

Conservation - Diversity - Strength. Integration weeks for and together with refugees



Construction of a steep path in the high mountains
Copyright: Bergwaldprojekt e.V.

Location

Upper Bavaria, Swabia, Freiburg

Country

Germany

Short summarizing description

The non-profit organization Bergwaldprojekt organizes project weeks in cooperation with forest authorities, educational institutions and social agencies. In these weeks all over Germany natural conservation works are carried out. Since 2015 the offer has also been addressed to refugees. Refugees participate in integration weeks for grown-ups or in project weeks with educational institutions to protect and conserve the domestic forest eco systems and get the possibility to not only proverbially get to know the country and its people. In addition to the ecological awareness-raising, these weeks promote the comprehension for sustainability in the purpose of a fair world

Key Terms

Nature conservation, volunteering, sustainability

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

The stability of the eco systems is extremely threatened. Together with that, the stability and resilience of human societies, which are dependent on these natural resources, is threatened as well. In the Alps – because of the exposed position – the changings of the eco systems have a distinctly quicker impact (e. g. as hot spot region in the climate change) than in most of the other regions. Here the dependence of people from the eco systems can be experienced directly. The hold projects link to that: We inspire people for the protection and conservation of the natural resources in a

positive atmosphere. Therefore, the project weeks are social laboratories. They can found action and meeting patterns which are transferable into other areas of life and social action fields.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

The aim of the project weeks is - to protect, to conserve, to tend especially the mountain forest, and the cultural landscapes. The aim of the volunteer weeks organized by the association for that purpose is to improve the situation of the forest at the concrete project sites. - At the same time due to working the participants develop an understanding of the connections in nature, the issues of the forest and the dependence of man on these sources of life. - With the help of accompanying public relations work the weeks also aim at improving the ecological and political circumstances.

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

The offer is directed to all societal groups. The participation in the project weeks is free of charge to allow all interested persons to participate. The Cooperation with local caritas-associations makes the specific invitation of refugees to the project weeks possible. In the context of the Waldschule also young refugees get the possibility to participate.

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

Since 1992 altogether 263 project weeks with distinctly over 5000 participants have been organized, since 2016 also refugees have been addressed and invited actively to participate in the for them new society within the scope of useful ecological activities. The following project weeks in the Alpine region were carried out with refugees: In Linderhof (Ammergau Alps), in the Lech valley (Weilheim / Schongau region) and on the Feldberg (Freiburg region) two one-week work efforts each and in Gunzesried (Allgäu) one project of that kind took place. The operation of the volunteers shows a durable impact – as well from the Nature protection point of view as from the contact with each other: Working together creates a connection between people that normally do not meet in their everyday life. The shared accommodation and not least the changing of the landscape accomplished together sowed the seeds for joyful experiences – in the landscape as well as in the minds.

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

There were some challenges in the administration of the projects which could be solved with the help of the cooperation with welfare institutions: The direct contact to the refugees allows the institutions to address people specifically and make them aware of the project. Also, all further arrangements after the completed registration (e. g. shoe size, clothing size for the needed rented equipment that Bergwaldprojekt provides, departure time and meeting points) are communicated by the social institutions between the refugees and the association effectively.

Link to website

<https://www.bergwaldprojekt.de/projekte/integrative-projekte> ; <http://umweltbildung-mit-fluechtlingen.de/projekte/news/gesellschaftlich-beteiligen-natur-erleben-hintergruende-verstehen/>

Starting date

2010-01-01

Duration

Volunteer work in the Alps region since 1992, integration weeks with refugees since 2015, since 2016 alpine; Duration is unlimited, for 2018 there are planned more integration weeks already. Projects always take place for one week.

Regional scale

4 - national

Other involved partners

Contact person

Bergwaldprojekt e.V.

Martin Ladach

ml@bergwaldprojekt.de

<http://www.bergwaldprojekt.de>

Category 1, Managing social change

For the refugees contacts to people from the adopting country that are not professional or voluntarily active in the work with refugees emerge in the project weeks. Sometimes friendships and relationships emerge which for one thing entrench the refugees socially stronger in the adopting society and for another thing also make personal experiences for the German participants possible. These provoke comprehension and sympathies for the situation of the refugees. In the project weeks people meet intensively on a joint-cooperative level: This way of living and working together promotes a respectful, tolerant and open contact to each other. Altogether the joint work in the community property state forest resp. the common effort for the protection and conservation of the alpine eco systems links the people – and the landscape does it's bit.

