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### Integration of work migrants in Germany: A research report

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# **Integration of work migrants in Germany<sup>1</sup>**

## **A research report**

Erika Spieß, Julia Reif & Katharina Pfaffinger

### **1. Introduction**

According to Eurostat (2016) in 2016 more than a million asylum seekers arrived in Europe with a total number of first time asylum applicants of 1,204,280 in the EU member states. During the first quarter of 2017 there was a total number of 164,500 first time asylum applicants in the EU, which is a decrease of 47% compared to the first quarter of 2016 (Eurostat, 2017).

In 2016, Germany had the most asylum seeker applicants with a share of 60% of all applications in the EU member states and 722,370 first time applications for asylum in total (Eurostat, 2016).

By far, refugees from Syria exceed refugees from other countries. According to Eurostat (2016), in 2016, 28% of the first time applicants were from Syria, who therefore top the chart in terms of number of applications (334,800) while the next highest group was refugees from Afghanistan (less than 183,000). In 2016 in Germany, 37 % of the first time applicants were Syrian refugees (BAMF, 2016).

There exists a close relationship between successful labour integration and acculturation (e.g. Ward & Geeraert, 2016). Employment is negatively correlated with social exclusion in refugees and immigrants (e.g. Phillimore & Goodson, 2006). Generally, finding a quick solution for refugees' integration into the labour market is impossible. To get the majority of the recent cohort of young humanitarian migrants into employment or (vocational) education and training, high investments in language proficiency and skills acquisition are needed.

But there exists few research on the acculturation process among refugees (Phillimore, 2011, p. 2): "While it is acknowledged that groups and individuals become integrated in different ways, little research has looked at the experiences that influence refugee arrival and settlement in new countries. Neither has there been much consideration of how those experiences cause psychosocial stress and how they, or associated stresses, impact upon refugees' pathway to, or away from, integration."

Shihadeh (2016, p. 16): "In general, there are very few studies examining the acculturation and integration of Syrian refugees around the world, and only a handful articles about Syrian refugees in the U.S., and most of them focused on political views, discrimination and terrorism."

32.767 first time asylum applications from Syria between January and August 2017 are with 24,3 % the largest group of asylum applicants in Germany (BAMF, 2017; fbb, 2016; Döring, 2016; ). Refugees with a good prospect to remain have positive gain due to the New German Integration Act (Mai 25th 2016) (The Federal Government, 2016; Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, 2016) which also provides access to language and integration courses. The waiting time for a place in such a course was reduced to six weeks. Moreover, access to vocational training measures and support has been improved.

The main objectives of the project "Social and Labor Adaptation of Syrian Refugees in Europe and Canada: A Multidisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Project" were to prepare the hosting societies for the integration of Syrian refugees and to examine and compare social and labour integration of Syrian refugees in Spain, Germany, and Canada. As successful labour integration is closely related to acculturation (Ward & Geeraert, 2016) and employment is negatively related with immigrants' and refugees' social exclusion (Phillimore & Goodson, 2006) we wanted to examine the complex process of adjustment and integration of refugees and work migrants in Germany. We chose a general population of work migrants as we wanted to develop a

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<sup>1</sup> This report is connected with the project: Social and Labor Adaptation of Syrian Refugees in Europe and Canada: A Multidisciplinary and Cross-Cultural Project Rita Berger (Universitat Barcelona), Saba Safdar (University of Guelph), Erika Spiess (LMU-Munich), Asunta Aneas (Universitat Barcelona), Rita Rueff (ESADE Barcelona), Ottmar Döring (f-bb Nuremberg), sponsored by the EAWOP 2016-2017

general model of organizational acculturation which then can be applied to different populations of refugees, e.g., Syrian refugees.

## 2. The situation in Germany

According to the German Constitution, a right for asylum is codified. The Geneva Convention on Refugees is the most important international document for the protection of refugees. The Asylum Procedure Act regulates the recognition procedures for asylum seeking people and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF) is responsible for the implementation of the procedure. The Immigration act, which was entered into force in 2005, aims at a fundamental organization of the Foreigner and Asylum Law: The support of immigrants and their descendants is deemed a governmental task. The management of migration is seen in consideration of economical and labour market policy interests, whereby the immigration of highly qualified employees is focused. Programs concerning the integration policy are for instance the Blue Card and the Early Intervention (Hinte, Rinne, & Zimmermann, 2015).

### 2.1 Networks

There are several **networks** for refugees, for example networks of refugees, mentors and employers. Their goals are:

- Job placement of qualified refugees
- Organization of the immigration/design of the immigration process
- Creating perspectives for the future of refugees

Since January 2016 there exists a **Service- and Learning-App** for arriving refugees, called “Ankommen” which means arriving, with the following contents:

- Answers to practical questions of everyday life: What is typical for Germany? What can you eat and drink in Germany? What has to be done if you are ill? What are the usual opening hours? Further topics are mobility, political and legal order, leisure time, media etc.
- Information on Asylumseeking, education and work
- Offers to learn German

The App, which has been developed by a cooperation of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge, BAMF), the Federal Employment Agency (Bundesagentur für Arbeit), the Goethe-Institut and the Bavarian Broadcast (Bayerischer Rundfunk), is available in the following languages: Arabic, English, Farsi, French and German. There is a predominant positive feedback with 210.000 downloads so far (BAMF, 2017).

Another App called **The Welcome App Germany**, which offers orientation and integration help for migrants and refugees in Germany, started in October 2015 and is now available for altogether 20 towns and districts, since January 2016 also in Munich. Goals and target groups are:

- Refugees, migrants and other immigrants:  
Makes learning German easier with vocabulary boxes with idioms and example sentences, improving integration, local contacts
- Volunteers, consultants and administration:  
Help for translation, reference book on specific topics
- Towns, municipalities and districts:  
Communication of local information, activation of volunteers
- Economy and welfare:  
Connection to the labour market, materials for integration in the companies, support of a region or function

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It is available in the following languages: German, English, French, Arabic, Russian and Farsi (Welcome App Germany, 2017).

All these initiatives are important for the integration of refugees into society. But the most important factor for successful integration is to have a place to work (OECD, 2007)

The central objective of the network “Integration Through Qualification” (IQ) is the improvement of employment opportunities for people with migration background. The target group consists of persons with qualifications acquired abroad. The project started in 2005 and is funded by the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (BMAS) as well as the European Social Fund (ESF). The current funding phase started on January 1st 2015 and ends on December 31st 2018. Partners of the network are the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Federal Employment Agency (BA). The network consists of one nationwide coordination office (MUT IQ), five competence centers and 16 regional networks with regional coordination offices (one for each German federal state or “Bundesland”). Each regional network consists of several sub-projects that pursue the goals of the network “Integration Through Qualification” IQ on the local level. In the current program phase, there are 394 sub-projects working throughout Germany.

