

Comedor del Arte



Workshop at a local sewing café making recycling-bags
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Location

3170 Hainfeld, Lower Austria

Country

Austria

Short summarizing description

Comedor del Arte is called a house in Hainfeld, a small city in the Prealps of Lower Austria. It is intended as a free of charge meeting point for all kind of people, independent of their age, sex, colour, place of birth, religious or political attitude. The program depends on what people need. Everybody can propose an activity. At the moment mostly people in the asylum procedure and migrants, adults as well as children, use the place and the offers: German learning groups, tutoring, workshops, cooking, excursions, cultur-parties, assistance with reading documents and speaking with authorities. The most important principle is voluntarism, from the side of the visitors as well as from the people, who offer their help and time. Creativity and fun go together. Comedor del Arte was founded by Franz Witzmann. The costs, especially the rent, were financed by the social Festival Tu-was in 2016. In 2017 a society was founded to apply for a support by the Leader region, which was conceded.

Key Terms

Cultural work, storytelling, meeting

Context and background, Which problems/challenges does your measure try to solve/cope with?

People waiting for asylum have rare chances for integration, rare opportunities to speak with indigenous people, till shortly there were no german courses free of charge offered, they have not enough money for the train to go to a city, they have no day-structure, one big accommodation house is 8 km away from the small city Hainfeld in the wasteland, there is not even an internet for free. Also migrants need help with papers, migrant children need tutoring for the school. On the other hand Austrian people are afraid of „dark people“ or women with headscarfs. Some daily newspapers

support the fears and xenophobic images. But we are sure, that people change their mind when getting into contact and that people need good, encouraging stories.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

1. Give sense and day-structure for everybody who feels alone 2. Give respect and appreciation 3. Discover and promote talented people, strength their sovereignty 4. Show ways for integration (e.g. volunteer working possibilities) 5. Bring people into contact, new and indigenous ones

Who are the main target groups and beneficiaries of your measure?

people seeking for asylum people with subsidiary protection or asylum migrants indigenous people who like to help and want to develop their personality

Which actions have already been implemented and which results have been achieved so far?

Coop. with „Wir Hainfelder“, society of businessman

Dec. 15: Stand on Christmas market (tea, sweets)

Dec. 16/ city of stars: Stand on Christmas market (tea, sweets, bolanis, falaffel). Making decoration for the city (100 paper stars, 100 sewed stars)

Dec. 17/ city of angels: food stand and stand with own products. 5 tailors sewed 40 angeldresses for a children quire.

The society donated in return money to buy 4 „Sozialcomputer“

Vegetable-coop:

Lebensgut Miteinander produces bio. vegetables. Comedor is distribution partner of the vegetable boxes and organized helpers for volunteer gardening. In return we get boxes for cooking.

Make people visible and appreciated by art:

Backing of prof. artists: theater group Simorgh (Afghanistan), Mika Abdullaeva: NÖN talent contest

Promotion of amateur artists: Acapella-festival, project „Digital Story Telling“

Integration of refugees in the reading group of a library

R. Sadegi produced small carpets, S. Naserifar illustrated a memory game

Which were the main problems and challenges you were/are facing when implementing the project and how did/do you (try to) overcome them?

High fluctuation of the visitors, it is difficult to develop projects. Strategy: keep the humour, stay flexible, love the challenge Misunderstandings because of language and cultur (e.g. to come in time or waste separation) Strategy: explain over and over again, train the calendar Visitors are traumatized and have existential problems. Strategy: don't have any expectations Danger of burnout for the helpers. Strategy: Self-care measures The financial management is a challenge (budgets, accounting). Strategy: keep up, learning by doing Indigenous people are very shy. Strategy: patience

Link to website

<http://www.comedordelarte.at>

Starting date

2015-12-11

Duration

24

Regional scale

2 - small region (some municipalities, a mountain valley etc.)