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

The volunteers get a certificate for their volunteer work. In individual cases this certificate helped with the application for an apprenticeship, e. g. in carpentry. The contacts to the foresters and the other persons might be helpful connections into the adopting society for the future to generally get an internship. Especially in the project weeks with young refugees which take part in the project weeks in context of trade school measures they are highly interested in green jobs.

Category 3: Improving land use, nature ,protection and regional development

The nature conservation works which proceed jointly and without pressure to perform exclusively consist of manual activities. It makes it possible for everyone to take part at the project weeks successfully. Mostly the refugees are more experienced in this kind of work than the German participants (e. g. in plantings or the construction of steep paths). Therefore, often situations reveal in which the role of the expert changes from the German participant to the refugee. In this way everybody may benefit from the group experiences.

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

As mentioned before, two of the yet completed project weeks were efforts with the Gertrud Luckner industrial school Freiburg that came to the Feldberg with young refugees. The youngsters do a prequalifying year with intensive German classes. The project weeks enable regional contact to lumbermen, foresters, farmers and voluntary workers in the project weeks. They also promote the mutual understanding. The employed workers of the forestry management appreciate the teenagers' performance in the project weeks as very positive.

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

We accompany all projects with intense public relations work (press release before the weeks to regional and national media) and invite journalists to the work space. In the last years many newspaper articles, radio and TV reports were published. The pieces carry positive images of the joint commitment into the society. They make the success, which all persons experience in the treatment of ecological and social themes, visible in the incorporating society. In this way positive news of the topic area asylum policy are promoted with the help of accompanying public relations work. Exemplary for the so far published pieces we quote a documentation of the project week with Gertrud Luckner industrial school at Feldberg: <https://www.swr.de/swraktuell/bw/suedbaden/bergwaldprojekt-am-feldberg-fluechtlinge-raeumen-wald-auf/-/id=1552/did=20647580/nid=1552/6npkqd/index.html>.

Category 6, Innovative dimension

Exceeding the concrete nature conservation and education works in the projects, the generations and nations overlapping collaboration of youth groups, grown-ups, people with and without a background of fleeing, public institutions, social and educational institutions as well as media representatives constitutes a platform that copes with the complexity of the global distribution questions in which's context also refugee movements are to be estimated. The purview of this platform is increased with the help of efficient preparing, revising and accompanying public relations work.

The model character of this project is obvious: On the basis of concrete examples people are getting active jointly and can integrate the gathered, positively regarded experiences into their everyday life. In such community-building measures we see a huge lever for a positive examination with the societal challenges and a peaceful cooperation.

Category 7, Transferability

The main idea of the entire actions of the association Bergwaldprojekt is transferability: Transferability exists as well in the context of the inclusion of all societal actors as in connection to a stronger orientation on the lifeworld and is from our point of view urgently necessary, too. With the integration projects for refugees we especially want to set an alternative to artificially created didactic, game and adventure situations in the context of biodiversity. It makes clear that the concrete use for people and nature does not have to be approached on detours. As well as the participants take home the experiences made in the projects and there further bother with the themes, other institutions can transfer the combination of environment conservation and participation to their measures. There are a lot of tasks and challenges. The message of the integration projects is clear and has got a requesting character: Everybody can do something. Let's start now.

Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

The project weeks of integration are no mayfly. Since 2015 we have been bothering for cooperation partners and have been talking actively to social and educational institutions. With the help of accompanying public relations work and the involvement in symposiums we try to make the concept more known and to give more people the possibility to support the alpine eco systems actively and joyfully on this platform. The previous cooperation with different partners all have solidified. In 2018 we are going to offer at least three project weeks in the Alpine region as integration weeks again. We still want to enable experiences as well for refugees as for people from the adopting society so that those involved feel their self-efficacy in the debate with ecological and social themes.

Further Information



Working - Experiencing - Understanding. Education for sustainable development with young refugees
Copyright: Bergwaldprojekt e.V.

[Natur und Landschaft Artikel Geflüchtete April 2017.pdf — 724Kb](#)

Overview article about projects with refugees edited by the Federal Agency for Nature Conservation

[Badische Zeitung Feldberg WSP November 2017.pdf — 108Kb](#)

Article in a regional newspaper about projects on the Feldberg