

# **Investing in the (Higher) Education and Training of Asylum Seekers and Persons with a Protection Status**

Claudia Nyffenegger – AOZ Vice President



## Philipp Schwartz – Integration of Refugee Scholars via Switzerland

*An 'advisory office for German scientists' has been founded in Zurich on an international, interdenominational and non-partisan basis.*

*Its purpose is to reasonably relocate scientists who have fled from Germany and have been ousted from their profession as well as to prepare them for the other countries.*

(translated abridged quotation from the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung NZZ*, dated 16 May 1933)



# **Investing in the (Higher) Education and Training of Asylum Seekers and Persons with a Protection Status**

1. Asylum and Social Welfare System in Switzerland
2. Education Funding by means of Social Welfare
3. Asylum Seekers and Persons with a Protection Status in the City of Zurich Engaging in Tertiary Education
4. Challenges while Pursuing a Tertiary Education
5. Conclusion and Outlook

## Asylum and Social Welfare System in Switzerland

### Confiscation of assets

- *“The provisions on the confiscation of assets permit the authorities to confiscate any assets in excess of 1000 Swiss francs held by asylum seekers who enter Switzerland.”* (State Secretariat for Migration SEM)

### Restriction on employment

- *“For the first three months after filing an application for asylum, asylum seekers may not engage in any gainful employment.”*  
(Art. 43, Asylum Act)
- The Canton of Zurich (Office of Economy and Labour) is currently not issuing work permits to asylum seekers as priority is granted to Swiss residents.

## **Asylum and Social Welfare System in Switzerland**

### **Core Tasks of Social Welfare**

- Ensuring minimum subsistence level
- Financial and personal independence
- Social and vocational integration

### **Scope of Action on the part of Municipalities**

- Housing situation (individual or collective housing, amount of approved rental costs); for asylum seekers, the level of minimum subsistence
- Decisions on measures regarding vocational integration
- Granting of integration allowances

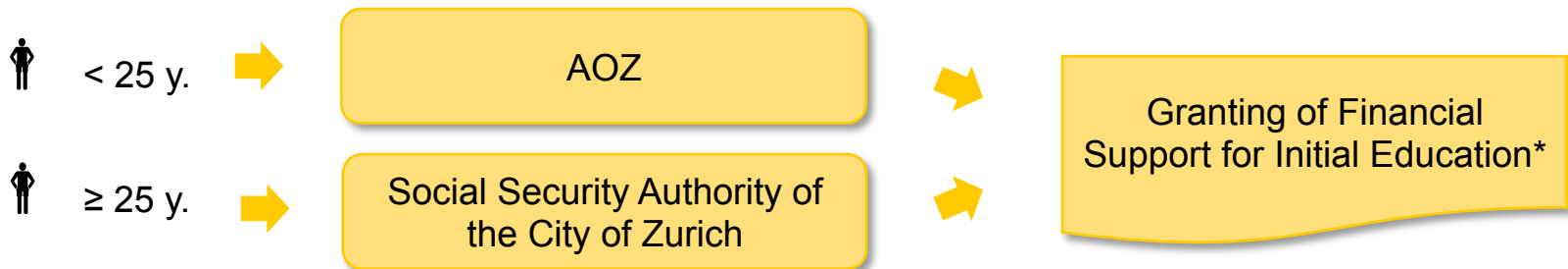
## Education Funding by means of Social Welfare

### Competencies

The social security authority, which is a political authority, decides on the granting of social welfare in most municipalities – often taking a conservative approach.

### In the City of Zurich

The City of Zurich has delegated the granting of municipal social assistance for asylum seekers and persons with a protection status to the AOZ.