Other involved partners

Tuwas Festival - www.tu-was.at

LEADER Management, Kirchberg an der Pielach - www.mostviertel-mitte.at

Contact person

Herzverstand — Association for the promotion, organization and operation of the Comedor del Arte

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Category 1, Managing social change

The Comedor del Arte tries to give the people a face by showing their talents (e.g. cooking for a stand on the market, sewing and handicraft for the shopwindow-decorations or for social projects, playing professional theater on culture-events). We network with local societies in order to help people to get voluntary jobs (e.g. a syrian table tennis professional played in the local sport club, young men work at the Tafel of the red cross, a woman from Ukraine sings in the quire of the church, young man worked occasionally on a vegetable farm). We try to tell good stories, to awaken interest and understanding. (e.g. the Simorgh theater group wrote a play about the problems of the Hazara group in Afghanistan; in the project „Digital Story Telling“ people speak about their situation; blogs on the website tell stories; fotos on facebook tell stories; articles in the local press inform as well).

Category 2: Integrating migrants into the local/,regional labour market

Of course we try to help people when seeking jobs. We inform about understaffed professions, translate job ads in the German courses and accompany people to local employees. As many of our visitors are extremely gifted craft workers, we try to offer them possibilities to show their talents (taylor, electrician, cooks). In the first floor of the Comedor del Arte there is a sewing room. In the ground floor there is a kitchen. The profession cook/waiter is an understaffed profession in Austria.

Category 4: Supporting change in the local / ,regional dual education system

Until recently people seeking asylum in Austria had no possibility to attend german courses free of charge. Therefore we offered learning groups. This has changed now, but still people use our offers in their free time. We hear now, that our pupils learn more easily in the official A0 and A1 courses than people without preparation. This is pleasing! We offer also tutoring for children. As Franz Witzmann workes voluntarily in the ground school as „Lesepate“ and has contact in his job as a learning coach for apprentices, he knows about the problems of young people and young migrants. At the moment we built up contacts to societies which support and train adults to find jobs in their old professions they learnt in their homeland, e.g. GEZA St. Pölten trains electricians; Kattunfabrik trains taylors (www.kattunfabrik.org). But however our new friends have to pass the necessary language exams first.

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

On our website we blog about the most important success stories and the workshops. The local press also reports about our activities or about events the comedor is invited to/involved. One week before the elections in october 2017 we organized an extraordinary report. A team of the german-french TV „Arte“ came to Hainfeld and made an interview with a family of Afghanistan. They wanted to portrait a successfully integrated family. The father is a doctor and learns actually for his nostrification. The portrait was arranged by Franz Witzmann who was also interviewed. Via facebook we communicate about the articles and blogs also. Especially the fotos are important: pictures with smiling women wearing a headscarf sitting next to smiling indigenous women from Hainfeld...

Many people are aware of our activities and appreciate them. Nevertheless it is not easy to find locals who come to us. It is easier to arrange meetings on places they are familiar with, e.g. local municipal „Kultursaal“

Category 6, Innovative dimension

A place is provided to spend there your time, do things you like, play, learn, communicate, get new friends, drink tea, use the internet...and everything free of charge. Everybody can come. Everything is voluntary, also activities that have to be done, like washing dishes or cleaning the toilet. The visitors define with their needs and talents the program which is offered.

Category 7, Transferability

Provide a place, preferably a house, maybe also a garden, for the rent you need private or public sponsors Provide an infrastructure: Austria is a rich country, we had no problems to get tables, seats, kitchen devices and sewing machines for free. Also important: Computers and internet! Confidence is important: don't expect anything special, but on the contrary be open and flexible and find solutions for the real needs and talents of the people Networking is important: with other organisations, societies, people. Together we know more and together we can help the people better.

Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

Call the people by their names, appreciate their talents, walk with the people through the city, accompany them to the doctor or to authorities. Invite people to lunch, to trips to a museum, to the cinema, to the theater, to festivals, to parties. If possible integrate them in your family or offer them a room to live. (2 men of Afghanistan live in our family) Talk with people, laugh with them, sing with them. Take them seriously. Talk about the people, write about the people, take fotos. Write statements of support for the asylum seekers and integrate fotos to show their integration efforts. (see PDF)

Further Information



Project integrating 3 young people in the reading circle of the library in Traisen with the book „Das Mädchen mit dem Fingerhut“ written by M. Köhlmeier, before we read the book in the Comedor, this project lasted 3 months, we met about 15 times.

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[NOEN_Bericht_Arte.pdf — 1929Kb](#)

Article in the local newspaper about the Arte-TV report made in Hainfeld and organized by Franz Witzmann

[Unterstützungserklärung für Mohammad Ahmadi.pdf — 2129Kb](#)

Statement of support written by Franz Witzmann, we try to write certificates and statements of support for all people who ask us.