

Vorankommen – Willkommen in der Bregenzerwälder Arbeitswelt / Getting ahead – welcome to the working environment in the Bregenzerwald



31.10.2017, Werkraum Andelsbuch. Event: "HRM and operational welcoming culture", solution-oriented group work after panel debate;
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Location

Bregenzerwald

Country

Austria

Short summarizing description

Demographic data indicates that Vorarlberg would decline in population without immigration, especially in regions of low population density such as the project region Bregenzerwald. In addition, companies in rural areas lack skilled employees. Compared to agglomerations, societies in rural areas are more traditional. To prevent conflicts and to stimulate local economy, it is important not to let happen migration randomly, but to establish a framework that is in favour of integration and creates a harmonic and migration-friendly environment which favours immigration, especially of skilled workers. The aim of this LEADER project is to develop a welcoming culture in a pilot area in a pragmatic way. With the implementation being done by the witus cooperative in the pilot area Bregenzerwald, possibilities should be outlined to gain and secure further financial means to extend activities to neighbouring areas.

Key Terms

Welcoming culture, migration, rural area

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

Two mega-trends will influence social development in the coming decades: demographic change and international migration. This project aims to move away from problem orientation towards a wide acceptance of the potentials of migration especially in rural areas. Regions that want to be attractive for migrants and especially qualified labour force need to develop a welcoming culture, demanding an attitude of openness and acceptance in the local society. To develop and sustain such attitude, efforts need to be embedded in existing local structures. Local players can and should influence migration and integration processes, instead of letting them happen randomly. This view is also reflected in Vorarlberg's development aim and strategy which is the base for all LEADER projects (LES2020).

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

The overall aim is to establish a framework for a welcoming culture in the Bregenzerwald. The project should serve as a model and help to facilitate the establishment of a welcoming culture in other rural regions in Vorarlberg and beyond. Objectives: 1. To ensure better coordination between actors by establishing long-term coordination mechanisms 2. To raise awareness on the positive potentials of immigration 3. To attract an increased number of migrant workers which choose to stay permanently

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

- Entrepreneurs of the witus cooperative (150 companies from five municipalities in the Bregenzerwald)
- Migrants
- Educational Institutions (local schools e.g. the Bezau commercial schools, but also institutions that focus on adult education as well as on language)
- Communities and society in the pilot area and surrounding areas

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

- Stakeholder meetings, events and interviews with the intention to learn about the needs which entrepreneurs, employees and communities face in terms of migration and to find regional solutions
- "welcoming portfolio" for newcomers (D/E), distributed through companies and municipalities: main information for a general orientation and insights to the possibilities in the region (e.g. free time activities, clubs, etc.).
- 3 local language courses organized – entrepreneurs offer them to their employees at no charge. Additional benefit: courses are held in the rural area
- Awareness raising through events (culture festival, "Vereinetag") and communication with stakeholders and civil population. E.g. the event "HRM and operational welcoming culture" focused on recruitment, arrival and becoming local staff in the region, focusing especially on strategies how SMEs in rural areas can attract and retain specialized migrant workers by comprehensive, trans-sectoral and transregional activities.

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

Problems arose mostly around participation and collecting the needed information. But through the commitment of the project team, their persistence and continuing placement of the theme, combined by the awareness on the importance of the topic, many people could be motivated to get involved.

Link to website

<http://www.regio-v.at/projects/5/vorankommen>

Starting date

2015-09-01

Duration

34

Regional scale

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

Other involved partners

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Category 1, Managing social change

Being a rural area, immigration is crucial for the Bregenzerwald to maintain its population. The demand of labour and especially skilled labour could not be satisfied otherwise. Migration and integration processes are not seen as an automatism and can be regulated through local players. The project focuses on increasing the attractiveness for migrants through developing a welcoming culture. The measures concentrate on attracting, arriving and living and aim to counter rural depopulation. This is accomplished by specific information-, networking- and supporting campaigns to incorporate a welcoming culture in the society. Some examples: Stakeholder meetings, intensive debate on the theme; Education & Information as well as activities with the community, cooperation with educational institutions, enabling intercultural interaction and constituting a network.

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

One main goal is to stimulate migration to the region, especially to satisfy the demand of (skilled) labour. The project focuses on recruitment, arrival and becoming a local. Events like "HRM and operational welcoming culture" with companies in October 2017 discuss this in detail. 3 language courses for 80 migrant workers were organized – entrepreneurs offered them to their employees at no charge with the additional benefit of being held in the regional

area. Events like the festival of cultures enabled intercultural interaction and therefore supported integration and the creation of regional ties – which results in the migrants feeling being welcomed and therefore being more likely to stay permanently. A welcoming portfolio “Welcome – working and living in the Bregenzerwald” was published in D+E and is distributed through companies and municipalities, to ease the arrival of newcomers through collecting practical information on the area (e.g. free time activities, clubs, etc.).

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

Through a broad promotion of the organised events in local networks (witus, Regio Bregenzerwald, Regio-V, Werkraum, municipalities), consistent mentioning of the topic as well as five articles in local print media (VN Heimat, Wirtschaftsundzeitung), migration is now broadly discussed in the five participating municipalities. Migration issues have been included into other projects and networks (e.g. “engagiert sein”, “Hand in Hand”, “L(i)ebenswert Bezau”). In addition, awareness could be raised in the society. An editorial series in regional papers is planned to target specific themes around migration and entrepreneurship to raise further awareness.

Category 6, Innovative dimension

The innovative dimension of the project is that in spite or even because of widespread fear of foreigners and xenophobia – especially in rural areas – it aims to actively stimulate migration. Another innovation is that the project also aims at a regional collective HRM solution instead of locating recruiting and human resources on the individual entrepreneurs, in order for SMEs to be competitive compared to bigger companies. A collaboration of SMEs working on the theme of migration and even letting village borders and parochial thinking behind is also new to the region.

Category 7, Transferability

The project is seen as a small-scale prototype applied to five municipalities in the larger region Bregenzerwald. Outcomes and experiences e.g. from events, language courses or the welcoming portfolio will be provided to the whole region to eventually be transferred. It is also seen as the possibility of trial and error as well as to enable further measures and some of the results are already being integrated in following-up projects like “PlurAlps”, “Zukunft Unternehmertum” and “Engagiert sein”. Measures like the welcoming portfolio, language courses for migrants or a festival of cultures can also easily be transferred internationally. Also, the events focussing on HRM and entrepreneurship can be seen as exemplary for a rural region.

Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

The project is part of and embedded in the concept of integration of the federal state of Vorarlberg. Additionally witus began a campaign which goes further than the LEADER project where we play with the word WILLKOMMEN (welcome) for the next several years. In one first promotion 50 speech bubbles appear on companies in all five villages stating “welcome to [first name of the owner]”. Upcoming promotions include written media, spray-colouring streets, street signs etc. all using the word welcome.

Further Information



26.9.2017, BWS Beza. Language course for migrant workers.
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 [17-04-05 layout-willkommensmappe-DE Web.pdf](#) — 1752Kb

Welcome Portfolio DE - compressed because of file size

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