The main objective of the network IQ is improving the labour market integration of adult migrants. It focuses on counseling and giving advice on credential recognition and job training (currently 116 sub-projects), training measures within the context of a recognition procedure (in order to obtain a full recognition of foreign credentials or as a bridge training scheme, currently 139 sub-projects) and the development of intercultural competence (including public employment agencies, small and medium enterprises etc., currently 125 sub-projects).

Between June 1st 2015 and September 30th 2016, there was a total of 9,826 Syrian clients in IQ counseling. With 5450 clients, more than half of them are between 25 and 34 years old. All in all, there were more male clients (8101) than female ones (1709). The four most frequent professions that were asked for were engineer (1610), physician (730), pharmacist (382) and lawyer (334). Regarding the employment situation of the clients a majority was predominantly not employed (8893), 101 clients were in an employment requiring the payment of social security contributions and 463 clients were still continuing their education (IQ database, 2016).

## 2.2 Examples for labour integration in Germany

As participants can provide evidence of their professional competences, knowledge and capabilities by undertaking specific design assignments, the possibility for qualification analysis exists. Legal background is the “Federal Recognition Act”, which aims at the recognition of professional qualification by way of qualification analysis.

In case of missing documents to proof foreign professional qualifications the qualification analysis will be done through work samples, professional interviews and/or presentations. The target group consists of migrants and refugees, whose documents are not available. It is funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and enables the possibility for recognition even without documents. So far, the program cannot be offered on a large scale (BAMF, 2015).

Several selections of programs for labour market integration currently exist: IdA Competence Check II, Selection of Programs for Labour Market Integration: Perspectives (PerF), Recognition of Occupational Competences.

### **Selection of Programs for Labour Market Integration: Perspectives (PerF).**

The target group of the PerF program is composed of refugees with a good prospect to remain in Germany. Objectives are to identify vocational competences under real life conditions, to show and inform about possible perspectives on the labour market, to help with applications and develop vocational language skills. Contents are language courses, job preparation and a six week internship in a company or similar. Approximately 4,000 people have taken part in PerF until April 2016. The program is funded by the Federal Employment Agency (BA) (Federal Employment Agency, 2016).

### **Selection of Programs for Labour Market Integration: IdA Competence Check II.**

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Objective is the identification of existing professional competences for specific allocation to further education or employment. The used method is a vocational competence identification test (Paper-Pencil and Tablet Tests in German, Arabic, English and Fresh). It aims at training professional competences in four domains: metal, electrical engineering, warehousing and logistics, gardening and landscaping. The program especially targets asylum applicants who are prequalified professionals with a good prospect to remain in Germany. So far it is only implemented in Bavaria and was in development until end of March 2017. It is easily applicable, valid, fast, suitable for big groups, and it is available in different languages. But there is little testing of social competences and motor skills.

## **Selection of Programs for Labour Market Integration: Recognition of Occupational Competences**

Objectives are the visualization of non-formal and informally acquired vocational competencies, the improvement of the counselling service of the employment agencies and the integration of asylum applicants, refugees, and domestic low-skilled workers. The methods that are used are standardized technology-based assessments of work related competencies (tests), which are available in German, English, Russian, Arabic, Turkish and New Persian. 30 occupations are covered by the test. The target group consists of asylum applicants, refugees and domestic lowly skilled workers. The test procedures are implemented nationwide by the Federal Agency for Labour and the procedure is in development. The tests cover a wide range of occupations in different fields but they are only computer tests, no motor skills.

## **3. First exploration: results of qualitative studies**

To get a first empirical access to the topic explorative interviews were conducted between May 7th and July 1st 2016 by students from the seminar „Work- and Organizational Psychology“. First, we used 4 studies (in which we conducted a total of 11 interviews) to clarify central research questions, concerning how refugees experienced the new culture and the integration process. This method offers a higher degree of flexibility and openness and is of an explorative nature.

Interviewees participated voluntarily and were given no incentive. Each participant was assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Each interview was audio taped and transliterated verbatim in German. Guidelines for the interviewees were developed separately for each study.

### **3.1 Study 1: Case Study “Perceived integration procedures reported by an Indian work migrant”**

In Study 1, two interviews were conducted, one with a representative of a company and one with a work migrant from India. We compared the view of the company representative with the view of the work migrant from India.

**Main questions:** Are there specific procedures for integration (e.g. guidelines, etc.)? Are they implemented in the company? In which ways are they implemented there? How do employees (more concrete a skilled employee from abroad) perceive those procedures? Are they effective (from a subjective point of view)?

**Main categories:** We deduced the categories from the integration procedures of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA). They include actions for language training, support of intercultural exchange and competences, staff recruitment abroad, respect of cultural/religious characteristics, offers for supervision/mentoring programs, support of compatibility of work and family.

**Results:** In the organization, there was no concrete guideline for integration according to the BDA. However, resulting from the internationality and culture of the organization, many of the recommended concrete guidelines were – partly implicitly – implemented. This procedure also seems to work for skilled employees, who need to be integrated.

### **3.2 Study 2: Challenges at work: Interview study with refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, and Albania**

In this study refugees from Syria (N=2), Afghanistan (N=2), and Albania (N=1) were interviewed.

**Main questions:** Questions on challenges, working environment, personal resources and resulting problems

**Main categories:** General information concerning origin and career, education and work in Germany, challenges in their daily working life, work routine

**Results:** The analysis of the interviews revealed four different types of sources for challenges in working life: Difficulties within the working environment, cultural distance, bureaucratic obstacles, and a lack of mobility.

### **3.3 Study 3: Facilitating and hindering factors for the labour integration of Afghan refugees**

In this study, three interviews have been conducted with a representative of a company, a refugee (Afghanistan) and a colleague.

**Main question:** Which facilitating and hindering factors exist for the labour integration of Afghan refugees?

**Main categories:** Facilitating and hindering factors for refugee, facilitating factors for representative of a company and for the colleague.

**Results:** Facilitating factors for the refugees are: resources, language, personal initiative and low cultural distance. As hindering factors the mental burden because of the separation from the family, the living conditions and the financial situation were mentioned. As facilitating factors on organizational level an open and intercultural corporate culture, good onboarding and integration procedures and social support were identified.

### **3.4 Study 4: Case Study “Experiences when entering a new culture reported by an Afghan refugee”**

Study 4 was an interview with a refugee from Afghanistan.

**Main questions:** How did the Afghan refugee experience the new culture, how did he search a job and how did he experience the entry into a company?

**Main categories:** Integration, social support, German way of working, cultural differences.

**Results:** Getting into contact with German employers was facilitated by social support. In line with that, the support of colleagues helped the Afghan refugee during his familiarization period at his new employer. Furthermore, the integration of the Afghan refugees into the German labour market was facilitated by extensive qualifications and certificates. Especially the acceptance and thoughtfulness of employers regarding religious acts of the Afghan refugee were important. The German way of working was perceived as hard but fair because of its regulated structures. Initial difficulties with the integration into the German way of life might especially occur due to cultural differences.

