

Germany is trying to teach refugees the right way to have sex

www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/05/13/germany-is-trying-to-teach-refugees-the-right-way-to-have-sex/

By Anthony Faiola and Stephanie Kirchner



From Germany's Federal Center for Health Education website.

BERLIN — The German government is rushing to integrate hundreds of thousands of asylum seekers, offering them language classes and the prospect of work. But in a country known for its matter-of-fact acceptance of public nudity and creative forms of lovemaking, it is also trying to teach the mostly-Muslim migrants about the joy of sex.

Operating under the premise that many Syrians, Iraqis and others seeking asylum here are naive about the predilections and pitfalls of the European boudoir, Germany's Federal Center for Health Education has gone live with a [sexual education website](#) for adult migrants. Using highly graphic diagrams and images, the \$136,000 site outlines everything from first-time sex to how to perform far more advanced sexual acts.

After a rash of sexual assaults allegedly committed by suspects including asylum seekers on New Year's Eve, the Germans have been on a mission to re-educate migrants, especially males, about sexual norms in the West. In Munich, public pools, for instance, published cartoons warning migrants not to grope women in bikinis. Also in Bavaria, public money is partially funding sexual education classes including lessons for male migrants on how to correctly approach German women.

But if all that is stick — the new government website is definitely more carrot: a guide to the pleasures of sex and the single migrant (or married, for that matter).

It's not all fun and games. There are educational warnings on how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases and useful information for family planning. There are also explanations — which advocates say are needed for some refugees — on the need to respect gays and lesbians.

But while the illustrations may be more health class than Hustler, the site nevertheless engages in a surprisingly blunt lesson on the giving and receiving of sexual pleasure.

Sexual intercourse is fully illustrated here, along with a suggestion to “vary movements in speed, rhythm and intensity” and a special tip that it can be enjoyed while “lying, sitting, standing or squatting.”

“For example, the man can be on top of the woman, the woman on top of the man or the man behind the woman,” the site states.

It then probes deeper into the world of sexual gratification, including graphic descriptions of the various ways to perform oral sex, anal sex and masturbation.

On the other side of the Atlantic, such material might cause a stir. But Germany is a nation where public nudity at parks and beaches remains relatively common, and where blunt public discussions of sex are comfortably held without prudish reserve. Thus, most observers seem to be taking it in stride, with even the harshest criticism against the site more of a grumbling than a show of genuine outrage.

Yet it has raised a few eyebrows.

“What is being done with our money,” incredulously [Tweeted Michael Bramer](#), a German freelance artist.

Others defend the site overall as a highly useful educational tool while suggesting it should have been aimed at the public more broadly. It is condescending, they say, to assume that migrants from the Middle East know nothing about the risks — and pleasures — of sex.

Some, however, argue that Germany’s liberal attitude toward sex must be respected — including by conservative religious newcomers who are not used to such openness. It is, in no small measure, part of the integration process of refugees.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Europe was “vulnerable” in the refugee crisis because it was not yet in control of the situation. (Reuters)

Heinz-Jürgen Voss, a sex scientist at the University of Merseburg, argued it was “racist” to assume that Syrians and Iraqis, for instance, were less schooled than Germans in the wonders of sex. That said, he argued, “it’s important to promote this kind of open and free sexuality, to fight for it,” he said. “It’s not something that the state can force people to do, to live openly. But it needs to be negotiated.”

Given the string of sexual assaults committed by suspects including migrants in Cologne, the site has additionally turned into a target for some anti-migrant voices.

“These men often know exactly what is allowed and what isn’t, but they simply aren’t interested, since the laws and culture of this country never interested them in the first place,” wrote the conservative blogger Anabel Schunke. “It is terribly naive to think that a complete socialization and cultural formation since early childhood could be wiped out by some nice images and integration classes.”

Nuri Köseli, a spokesman for Islamic Relief Germany, an organization that’s also working with refugees, said he didn’t find anything particularly offensive about the new website. But he did question its necessity, and argued that such explicit teachings could prove frustrating for some migrants stuck in refugee camps and with limited access to sexual partners.

“Although this is a human need of course, people have bigger problems,” he said. And, he argued, “most of them are staying in emergency shelters for a long time without any access to private spaces. To confront them with such an issue in that situation might even be counter-productive.”

For the dateless migrant, however, the site also offers insights into how to release sexual energy. It is okay, the site says, to like pornography.

The site, which went live in March, is available to anyone with the URL. But officials say it was devised to be disseminated by doctors and other medical professionals who are working with migrants. Asked if some might be startled by its blunt treatment of sex, Christine Winkelmann, head of HIV and STD prevention at the Federal Center for Health Education, said: “Just like all content found online, people can decide themselves what they want to see and what they don’t want to see.”

“We completely trust in our experts who are spreading the information that they are able to judge who to show it to,” she added.