assessments are substantiated by the feedback provided in the open text boxes, where respondents who have already worked with colleagues from the WAY project report that they make the teams more varied, bring new perspectives and approaches, inspire critical reflection on existing approaches and productively contribute their language skills.

#### 6.4 Political social work in the SB

In connection with processes of intercultural opening, the question arises of whether and in what form the SB is doing structure-changing political work in addition to case work. The respondents were therefore asked to state their position on three statements concerning this question (see Fig. 8): 79 percent of the respondents each agree with the statements that social work also always involves a political mandate and that the SB's ICO also requires an intervention at political level. When asked about the actual political work done, 52 percent indicate that the SB engages in political work.

The employees were asked to specify the SB's political work in an open text box. The employees listed the following, among others: public relations work, co-determination of public discourse, organisation of expert conferences, lobbying, advocacy, political networking, drafting of statements, political disputes and discussion events within the organisation as well as creation of (new) living and working spaces for LGBTI\*.

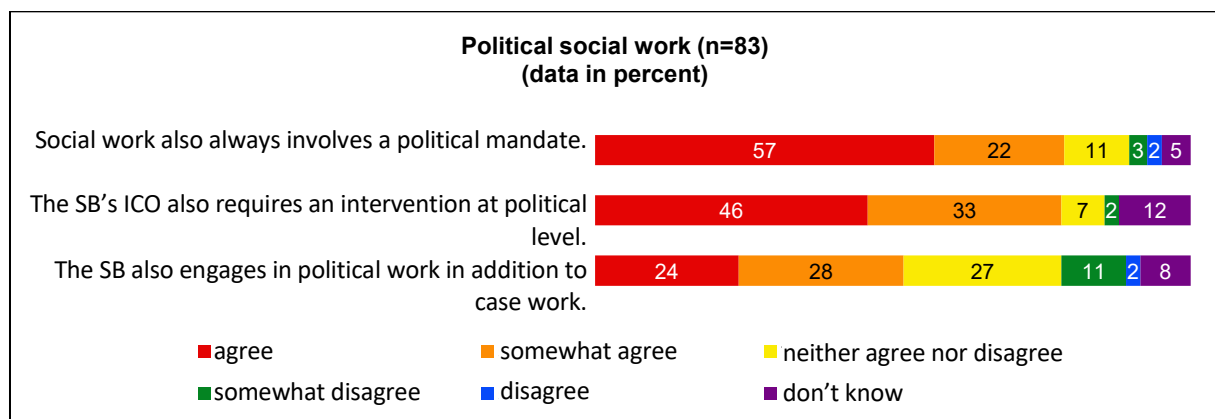


Figure 8

#### 6.5 Political work in the SB ... and beyond

The strong agreement with the political dimension of the SB's work, as illustrated in Figure 8, also reflects the historical and current professional discourse on social work. Social work, such as in the form of the *Settlement House Movement*, has always been closely associated with political decision-making processes and only evolved into an independent part of western welfare structures in the course of many years of lengthy political reform processes (Köngeter 2021).

Social work and politics still have a close and tension-filled interrelationship: On the one hand, the general framework conditions of social work are defined in political negotiation processes; on the other, it is social workers who implement socio-politically agreed measures within their everyday practice. At the same time, social work also always acts as an up- and downstream instance of social policy: It mends gaps in the system retroactively and draws attention to new structural deficits as an expert at grassroots level (Benz and Rieger 2015, p. 30).

The question of to what extent political activity is part of the professional mandate of social work is answered differently in the literature (Merten 2001). Lüssi (2008), for example, decidedly speaks out against a political mandate, claiming that political partisanship is inappropriate and counterproductive. The German Professional Association for Social Work (DBSH [2014] paints an entirely different picture

along its professional ethical principles – urging professionals to initiate and accompany political processes (p. 33). This position is consistent with that of the International Federation of Social Workers (2014), which understands “policy formulation and analysis and advocacy and political interventions” as tasks of social workers. The U.S. National Association of Social Workers (2017, p. 30) pointedly spells out this political understanding of social work in its *Code of Ethics*, arguing that “social workers should engage in social and political action”. In the Swiss Professional Code of Ethics in Social Work, social workers are even obliged to use their civic resources to advocate for a democratic society (AvenirSocial 2010, p. 13). Summing up these principles and calls, it can be said by quoting Silvia Staub-Bernasconi (2007) “that the wording in the professional codes would actually be sufficient to (passionately) think and act politically on a professional and scientific basis” (p. 242).