## **4. A Model of organizational acculturation**

Work migrants face a twofold challenge. Adaptation to a new culture means acculturation: “Acculturation is the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members” (Berry, 2005, p. 698). On the other hand work migrants have to adapt to a new organization, which means socialization: “Organizational socialization refers to the

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process by which newcomers make the transition from being organizational outsiders to being insiders” (Bauer et al., 2007, p. 707).

We developed a theoretical model of organizational acculturation (Reif, Spieß & Berger, 2017), which describes the process of integrating migrants in organizations. The model integrates research on intercultural psychology and research on organizational socialization. In the following we will describe our main ideas.

## A model of organizational acculturation

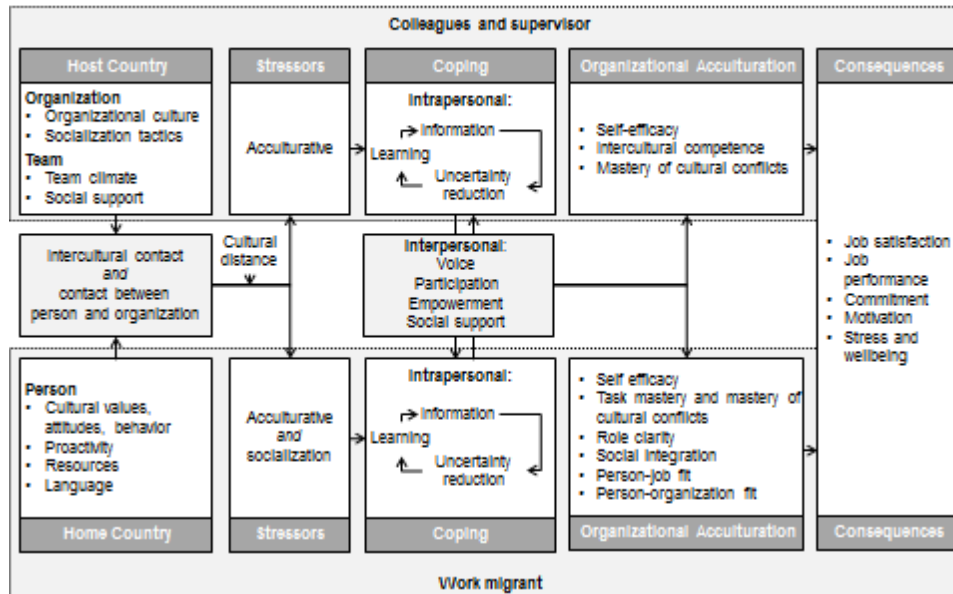


Figure 1: A model of organizational acculturation (Reif, Spieß & Berger, 2017)

By means of socialization, the individual adjusts to the work organization as part of a process. The company initiates socialization strategies, e.g., special initiation trainings (Jones, 1986). Van Maanen and Schein (1979) defined socialization tactics as “the ways in which the experiences of individuals in transition from one role to another are structured for them by others in the organization” (p. 230). Tactics lead newcomers to the assumption of the new role, e.g., putting them through a set of experiences, providing role models, providing initial trainings. A positive relationship between institutional socialization strategies and P-O fit was determined (Kim, Cable, & Kim, 2005).

Organizational acculturation involves multiple levels: The link between intercultural contact / person-organization-contact and the emergence of stressors is moderated by cultural distance. Organizational acculturation depends on both intrapersonal and interpersonal processes which are dynamically linked to each other: When entering a new organization, work migrants face both acculturative stressors and socialization stressors. On the other hand when work migrants enter a new organization, new colleagues and supervisors experience also acculturative stressors.

*Acculturative* stressors (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994, p. 438) are perceived discrimination, social isolation, threat to cultural identity, inferiority, homesickness, fear, anger/disappointments, mistrust, communication problems, culture shock, perceived hatred and guilt. *Socialization* stressors (Saks & Ashforth, 2000, p. 43) are role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, or unmet expectations. The emergence of acculturative stressors and socialization stressors is influenced by organizational-level factors, team-level-factors and individual-level factors which converge, when work migrants enter a new organization.

Further antecedent conditions are organizational culture and values, socialization tactics, social support by the work team, individual resources, attitudes, values and behavior, as well as proactivity. These stressors can arise both in the integratee as well as in the integrator.

Organizational acculturation depends on both intrapersonal and interpersonal processes which are dynamically linked to each other. The model suggests an intrapersonal, cyclical coping process which holds for both integrator and integratee: information acquisition helps to reduce uncertainty which again fosters learning. Moreover, the model proposes an interpersonal coping process between integrator and integratee in

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the form of participation, voice, social support and empowerment. These intra- and interpersonal coping mechanisms lead to successful organizational acculturation (social integration, role-clarity, mastery of tasks and person-job / person-organization- fit) which in turn positively influences work-related outcomes, such as work satisfaction, work performance, commitment and well-being.

The interpersonal exchange between work migrant and new colleagues/supervisors in the form of voice, participation, empowerment, and social support is fostered by the intrapersonal learning process. In turn, the interpersonal exchange process fosters the intrapersonal learning process.

Organizational acculturation positively influences organizational **outcomes**: Job satisfaction job performance, commitment, motivation, stress and wellbeing.

Taken together, the model of organizational acculturation considers that work migrants not only face the challenge of entering a new organization but also face the challenge of entering a new culture, which makes the onboarding process even more complex. The model takes a relational perspective on organizational acculturation as it incorporates both the perspective of the integratee and the perspective of the integrater. The model outlines practical starting points how to handle this multi-level complexity in organizations and offers fruitful avenues for future research by integrating two scientific research streams (acculturation and socialization) that have so far been investigated without taking much notice from each other.

## **Practical implications:**

Prevent the emergence of stressors:

- Advance an organizational culture and a team climate which is characterized by appreciation of diversity, openness, and tolerance
- Provide socialization tactics
- Underline the importance of social support within teams
- Foster an exchange regarding different cultural values, attitudes and behaviors
- Train proactive behaviors
- Enable the use of personal resources, improve language skills

Support effective coping:

- Provide different sources for information: Colleagues, supervisor, mentors and documents
- Provide information on tasks and roles, social issues, organizational culture, organizational values, organizational vocabulary, organizational politics, culture and intercultural contact
- Establish a climate of psychological safety, where employees feel encouraged to speak up
- Give work migrants a voice within the organization and encourage them to use it
- Participate work migrants
- Train empowering leadership behaviors; empower work migrants
- Provide social support for work migrants

## **5. A qualitative Validation of the Model of organizational acculturation**

42 qualitative Interviews were conducted between December 2016, January and February 2017 by students from the seminar „LPP-Learning-practice-project” in order to qualitatively validate the model of organizational acculturation. Interviewees participated voluntarily and were given no incentive. Each participant was assured of anonymity and confidentiality. Each interview was audio taped and transcribed verbatim in German.

