

# MEDIBÜRO

## Network for the right to health care assistance for all migrants

### On the situation of "people without papers" in Germany

An estimated 520,000 „people without papers“, i. e. without a regular residence permit status, live in Germany. They are part of our society, but live in constant fear of being discovered. Their migration histories and the reasons for living in illegality are very diverse. Totalitarian social systems, economic exploitation, social injustice and war drive people to flee. Often richer countries of the global north are (in-)directly involved in the emergence or perpetuation of the conflicts. The non-recognition of these reasons for flight in the German asylum procedure and the restrictive immigration law mean that many migrants are forced into illegality. Thus, they are denied access to education, work and health care. Migrants from newer EU countries such as Romania and Bulgaria

also have no access to health care if they have no health insurance either in Germany or in their country of origin, even if they live here legally. This includes many Sinti and Roma, who are often exposed to discrimination in their countries of origin. Providing medical care to illegalized people is not a punishable offense. They have a right to health care according to the Asylum Seekers Benefits Act (AsylbLG), which is, however, limited to acute illnesses and pain conditions - without standard medical care. In addition, the social welfare offices, as payers of costs, are legally obligated to forward personal data to the immigration authorities. Thus, there is always the danger of ending up in deportation custody from the treatment room.

Emergency treatment is an exception: Hospital administrations are not allowed to pass on patient data to the immigration authorities, as they were collected under medical confidentiality. This protection of secrecy extends to social welfare offices in the case of emergency treatment.

Pilot projects to improve health care for illegal immigrants have emerged in several cities and states in recent years. Here, public funds are used to provide counseling and limited medical services based on the AsylbLG without transferring data to the foreigners authority. In Berlin, the „Clearingstelle for people without health insurance“ was established in 2018.

### Who we are

The Network for the Right to Health Care for All Migrants - Medibüro Berlin (formerly Büro für medizinische Flüchtlingshilfe) exists since 1996 as a self-organized and non-governmental project. As an anti-racist initiative, we aim to improve the health care of illegalized people in a political and pragmatic way. Since it is mainly political that illegalized people are excluded from the regular health care system, we demand political solutions and try to create more awareness for the problem through public relations. Everyone in the collective participates free of charge.

### Our work

We refer patients to doctors, psychologists, midwives and physiotherapists who have agreed to provide treatment anonymously and free of charge. Costs for medication, orthopedic aids, eyeglasses, laboratory examinations, etc. are financed through donations. In the case of serious and chronic illnesses, we try to find a solution together with the treating doctors. However, we often reach our limits here.

Since 2018, the „Clearingstelle for people without health insurance“ of the Berliner Stadtmission has been operating in Berlin. It is a state-funded

project for the medical care of people without health insurance and for legal advice on whether there are possibilities of gaining access to regular health insurance after all.

The Medibüro has limited funds and capacity and we believe that health care for all people must be provided through governmental rather than volunteer structures. Therefore, we ask all patients to go first to the Clearingstelle at the Berliner Stadtmission.

However, migrants who do not receive (sufficient) help at the Clearingstelle of the Stadtmission can always turn to us. We work to ensure that all necessary medical services are covered by the Clearingstelle. If this is not possible, we try to organize the treatment through our voluntary network.

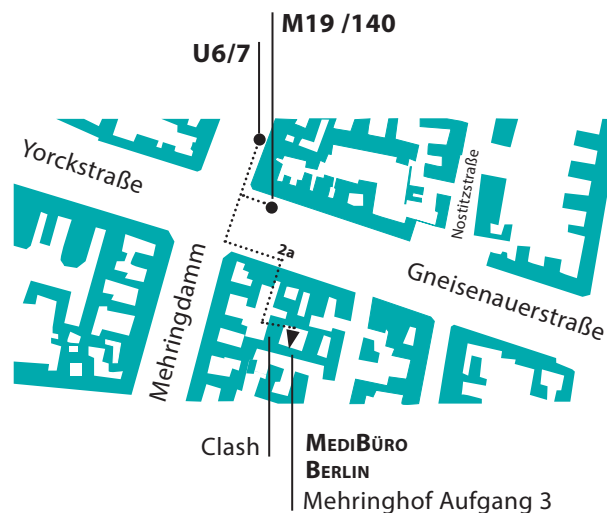
### Our goal

Medical care must be independent of the residence status. This entitlement is one of the basic rights of every human being. In Germany, however, the right to health care for illegalized persons is difficult to enforce. Through our work, we try to bring the reality of the lives of illegalized persons into the public eye and to alleviate human distress. However, the long-term political goal of our work is the abolition of special laws for migrants and refugees as well as the integration of all into the standard medical care.

### Contact and information

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