Continuing along these lines, suggestions on how this political mandate can be specifically implemented are developed in more recent publications: Benz and Rieger (2015, p. 46) assume that social workers can take political action as part of their professional activity in four dimensions: (1) policy implementation, (2) policy advice, (3) advocacy and (4) political education. Weiss-Gal (2017) go one step further, pointing out that social workers can engage in politics as private individuals via the “civic route”. They decidedly delimit this route from professional political activities, which are referred to by Weiss-Gal (2013, p. 4 f.) as “policy practice “ – understood as activities “undertaken by social workers as an integral part of their professional activity (...), that focus on the formulation and implementation of new policies, as well as on existing policies and suggested changes in them”. Hence, social workers have the following possibilities of becoming politically active via the civic (see nos. 1 and 2) and professional route (see. nos. 3 to 6):

1. Social workers can become politically active as private individuals or in particular areas as citizens. In this case, the focus is initially placed on voluntary political participation – such as voting, going on demonstrations or leading political discussions.
2. A second, particularly intensive form of policy engagement via the *civic route* is open to social workers by running for and holding political positions at federal, state or municipal level (see e.g. Amann & Kindler 2021a, 2021b).
3. *Policy practice* means, as outlined above, the policy engagement of social workers, i.e. political activities as part of the professional activity. These include, for example, drafting statements for the agency, hosting and organising conferences or establishing and maintaining internal discussion circles.
4. *Policy practice* can also take place in the form of *academic policy practice* in the science of social work. This involves, for example, introducing new research results (including bachelor’s and master’s theses) into political discourse, participation of professors in public debates or considerations on how policy engagement as part of social work study programmes can be further strengthened.
5. Professional associations also play an important role in political activities of social work: They can become politically active in place of their members while also encouraging them to engage in politics, e.g. by giving voting recommendations.
6. Last but not least, all social workers are in a way politically active “at the *street level*” by implementing agreed guidelines, laws, etc. while often making use of their scope of action.

## 6.6 Outlook on political work in the SB

The SB can play a part in politics as an employer and as an organisation within its professional mandate predominantly via the *professional routes*. In this respect, a specific focus on the routes of “policy practice” and “street-level policy involvement” would be presumed. This fact is indeed discernible from the open responses in the employee survey. More targeted collaboration with universities and research institutes as well as professional and trade associations in the future could be consid-



ered to strengthen the two other *professional routes*, “policy involvement by professional associations” and “academic policy practice”. The SB could also consider to what extent it would like to (further or additionally) encourage and support the private policy engagement of its employees.

Many (social) problems cannot be dealt with in case work, but require additional, accompanying or supporting political measures. With its professional expertise, the SB has a lot to offer in this respect and plays a major role as an “advisor” for decision-makers in politics and administration. A recent best-practice example of the SB’s “policy practice” at the interface between practice, administration and politics is the close collaboration with the Berlin Senate Department for Integration, as part of which the Berlin inclusion strategy for LGBTI\* refugees was presented in December 2021 at the migration network meeting of the European Network of Cities for Local Integration Policies for Migrants. This example demonstrates how much administration and politics depend on the knowledge and expertise of professionals at the grassroots level in the (further) development of guidelines, laws and framework conditions. This is only one example of the SB’s many other professional interventions at political level, such as the legal expert opinion on the subject of “Bisexuality as a reason for flight” commissioned by the SB (see Linke 2021).

However, *policy practice* does not only take place at the management level and in formalised structures. As a rule, all areas and hierarchical levels of social work are affected by political decisions and are therefore in principle accessible to political treatment. The six routes described by Weiss-Gal offer suggestions on how to go about this political treatment more systematically, even though the practice – especially in such a large, dynamic and thematically wide-ranging organisation like the SB – often turns out to be more diverse and more complex than a simple model. It can be assumed that all employees of the SB participate in policy practice activities in their very own ways, sometimes in various shades, nuances and mixed forms of the six routes, on different levels and in different forms, promoting social change processes as part of their work.