Evaluation of interview data was based on Miles and Huberman (1994) and Mayring's (2008) qualitative structuring content analysis. This approach can be divided into three steps:

Step 1: Forming categories; Step 2: Using the evaluation categories to form a category pattern; Step 3: Coding – the categories extracted from the text were applied to the text and the single passages from the text were applied to the respective categories.



## 5.1 Study 5: Factors inhibiting and facilitating work integration in Germany across different organizations

23 interviews (N=9 work migrants, N=5 leaders and N=9 German colleagues) were conducted in different German enterprises in southern Germany.

Origin of the work migrants: Greek, Bulgaria, Poland, Brazil, Italy, China, Mexico, USA

Age (average): 37 years

These four main categories were derived from theories (acculturation and socialization) and were further discussed with the students: Organizational structures and strategies, social support, personal characteristics and culture (Figure 2).

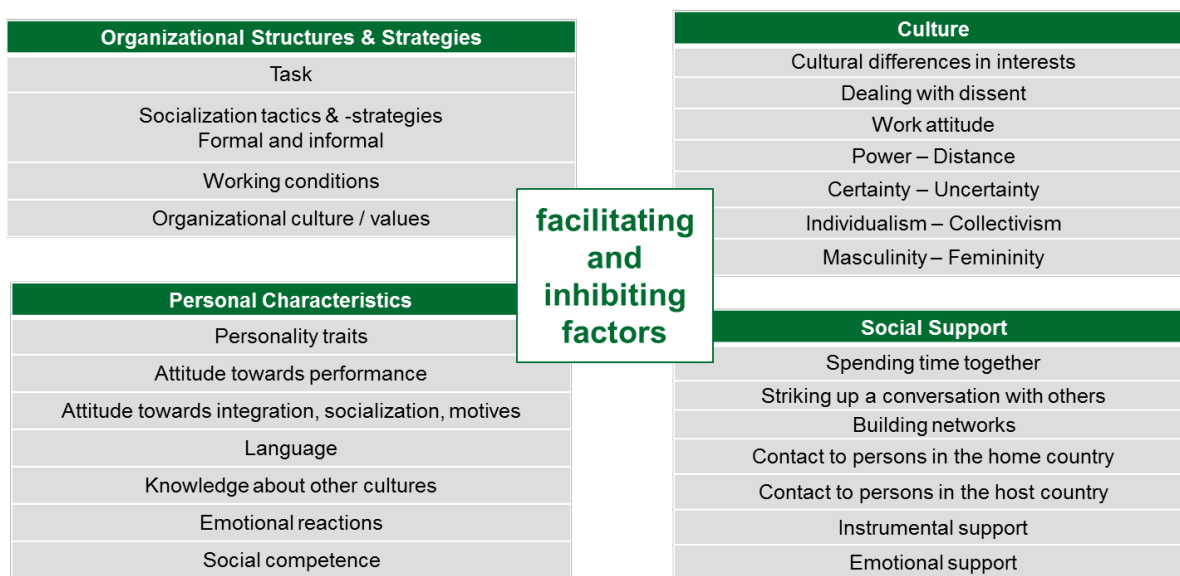


Figure 2: Categories and subcategories

Besides the four main categories, Figure 2 also shows different subcategories. Subcategories emerged in the process of analyzing the verbal interview material.

### Organizational structures and strategies

In the main category organizational structures and strategies, the following subcategories emerged: task, socialization tactics and -strategies, working conditions and organizational culture and values. The categories concerning organizational structures and strategies were mainly described as facilitating factors. Especially programs for personal development and further education concerning organizational processes, culture of organization and teambuilding as well as a partner (of the same culture) have been seen as helpful. Inhibiting factors were high workload or unclear distribution of tasks.

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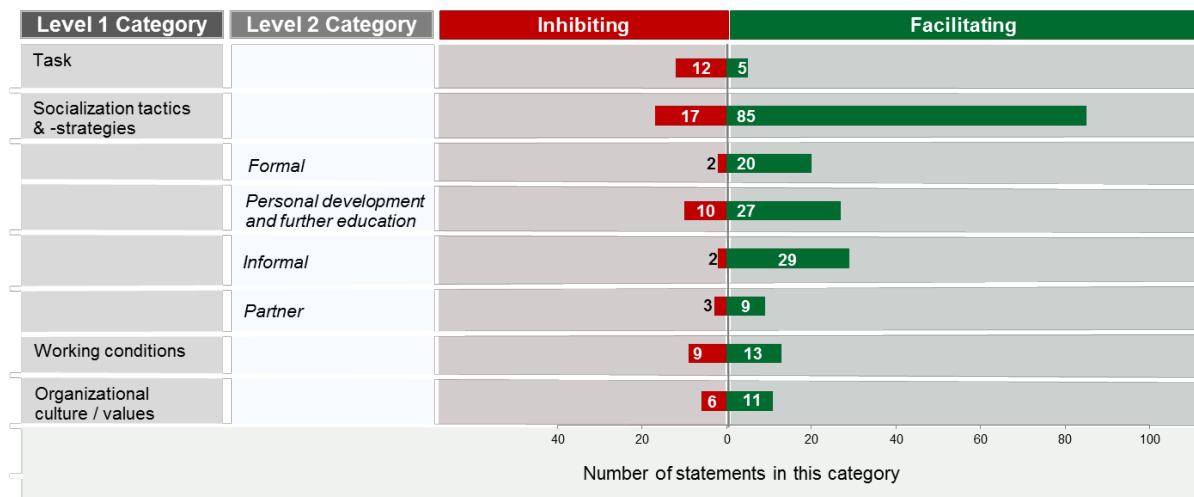


Figure 3: Subcategories of Organizational structures and strategies

## Personal characteristics

For the main category personal characteristics, the following subcategories emerged: personality traits, attitude towards performance, attitude towards integration, language skills, knowledge about other cultures, emotional reaction and social competence. Participants especially mentioned a lack of language skills a lack of proactivity and negative emotional reactions as inhibiting factors regarding organizational acculturation. Openness, proactive behavior and a positive attitude towards integration were perceived to facilitate the onboarding-process.

