

MAB



"Home" theatre production
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Location

Belluno, Italy

Country

Italy

Short summarizing description

To prevent negative reactions to immigration, the Belluno Municipality has formulated, in April 2014, a proposal for their own model of integration (MAB), based on widespread micro hospitality and “bi-univocal” (reciprocal of respective cultures). This involves: - no mass accommodation (hangar shelters or camp sites), but rather widespread micro hospitality - education programmes to cover local culture and customs (using money, recycling, relationships, contributing to local and cultural life) - secondary schools visits to educate the children about their story and journeys, dispelling prejudice - Public gain volunteering (lawn mowing, de-littering, painting school railings and gates, etc) - Pedibus with primary school children At completion (3-4 weeks) a certificate is presented to demonstrate commitment

Key Terms

hospitality integration self-determination

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

The media reporting of migrants arriving in Italy by sea generates fear, diffidence and xenophobic feelings towards the asylum seekers, as well as dissatisfaction and mistrust towards the institutions. Our region was previously not accustomed to welcoming immigration, so it is necessary to educate the population prior to introducing people that might be perceived as foreign. Existing feelings of rejections are exacerbated by the current economic situation which sees many Italian citizens struggling to find employment. Finally, the problem with handling immigration is often more with the handling than with the immigrants themselves, it is necessary to plan immigration management carefully.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

- Integrative hospitality, widespread in the Municipality - Encourage a dialogue between citizens and asylum seekers, fostering two-way benefit and enrichment - Prevent the occurrence of public disorders and friction observed in other Italian cities - Educate and inform the population on the immigration phenomenon

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

The main target and beneficiary of the program are the asylum seekers, but also those that have obtained asylum and the population, starting from the youngest in order to create long lasting openness, and ending with the most reluctant, to dispel fears and reservations.

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

Already implemented since May 2014: - public assemblies to explain the migratory phenomenon to the population with particular attention to the motivations leading to migration and the economic component of dealing with it - volunteering opportunities in public parks, involving asylum seekers as well as autochthonous citizens and leading to spontaneous socialising and work relationships (i.e. asylum seekers then employed as mother-tongue reader at the lyceum and baker) - theatre production organised by Slowmachine and the Belluno Municipality co-written and performed by asylum seekers (fulfilling the aim to encourage self-esteem and belonging in the asylum seekers, and to encourage new means of communication) - Pedibus volunteering, escorting primary school children to and from home - Contributing to the clearing and requalification of the independent community centre, and subsequent participation in its social life -

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

We faced political instrumentalisation during the election campaign, which we overcame by creating information. We also faced diffidence with the people living in the areas and apartment blocks where we planned to house the asylum seekers, we overcame this by making ourselves very available for contact and questions, and by organising assemblies and discussions with the residents. Finally, we had to face the challenge of explaining the reasons behind employment and housing restrictions affecting the asylum seekers, guiding them through the bureaucratic process.

Starting date

2014-05-01

Duration

43

Regional scale

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

Other involved partners

Prefettura di Belluno, Consorzio di Cooperative S.I., citizen committees

Contact person

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Category 1, Managing social change

The MAB project has prevented public clashes and crimes related to the introduction of asylum seekers in the territory. Introducing asylum seekers in small housing groups, within the urban area, rather than amassing them in the peripheries encourages socialisation, integration and acceptance. The local population perceive the introduction of asylum seekers as a mild and controlled process, whereas the numbers of asylum seekers welcomed are the same as those welcomed by other cities where the introduction is perceived as a shock. Creating awareness in the population allowed us to shift the attention of the local population to what are the real problems (i.e. unaccompanied minors) rather than on the alarmist portrayal of the media. The natural repercussions of the success of the project are the spontaneous activities started by local citizens to involve asylum seekers (theatre productions, employment, etc)

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

- Extensive national and international positive press coverage (Rai News 24, Sky Tg 24, Agence France Press AFP, Aljazeera - invited as speakers on best practices to the European Migration Network conference in Rome, 2016 - The Major was invited to present the project to the National Assembly of ANCI (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani) - Positive media coverage in local press and television - Presentations in various public assemblies and conferences

Category 7, Transferability

The project has produced, and made available online on the website of Comune di Belluno, extensive documentation and best practice guidelines, these have been adopted by other small to medium municipalities and are a blueprint for future similar projects.

Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

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Project documentation