

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to your colleagues, clients or customers visit <http://www.djreprints.com>.

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/migrants-meet-with-enthusiastic-welcome-in-germany-1441558108>

WORLD | EUROPE

Migrants Meet With Enthusiastic Welcome

Residents volunteer to help as tides of migrants continue to arrive in the country

By **ANDREA THOMAS**

Updated Sept. 6, 2015 7:34 p.m. ET

Tides of migrants sweeping into Western Europe continued to arrive in Germany on Sunday, overjoyed and relieved, but also exhausted and battered by their long journey. With few exceptions, they met with an enthusiastic welcome.

From Budapest to the Hungarian-Austrian border, from Vienna to Munich and other German cities, thousands poured in on Saturday and Sunday. Here are some of the stories and scenes from the weekend:

RELATED NEWS

- Tide of Migrants Continues to Pour Into Austria, Germany (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/tide-of-migrants-continues-to-pour-into-austria-germany-1441532134>)
- Germany, Austria Scramble to Absorb Wave of Migrants (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/germany-austria-scramble-to-absorb-wave-of-migrants-1441477412>)
- Thousands of Migrants Pour Into Austria, Germany After Hungary Trek (<http://www.wsj.com/articles/thousands-of-migrants-reach-austria-from-hungary-1441449219>)

Unexpected Generosity

It was shortly after midnight Sunday morning and Isabella Klebinger, 30, was

feeling cold, tired and just a little patriotic.

“I’m really a bit happy that I’m Austrian,” she said with a whiff of understated relief.

After a day spent at a border crossing to Hungary helping to comfort and feed the thousands of migrants flowing into her native Austria, the bookish Ms. Klebinger and two of her friends were shivering in front of mounds of donations from their fellow Austrians: loaves of bread, diapers, shoes, blankets and clothes.

It was an impressive sight. Ms. Klebinger had expected a little less of Austrians and a government that was now receiving plaudits from around the world for its response to the massive refugee crisis.

Austrians might not have been as selfish as she had imagined. Some had driven more than three hours to pitch in at the border, and it was civilian volunteers—not police or rescue workers—who appeared to be taking the lead distributing clothes and food at the border station.

“When you’re helping, you meet people from all over,” she said. “You find this tolerance. I’m relieved.”

—*Matt Bradley in Neue Zeitung, Austria*

Too Many to Handle

So many people made it into Germany this weekend that even some migrants are doubting the country’s ability to absorb them all.

“There is way too many to handle,” says Fatima Hamido, a 23-year-old biology student from Syria.

She expects many more Syrians and others from Iraq and Afghanistan to arrive.

Ms. Hamido said she wanted to come to Germany because she hopes to finish her studies and work here. She assumes that education and job opportunities for Syrians are better in Germany than in Hungary, Serbia or Greece—other countries on the route many migrants take.

She arrived at the Munich main station late on Sunday morning after having spent several days in Hungary.

—*Friedrich Geiger in Munich*

Jubilant Welcome

The exhausted migrants arriving in Munich were greeted by an enthusiastic crowds, with locals chanting “welcome to Munich,” reaching over to shake hands, and some even hugging the newly arrived people.

Charlotte Probst, 37, stood at the railings late on Saturday night, distributing sweets for the children. “I am here for the children. You must see the spark in their eyes,” she said, after five hours at the station.

“It is important to welcome them. There has been jubilation when they came, it is so beautiful.”

She said the whole atmosphere reminded her of Germany’s hosting of the soccer World Cup in 2006, when the country celebrated for weeks in what has since been dubbed Germany’s “summer fairy-tale.”

—*Andrea Thomas in Munich*



Volunteers clap and hand out tea as refugees arrive in Vienna from the Hungarian border on Sunday. *PHOTO: VALENTINA POP/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

Long Journey From Aleppo

On Sunday morning, at least one train was arriving every hour at Vienna’s Westbahnhof with hundreds of migrants from the Hungarian border. Aid workers, camera crews, police and translators were cramming onto a platform where one of the trains was arriving 54 minutes late from Hegyeshalom, the Hungarian border town.

The migrants stepping off of the train were welcomed with hot tea and coffee, blankets and toys for the children. Many volunteers started clapping and cheering. Rehab Haddad, a 25-year-old English teacher from Syria, was amazed—and slightly befuddled. “Why are they clapping?” she asked, while

grabbing her two children by the hand.

She came from Aleppo with her husband and his brother. “We were on the road for a month. The worst was the cold, the children got sick all the time,” she said. But now her 2-year-old girl was smiling and squeezing a fluorescent green plush toy she got from one of the volunteers. Ms. Haddad wasn’t sure where they should go next.

She had heard Sweden is better than Germany and asked if there was a direct train to Sweden. A translator told her she first had to get to Germany. A train was departing for Munich in an hour.

—*Valentina Pop in Vienna*



A child waits in a car of an Austrian who drove to Budapest to help transport migrants to Vienna. PHOTO: MARGIT FEHER/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

50 Cars From Austria

It was dark Sunday by the time a group of Austrians arrived in Budapest in about 50 cars to pick up migrants and drive them to Austria, despite legal risks they’re facing.

“We saw this on TV and we must help,” said Erwin, a 52-year-old engineer from Vienna who declined to give his surname.

Three young migrants were waiting for him to return to his compact car at a square in Budapest near the Keleti train station.

There were more migrants than seats available in the cars. Those who weren’t able to find seats had to go back to the station and find trains going to the Austrian-Hungarian border.