*\*Initial Education = (Pre-)Vocational Training and Tertiary Education*

## Education Funding by means of Social Welfare in the City of Zurich

### General Principles and Conditions according to the Guidelines of the Social Security Authority

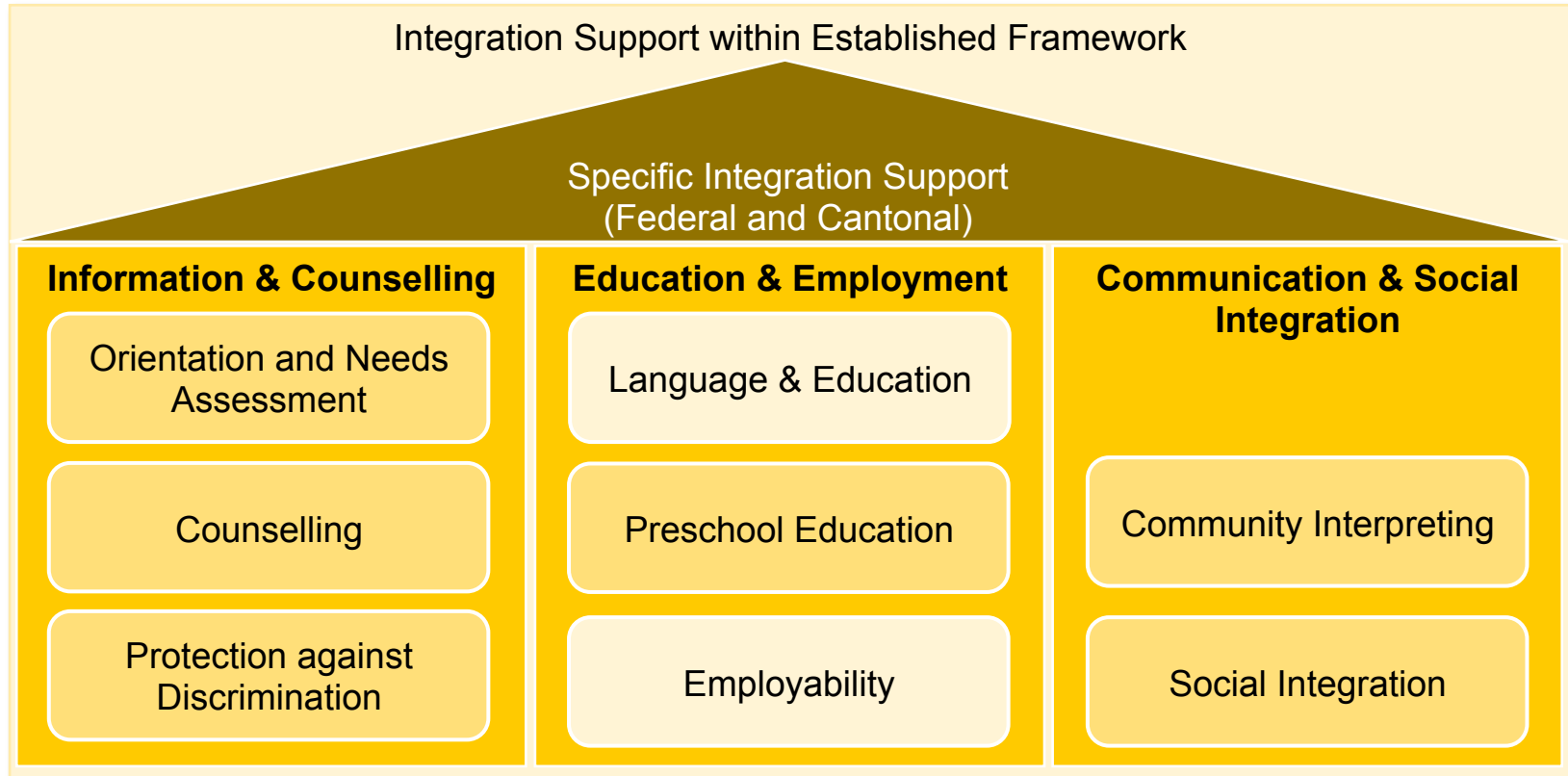
- Financial support is granted for initial education, e.g. persons completing an additional education do not usually receive social assistance  
(see *Guidelines*, chapter 2.7)
- Students at universities of applied sciences as well as at universities are generally expected to contribute their own funds or to engage in gainful employment with a workload of at least 0.2 Full-Time-Equivalents (FTEs) while studying  
(see *Guidelines*, chapter 2.5)

### Internal Guidelines of the AOZ

- Requirements for a successful application: clear professional focus, a real prospect of success (German language skills at least at C1 level of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages [CEFR], field of study)

## Education Funding by means of Social Welfare

Cantonal Integration Programmes (CIP):