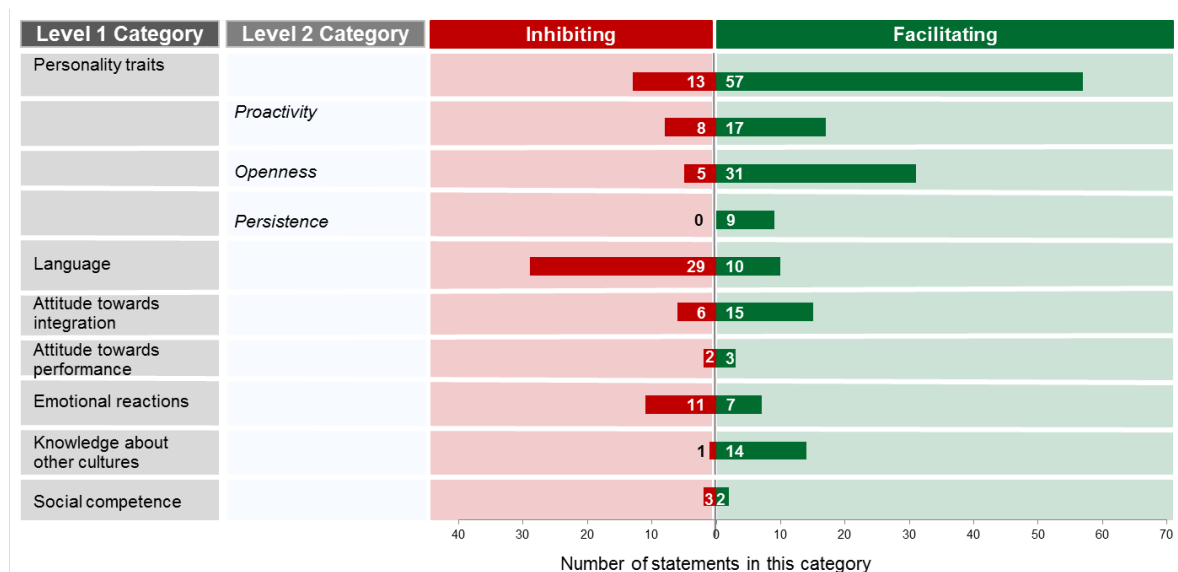


Figure 4: Subcategories of Personal Characteristics

## Culture

For the main category culture, the following subcategories emerged: cultural differences in interests, dealing with dissent, work attitude, power-distance, certainty-uncertainty, individualism-collectivism, masculinity – femininity. The categories concerning culture were described mostly as inhibiting factors. Participants especially referred to the inhibiting aspects of a weak work attitude.

Quotation subcategory “cultural differences in interests”/facilitating: “I have to say, the structures of companies are quite similar, both are quite flat. You can have autonomy for your own work.[...]. Of course it's good.”

Quotation to subcategory “work attitude”/facilitating: „Because some colleagues have like an alarm exactly at 12 o'clock... that would ring...[Laughs]...their break. [...] that programming break was a bit fun to me.. “

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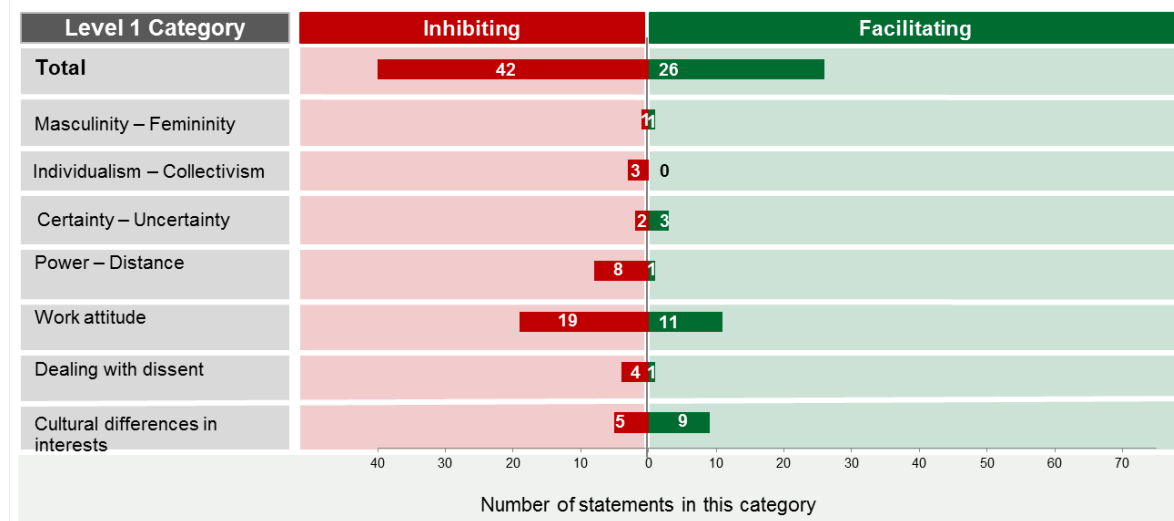


Figure 5: Subcategories of Culture

## Social support

For the main category social support, the following subcategories emerged: spending time together, striking up a conversation with others, building networks, contact to persons in the home and the host country as well as emotional and instrumental support. The categories concerning social support have been described as useful factors, especially the factors emotional support and spending time together have been mentioned. The lack of both emotional support and striking up a conversation with others have been described as inhibiting factors.

Quotation subcategory “striking up a conversation with others”/facilitating: „My team leader held a lot of activities such as film nights and paintball and so on and I got to know my team and my other team members better.“

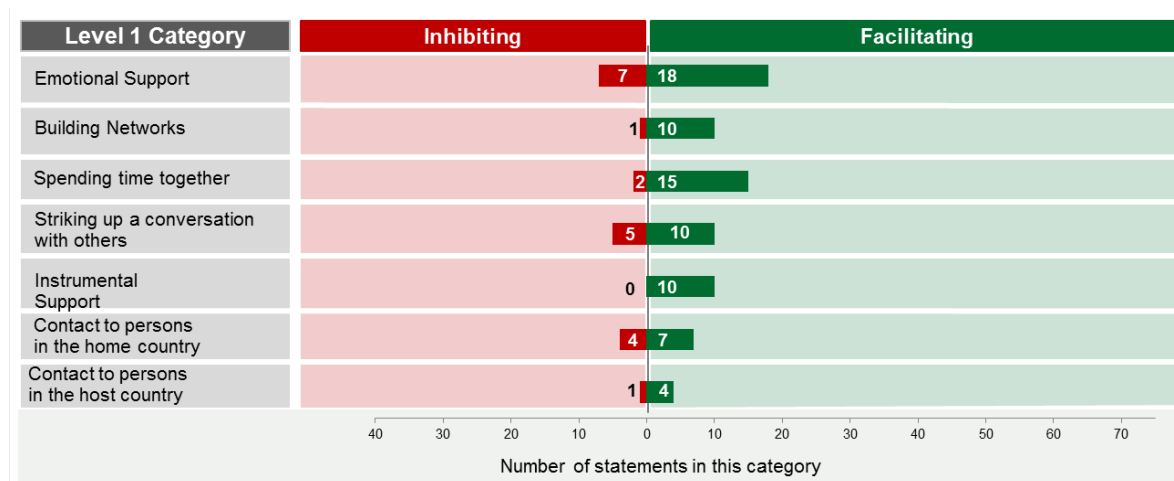


Figure 5: Subcategories of Social support

## Summary and implications:

Factors that facilitate integration of work migrants in organizations are:

- Within the category organizational structures and strategies the subcategories programs for personal development and further education as well as organizational culture.
- Within the category social support the subcategories emotional support and spending time together.
- Within the category personal characteristics the subcategories openness, proactive behavior and positive attitude towards integration.