“I don’t see any reason why people are not free to move,” said Jakob who came by

car from Vienna and also declined to give his last name. “This is one way we can help.”

Should they take refugees across the border in their cars, they could face a prison term of up to three years for human trafficking under Hungarian law, a spokeswoman for the Hungarian police said.

—*Margit Feher in Budapest*

A 45-Day Journey

Baktash, a 17-year old Afghan, is one of the migrants who got a ride from Budapest in the Austrian car convoy on Sunday evening. He is charging his smartphone in one of the dozens of plug extensions taped around a seating area at the Vienna Westbahnhof.

“Free plugs, free Wi-Fi, great!” he says with a big smile.

Baktash, who would not give his last name, traveled for 45 days from Afghanistan through Iran, Turkey, Bulgaria, Serbia and Hungary. For a month he got stuck in Bulgaria, in a refugee camp near Sofia.

After Bulgaria, which was “the worst” and where he lost about 30 pounds, came Hungary, where he was not able to escape fingerprinting. He fears that he will be sent back to Hungary because of EU rules that asylum-seekers have to make their request in the first country of arrival.

He shows Hungarian papers that have a small-print English translation saying he has requested asylum in Hungary. “Even if I throw them away, other countries can check the database and see my Hungarian fingerprints,” Baktash says with a sigh.

He is still determined to continue his journey: Germany, Belgium, maybe Canada, where he has a brother. “Can they see Hungarian fingerprints in Canada?”

—*Valentina Pop in Vienna*

Soccer and Shelter

Soccer and Shelter

It was Sunday afternoon and the two soccer pitches in Munich’s Kustermannpark fill slowly with migrants, both freshly arrived and longtime residents.



A group of newly arrived refugees from Syria and Guinea gather in a park in Munich, Germany, to play soccer.
 PHOTO: ANDREA THOMAS/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Rassan, a 16-year-old boy from Damascus, Syria, arrived in Munich two weeks ago and attends his first tournament in Germany. The matches are organized by “buntkicktgut,” a Munich street football league.

The goal is to promote fairness, tolerance and participation among the young men and give them respect and appreciation in return, said Rüdiger Heid who helped create the project in 1996.

“On the pitch, everybody is the same,” he said.

Goalkeeper Rassan, who doesn’t reveal his surname and refuses to talk about the Syrian civil war, says he loves Germany, but loves soccer even more.

“I came here to study, to do fitness and to play football,” he says. “I seek shelter from the war at home. It is good here.”

—*Andrea Thomas in Munich*



Muslim families living in Hungary held signs at the Keleti train station on Sunday to thank Hungarians who had provided support to the migrants. PHOTO: MARGIT FEHER

Thanks for Support in Hungary

A handful of Muslim families living in Hungary showed up at the underground passageways of the Keleti train station Sunday afternoon with their children to express their thanks to ordinary Hungarians for their support of the migrants over the past few weeks.

Their children dressed in white stood in a semicircle holding up signs in three languages—Hungarian, Arabic and English—saying “Thank you, we will never forget your help. You are great.” They arranged tealights on the pavement in the shape of a heart and wrote “Thank you, Hungarians” in the middle.

“They gave them drinks and food, they did everything they could, and now we’d like to thank them,” said Ola, a 30-year-old woman in the group who declined to give her last name.

By Sunday afternoon, the civilian aid station at Keleti was overflowing with donations ranging from diapers to warm blankets.

—*Margit Feher in Budapest*



Maha Almustafa, a 45-year-old English teacher from Syria, and her 11-year-old daughter Nour were awarded asylum in Germany. They witnessed killings in Syria and hope to start a new life in Germany. *PHOTO: ANDREA THOMAS/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL*

One Family’s Journey

The Munich residents who rushed to welcome the migrants as they arrived by train on Sunday included some who made the same trip not too long ago.

Maha Almustafa, a 45-year-old English teacher, came to Germany in July last year with her husband, two sons and one daughter. She now lives in the Bavarian town of Erlangen and was in Munich to visit her sister and her four children.

It was a long journey to Germany. The family left Syria in 2012 when the troubles

started there and settled in Egypt, where Ms. Almustafa got a job teaching English to Syrian children. But after the new Egyptian government headed by Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was sworn into office in June last year, her residency permit wasn't renewed.

“We came to Europe by boat from Egypt. It was very difficult. The sea was calm during the first four days, but during the last night the waves were so high that the boat filled with water. We brought food but didn't eat anything because there was just one toilet for all of us,” said Ms. Almustafa.

“If you asked me again, I would not make it again. It was crazy when we were on the boat. It was very dangerous. Every moment you think you will die.”

Her family has now received asylum status and she is relieved to be safe, though still concerned about her long-term prospects. She and her husband have been trying to register for German language classes, but they've had to wait because there aren't enough places. They've also been looking for an apartment for seven months, but the search has been difficult because many people are unwilling to rent to them because they are on welfare.

“Everybody is very nice, I have German friends,” she said. “In Syria is war, I don't want to go back.”

—*Andrea Thomas in Munich*

Write to Andrea Thomas at andrea.thomas@wsj.com

Copyright 2014 Dow Jones & Company, Inc. All Rights Reserved

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. Distribution and use of this material are governed by our Subscriber Agreement and by copyright law. For non-personal use or to order multiple copies, please contact Dow Jones Reprints at 1-800-843-0008 or visit www.djreprints.com.