## **Education Funding by means of Social Welfare**

### **Grants and Scholarships**

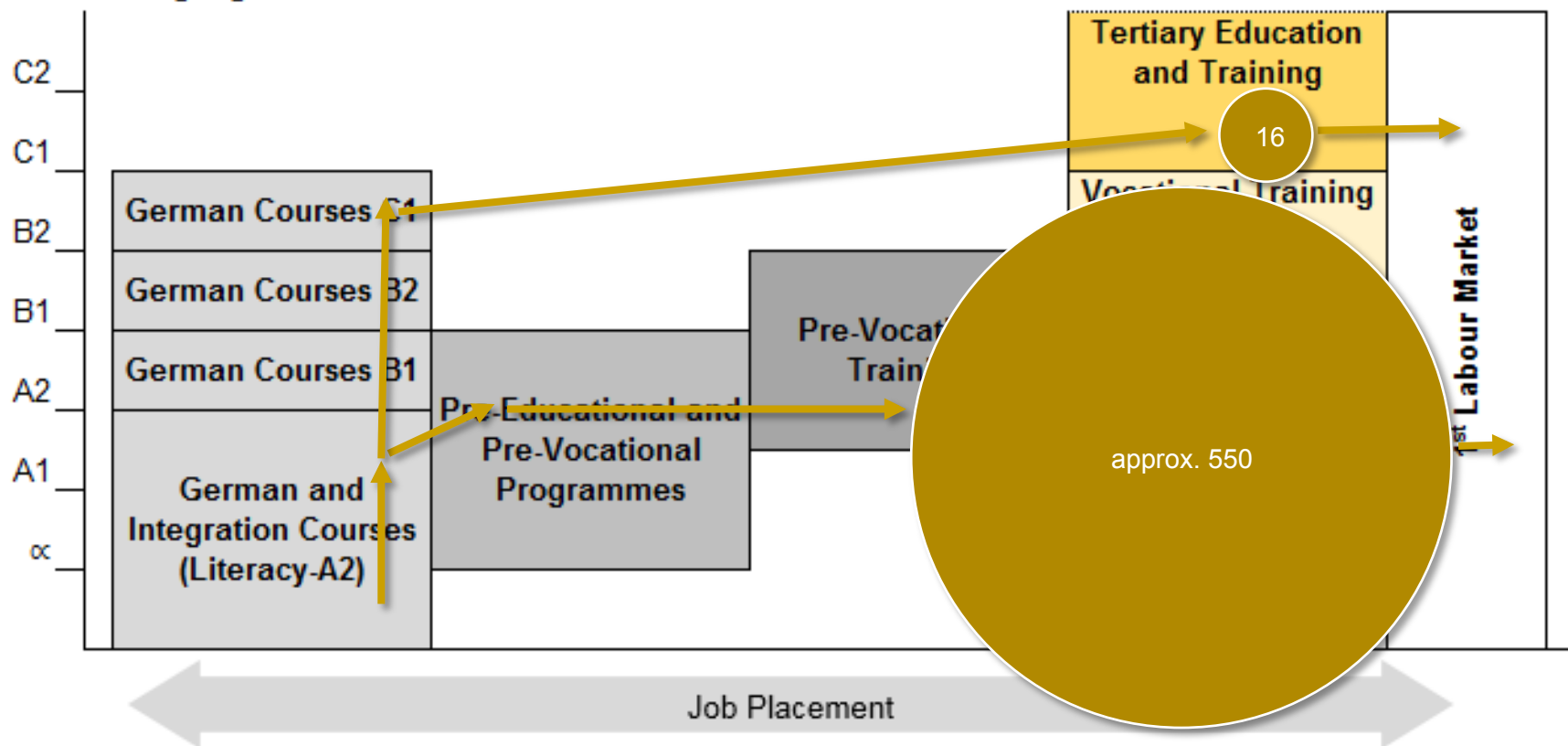
The following foreign nationals meet the personal requirements for cantonal grants in Zurich:

- Persons with at least five years of uninterrupted legal residence in Switzerland
- Refugees

(Excerpts from the leaflet issued by the Office of Youth and Career Services of the Canton of Zurich)

# Asylum Seekers and Persons with a Protection Status in the City of Zurich Engaging in Tertiary Education

German language skills



## **Asylum Seekers and Persons with a Protection Status in the City of Zurich Engaging in Tertiary Education**

- Since 2013, the social welfare department of the City of Zurich has been co-financing the tertiary education of 16 persons with a protection status.
- The fields of study are varied:
  - Theology / Islamic Studies (4)
  - Economics / Business Administration / International Management (3)
  - Biology / Biostatistics (2)
  - Social Sciences (1)
  - Facility Management (1)
  - Human Medicine (1)
  - German Linguistics and Literature (1)
  - Psychology (1)
  - Mechanical Engineering (1)
  - Peace Studies (1)

(number of people in brackets)

## **Challenges while Pursuing a Tertiary Education**

### **Admission to Tertiary Institutions**

- Language skills at least at C1 level of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)
- Entrance examinations
- Recognition of the education/degree obtained in the country of origin

### **Aggravating Circumstances for Asylum Seekers and Persons with a Protection Status**

- Strong emphasis on language (e.g. examination system: knowledge questions, terminology, multiple choice)
- Required learning strategies, access to study groups
- Housing situation

## Conclusion and Outlook

- In the 1950s: focus on highly qualified labour, e.g. rapid labour market integration of asylum seekers from Hungary
- Since the 1980s: focus on low-wage sectors such as catering trade and cleaning as well as support within labour market integration programmes, e.g. asylum seekers from Sri Lanka
- Current situation: focus on (pre-)vocational training and education for low-qualified labour
  - Confederation: focus on pre-vocational training (low-qualified labour)
  - Cantons: focus on rapid labour market integration (job placement)
- Hence, integration support is still not directed primarily towards highly qualified individuals
- Individual support within the scope of civic engagement and social responsibility is highly desirable (e.g. mentoring programmes, access to study groups)
- Secondary schools - as important facilitators of the access to tertiary education – yet to address the issue of education of asylum seekers and persons with a protection status

# Thank You for Your Attention