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Factors that inhibit integration of work migrants in organizations are:

- Within the category culture the subcategories work attitude and power distance.
- Within the category organizational structures and strategies the subcategories high workload, unclear distribution of tasks and working conditions.
- Within the category personal characteristics the subcategories lack of language skills, negative emotional reaction and lack of proactivity.

## Practical recommendations:

Further strengthen facilitating factors. Minimize inhibiting factors, for example by implementing the following:

- On-The-Job language training, language tandems,
- structured onboarding process, mentoring,
- intercultural trainings for German employees and supervisors,
- task-specific trainings and personality development (coaching).

## Limitations:

Interviewees stem from different companies, which is why specifics of the companies could not be analyzed. Future research should use a larger sample concerning the subgroups international worker, German worker and teamleader. A quantitative study should follow as well.

## 5.2 Study 6: Factors inhibiting and facilitating work integration in Germany within one organization

19 Interviews were conducted in a small and medium-sized German enterprise in southern Germany. (N=17 work migrants, N=1 international leader and N=1 leader).

Sex: 6 woman, 13 men: Age (average): 37,7 years

Origin of the work migrants: Portugal (6), Spain (1), Italy (1), France (1), Slovakia (1), Romania (1), China (3), India (1), Iran (1), Argentina (1), Peru (1)

These four main categories were derived from theories (acculturation and socialization) and discussed with the students like in study 5: Organizational structures and strategies, social support, personal characteristics and culture. An additional category was formed after analyzing the data: Contextual factors.

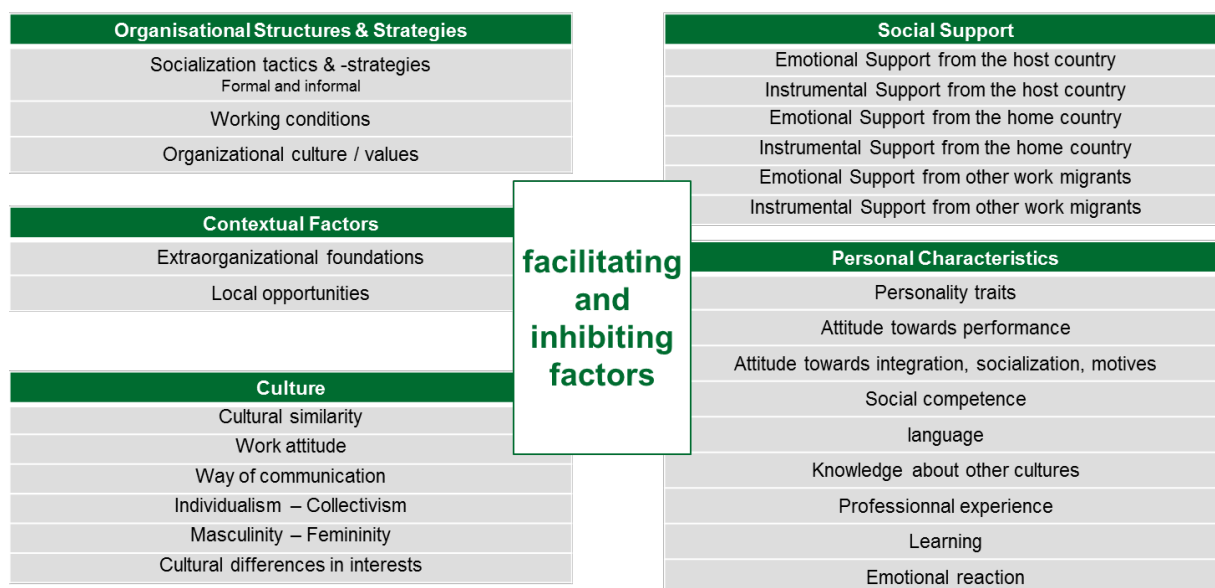


Figure 7: Categories and subcategories

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Figure 7 shows besides the four main categories also different subcategories. Subcategories emerged in the process of analyzing the verbal interview material. Therefore, they differ from the subcategories identified in Study 5.

## Organizational structures and strategies

In the main category organizational structures and strategies, the following subcategories emerged: socialization tactics and –strategies, working conditions and organizational culture and values.

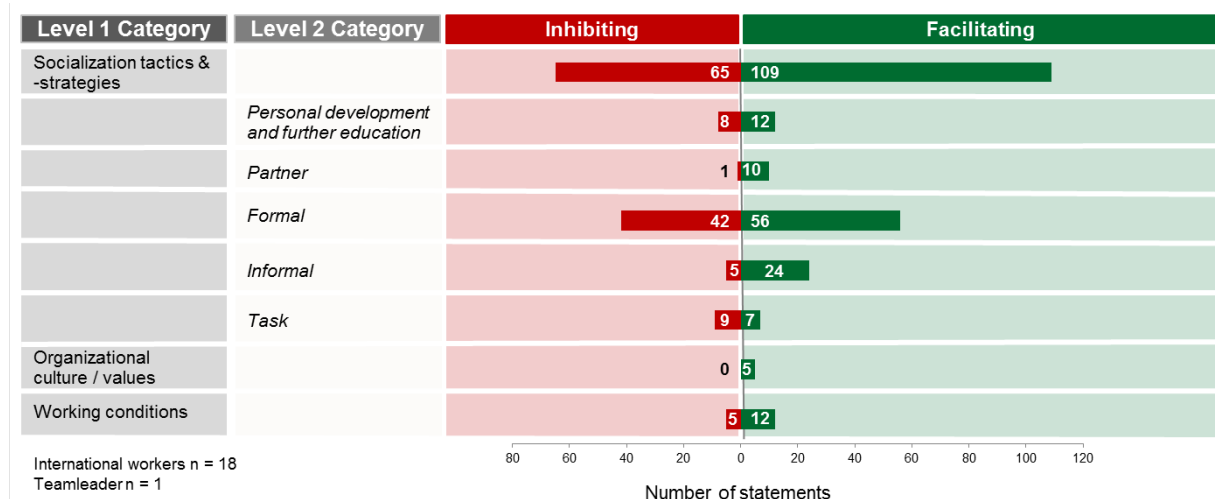


Figure 8: Organizational structures and strategies

Formal and informal socialization tactics and -strategies, personal development and further education as well as working conditions have been seen as helpful. Inhibiting factors were a lack of formal socialization tactics, high workload or unclear distribution of tasks as well as missing offers for personal development and further education.

Quotation to subcategory “personal development and further education”/facilitating: „If they are getting international employees from different countries, from different cultures, there has to be an intercultural training for employees or at least some type of documentation on how to treat international employees or migrants“

Quotation to subcategory “formal”/facilitating: ”When I arrived here in Germany, XY had a kind of integration process, where you should go to each department to have an interview with the director of each department. So, they explain you what their department is doing and you can also introduce yourself to that persons and they will know that you are in the company”

Quotation to subcategory “formal”/hindering: “I think the support from them, so from the Human Resources was not so, was not so good let’s say. Because they gave just some guidelines and [...] then you go along and you need to find a way to [...] solve these issues”

## Personal characteristics

For the main category personal characteristics, the following subcategories emerged: personality traits, attitude towards performance, attitude towards integration and socialization, social competence, language, knowledge about other cultures, professional experience, learning and emotional reaction.