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## 7 Results and practical recommendations

### From beginning to arrival and consolidation

The five dual students have in common that they all have overcome the initial hurdles and are successfully mastering their studies and daily practice. Their different journeys until arrival in the organisation, the LGBTI\* community and society are examples of individual inclusion processes of people with a refugee and migrant background. The students play a central role in the SB's intercultural opening. By consolidating the training in the future, the SB also endeavours to accomplish successful junior staff development.

### Training of dual students with a refugee and migrant background in the SB

a) The **tandem model** is suitable to establish structures (without standard solutions) in the practical training. These structures enable the dual students to be integrated in the teams from the beginning, while also contributing to the training success. The two principles of parental care and a flexible framework in daily work routine had a supportive effect. The students have made personal and professional progress and acquired independence in daily practice, which suggests a future training success.

b) The **SKala group** – a forum for the dual students and all colleagues working with them – prevents dual students from being singled out not only in the various teams, but also in the various study programmes/universities. In the third year, the students use the group for their own intercultural topics, thereby expanding their professional scope of action. It is advisable to continue this group beyond the SKala funding period and to initiate a similar group for future dual students. There are already innovative ideas on how dual students across departments can go through a group process in the SB.

c) Intensifying the **collaboration between the universities and the training provider** with the aim of constructive theory-practice exchange is desirable. The professional practice of social work in the SB is not reflected in theory. There is a lack of coordination between the curriculum of the universities and that of the training provider. For this reason, a readjustment is required, because the students currently take their individualised problems to the (otherwise well working) instruction. It would be helpful for the students if it was agreed with the universities to address their fields of work (and focus areas) at the university, which would be an interesting addition to the curriculum of the universities and beneficial to all involved.

**Our recommendation for the dual studies:** In the future, all dual students should study at the same university. This would allow the SB to establish collaborative relationships and the students to exchange experiences. The results of the research on the BA study programmes and the experience of the students with the teaching and examination methods speak in favour of the Paritätische Akademie (see chap. 3.6 and 3.7). Furthermore, the INIB submitted first suggestions on application for appropriate grants. At the same time, the SB is already implementing the instruction training that was recommended by the INIB for an organised guidance and developed jointly. In terms of transformative practice, it is exemplary that the next step was already taken before the end of the WAY project.

d) The **intercultural opening** of social institutions with multilingual and multicultural clients calls for multilingual and multicultural personnel, with adapted training sessions contributing to (more) cultural sensitivity and intercultural competence. This is intended to reduce communication problems in everyday contacts and also reduce inhibitions to talk about differences experienced in coping with everyday problems. Language and cultural mediation for LGBTI\* clients should be further professionalised and consolidated. The understanding and the definitions of (indirect/direct) ICO should be discussed internally and corresponding signals should be sent out to client groups and society without excluding anyone. An advisory board member warns: *What happens if parts of an individual's identity (including cultural identity) cannot be lived?* The dual students give first answers to this question, since some of them already see themselves close exactly such gaps in a future instructor position (with adapted structures).

e) **Political social work**<sup>63</sup> is practiced in the SB via a gradual change in practice, a subsequent project development and a final structural change. This process is subject to the (unwritten) principles at the management level, such as *Political work is welcome, but within the organisation rather than on the streets!* or in crisis situations *Doing nothing and not changing was not an alternative ... Political work is integrated in the SB's DNA!* ... An advisory board member poses the challenging question: *How flexible and future-oriented will the SB remain with this DNA and its limits/brackets?* Even if this ultimately suggests a role model function for our society, the SB should not aim for achieving an ideal society or becoming an ideal organisation. Following Aladin El-Mafaalani<sup>64</sup>, it should also be considered that more participation leads to greater awareness and more discussion of discrimination, raising conflict potential – hence, political work must also include promoting **conflict management**.

The **WAY** concept is a **best-practice** example of stimulating engagement in the context of the transformation of our society. Projects and project owners with similar aims are recommended to use a participatory approach and have the participatory practice research monitored by external experts.

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<sup>63</sup> Cf. e.g. Prasad, N. (ed.) (2018). *Soziale Arbeit mit Geflüchteten. Rassismuskritisch, professionell, menschenrechtsorientiert*. Opladen & Toronto.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Aladin El-Mafaalani's article on his book *Das Integrationsparadox. Warum Integration zu mehr Konflikten führt* (2018) in: *Der Tagesspiegel* of 14/11/2019, page B 6.