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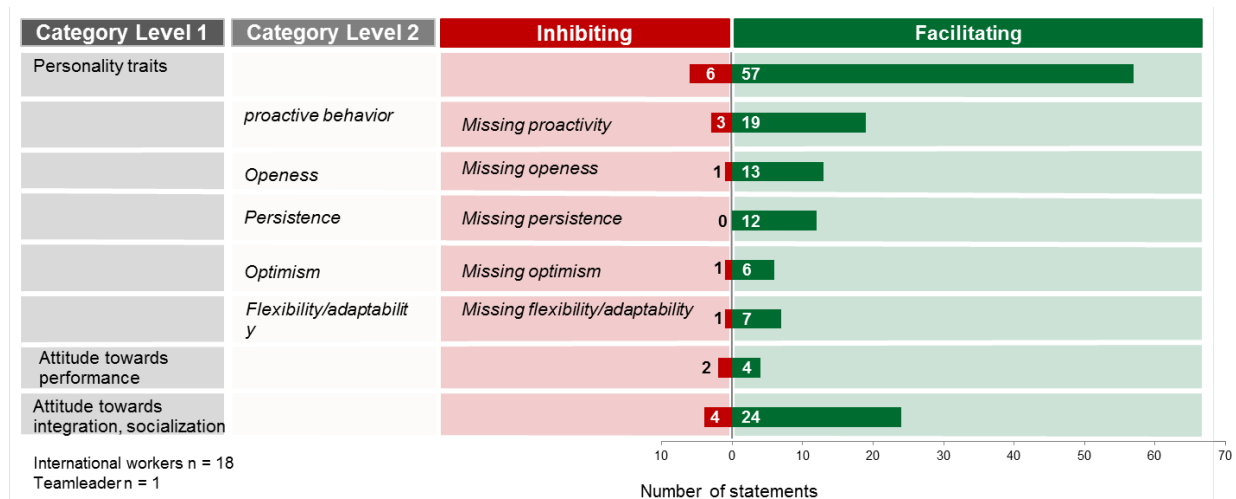


Figure 10a: Personal characteristic

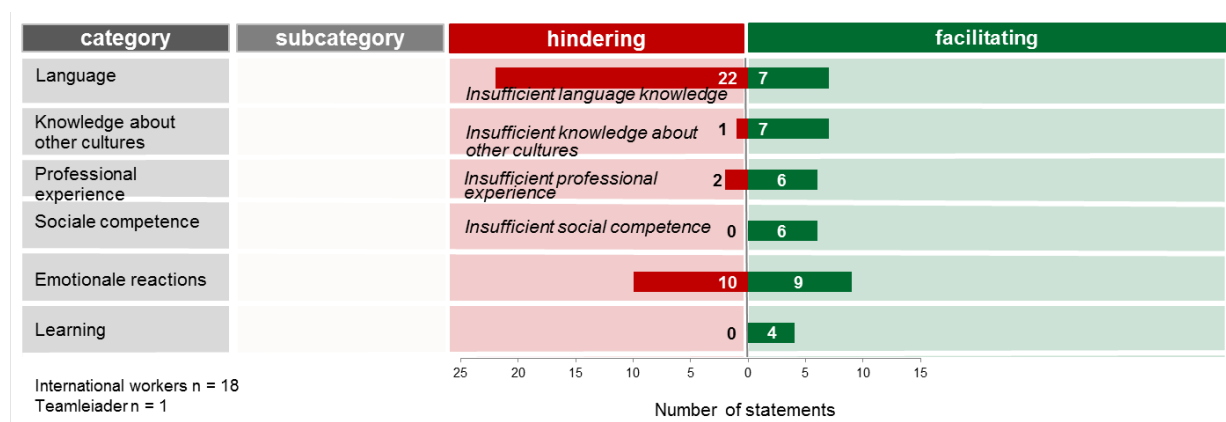


Figure 10b: Personal characteristics

Participants especially mentioned that a lack of language skills (Figure 10b), negative emotional reactions and negative attitude towards integration and socialization inhibited organizational acculturation, whereas especially a positive attitude towards integration, proactivity and openness were perceived to facilitate the onboarding-process (Figure 10a).

Quotation to subcategory “flexibility”/facilitating: “If you are able to adapt yourself to, ahm, all the environments, you are the right person“

Quotation to subcategory “attitude towards integration”/hindering: “They didn’t even try to change the language even though they knew I was not talking because I didn’t understand at all anything at the beginning. They didn’t change at all“

Quotation to subcategory “language”/hindering: “The language was also very good point, because when I arrived Germany in 2012 I was just able to speak English. [...] most of the people or many people speak very good English”

Quotation to subcategory “emotional reaction”/hindering: “I was a foreigner completely and arriving to a new place without knowing almost nothing, ahm, even where to go and where [...] to communicate with some persons“

## Culture

For the main category culture, the following subcategories emerged: cultural similarity, work attitude, way of communication, individualism-collectivism, masculinity – femininity and cultural differences in interests.

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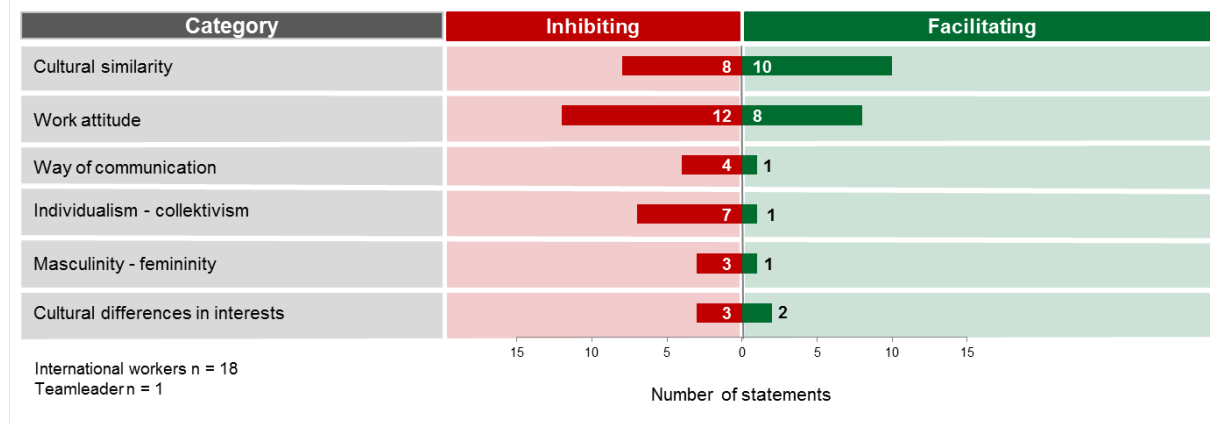


Figure 11: Culture

Especially the factors work attitude, cultural similarity and individualism-collectivism were described as hindering. The subcategories cultural similarity and work attitude have been also seen as facilitating.

## Social support

For the main category social support, the following subcategories emerged: emotional and instrumental support from the host and the home country, as well as from other work migrants.

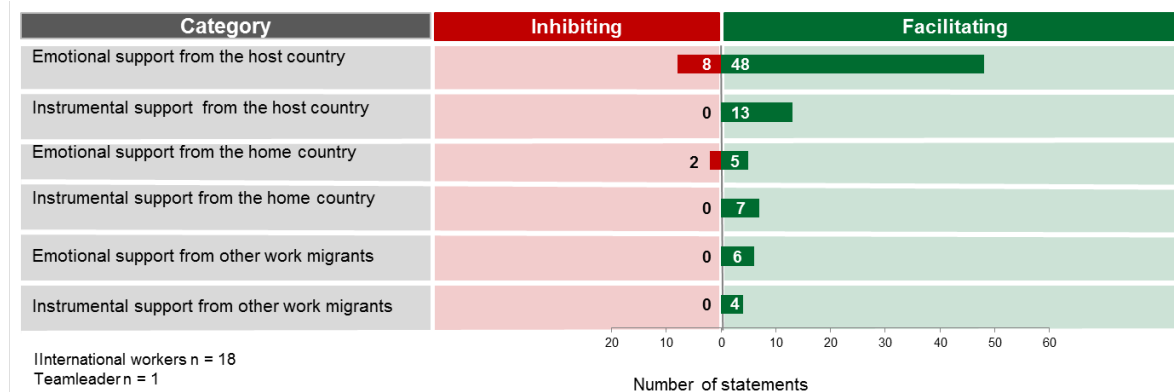


Figure 9: Social support

The categories concerning social support were described as useful factors. Especially the factors emotional support and instrumental support from the host country were mentioned positively. The lack of emotional support from the host country and from the home country were described as hindering.

Quotation to subcategory emotional support from the host country/hindering: “[...] nobody tried to approach to me and something or for example ‘how is it going’ or ‘do you have something to ask’ or something like that”.

## Contextual factors

For the main category contextual factors extraorganizational foundations and local opportunities were relevant subcategories.

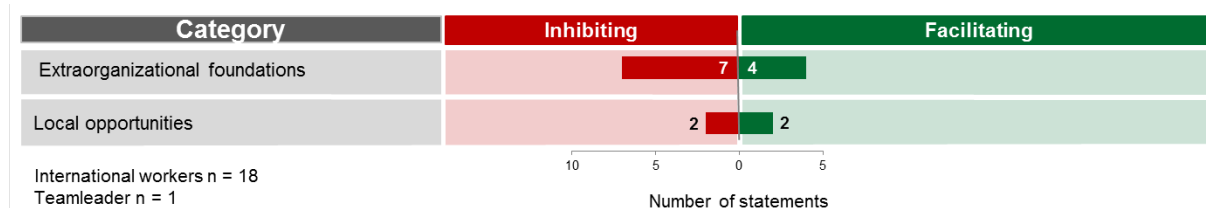


Figure 12: Contextual factors

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Especially extraorganizational foundations were seen as hindering factors, while local opportunities were seen as facilitating as well as hindering.

Quotation to subcategory extraorganizational foundations/hindering: “But for example at finance center at that time, when I was there, the people was like wow, we do not speak English, so just German and I could not speak German but, ähm, it was [...] okay. In the end that lady got helped from a colleague and we solved the problem.”

## Limitations

The number of persons in our subsamples were not equally distributed (N=17 work migrants, N=1 International leader and N=1 leader). German colleagues could not be reached.

Future research should replicate our study with more homogenous groups. A comparison between the answers from one company and the answers of different companies will be done more in detail.

## Summary and conclusions:

In Study 5 the categories concerning organizational structures and strategies were mainly described as facilitating factors. Especially programs for personal development and further education concerning organizational processes, culture of organization and teambuilding as well as a partner (of the same culture) were seen as helpful. Inhibiting factors were high workload or unclear distribution of tasks. Compared with the results of Study 6, the results of Study 5 are quite similar - formal and informal socialization tactics and - strategies, personal development and further education as well as working conditions were seen as helpful. In addition, interview partners mentioned working conditions. Inhibiting factors were a lack of formal socialization tactics, high workload or unclear distribution of tasks as well as missing offers for personal development and further education.

In both studies the category social support was described as a useful factor, especially emotional support from the host country.

Concerning the category personal characteristics, participants in both studies especially mentioned a lack of language skills, negative emotional reactions and negative attitude towards integration as inhibiting factors, whereas especially a positive attitude towards integration, proactivity and openness were perceived to facilitate the onboarding-process.

In Study 5 the categories concerning culture were described mostly as inhibiting factors. Participants especially referred to the inhibiting aspects of the factor work attitude. In Study 6 in addition to the factor work attitude, also lack of cultural similarity and individualism-collectivism were described as hindering. The subcategories cultural similarity and work attitude – in contrast to Study 5 - provided also facilitating aspects.

The additional category contextual factors in Study 6 showed that especially extraorganizational foundations were seen as hindering factors, while local opportunities were seen as both facilitating and hindering.

The organizational acculturation and socialization process of work migrants turns out to be far more complex than supposed. But our studies reveal some important factors that might be taken into consideration: Social support e.g. is an important factor especially if offered from the host country. Organizations can prepare themselves with a well-structured socialization strategy and with a culture that is open to foreign people. An important personality trait is proactivity which opens the doors. Further positive attitudes towards integration help people to get along with obstacles. A lack of language skills is an inhibiting factor concerning the onboarding process. Here, employers can offer language courses in order to help their employees improve their language skills and to get more fluent in speaking



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## 7. Appendix

Guideline for the interviews of the LPP-Learning-practice-project:

### Questions referring to the onboarding process:

1. How did you experience the onboarding process? Emotions: How did you feel?
2. Which factors facilitated your entry to XY? In which way did your team / your team leader / the organization / other persons outside the organization facilitate your entry to XY?  
Mediating mechanisms: Which effects did these factors have on your onboarding process?  
Social support: Which kind of support did you receive from your team / your team leader / the organization / other persons outside the organization? In which way did this support facilitate your onboarding process?
3. Which factors were rather obstructive, inhibited the onboarding process or made your entry rather difficult? In which way did your team / your team leader / the organization / other persons outside the organization inhibit your entry to XY?
4. Culture: Comparing your home country culture and the German culture, which similarities or differences do you perceive? In which way did these similarities / differences influence your onboarding process (both positively and negatively)?
5. Personal resources: In which way did your personal characteristics and behaviors influence your onboarding process (both positively and negatively)? In which way did you – maybe – block yourself? In which way did your personal characteristics and behaviors facilitate your onboarding process?
6. Is there anything else you want to add? Do you have any further suggestions or proposals regarding the onboarding process?
7. Demographic Data