

The Sixth Continent. Integration and social work for marginalized people in the House of Solidarity.



The House of Solidarity and its guests.
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Location

Brixen

Country

Italy

Short summarizing description

The integration-and social work of the House of Solidarity in Brixen (Italy) offers a “bridge” for migrants/refugees AND local people in difficult situations into a more stable life: 120 per year, more than 1.000 since start of the project. People in all kinds of difficult situations find a home, a family and a starting point to a more stable live (work, house, school, ...). 3 employees and 15 volunteers try to practice solidarity, to promote integration, to experiment with sustainability, to fight poverty, to strive a peaceful coexistence between different cultures, religions, generations, genders. They do that without public funds, bureaucracy, political, religious or other dependence. The social-and integrative project (ACCOMPANY) is one of three pillars of the House of Solidarity, influencing each other mutually. The others are TRY and MOVE. They consist in trying out new concepts which seek for answers to big questions of the future, and activities for raising awareness.

Key Terms

Integration, Bridge, Home

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

South Tyrol in the last 10 years has turned from a province of emigrants into a destination for migrants. Many of the new citizens are job- and homeless. Many South Tyroleans are afraid of this development. The environment often is hostile. Politicians are reluctant to adopt measures, which facilitate a faster integration. The clash between wealthy and poor brings additional pressures. Schools, hospitals, social services, etc. are not prepared and overburdened. Enterprises embrace skilled workers. The labour market keeps being difficult for unskilled people. The issues around migrants and refugees dominate the public discussion. Media partially are supportive, partially lack of sensitivity. Almost everyone in South Tyrol lacks of experience and know how in dealing with this big changes.

Which are the key objectives of your measure?

1. We look out for small solutions to big challenges: migration, integration, diversity, poverty, 2. We „bridge“ people in difficult situations into a stable life. We satisfy their basic needs: living, work, health, school, 3. We offer a peaceful living-together among different cultures, religious, gender, ages. 4. We share our experiences and learnings - demonstrating models for big challenges of our time. 5. We do this independently and without direct public contributions.

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

1. Migrants/refugees and non. People with social, fisical or psychological problems, unemployed, homeless, refugees, migrants, (ex)-prisoners, old and young people; singles and families; male and female. 2. People having a stable situation, volunteers and students (local and foreign): who support the whole project. 3. Networking-partners of all kinds. 4. Individuals and groups who learn from visiting the house. 5. The society as a whole, who can learn and appofit from our experiences.

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

- Integration new arrivals in their new home: with internal and external buddies and other measures. They learn basics of living (cooking, cleaning, time-keeping, etc.). -> 120 people every year. - Integration in the new culture: organizing language-tandems or integrating them in languages courses outside. In this stage they improve their language skills in order to become active members of the new society. -> about 30 people every year. - Integration into work/school: by analyzing and observing their skills, building networks; integrating them into our own work-integration-projects; supporting them in building startups; etc. -> about 100 people every year. - Integration into the health system: by connecting them to our network and providing fisical, psychological and psychiatric help - > about 20 people every year. - Integration into society: by integrating them into associations, bringing them together with local groups, and people. -> around 120 per year.

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

- Finance: Since the House tries to finance itself without public funds, the financial question is always present. -> Diversification of financial acitivites and creativity. - Understaffing: 2 positions for more than 40 guests, is constantly a challenge. -> Involving volunteers; networking and delegating; giving responsibilities to guests. - Acceptance: Working with marginalized groups raises issues of acceptance, fear, prejudices – >Encounters at all levels; awareness raising; PR. - Pressure: Increasing numbers of refugees, migrants, poor people – with us having the same resources.

Link to website

<http://www.hds.bz.it>

Starting date

2010-01-01

Duration

112

Regional scale

3 - big region (Bundesland, Region, Département/Province, Kanton etc.)

Other involved partners

Hospitals of the region University of Bozen Political entities on all levels (national, province, county, municipality) Caritas Diözese Bozen-Brixen Vinzensverein Schools Youth groups Police, Carabinieri Justice Department

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Category 1, Managing social change

When migrants come to their new home-country, they do not know many things: language, culture, religion, traditions, laws, rules, Research shows, the faster we are able to integrate them, to turn them into active members of the society, the better. - Individual change: around 120 people per year get a new home. This are around 1.000 since starting the project. - Group change: around 50 groups per year visit the house. Additionally, more than 20 events take place. Around 5.000 people come every year into the House of Solidarity, getting a new picture and idea of a diverse society. - Organizational change: By networking and inviting other organizations from South Tyrol, Italy and abroad (also around 50), they learn from our experiences and viceversa. - Political change: As an independent organization we raise our voice to ask for change. - Social change: We contribute to the acceptance of diversity and an open. - International change: Its known also outside South Tyrol.

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

Integrating migrants into the labour market is a key success factor for integration. - Talentscouting: We try to match the talents of migrants with the needs of the local economy. - Formation: We try to evaluate if there are possibilities of job-oriented-education. In 2017, 3 of our guests started professional school. - Networking: We offer our wide network to bring migrants into an occupation. In 2017 we bring around 100 people into work, which is the 1st step to a stable live. - Start-up: Even though very difficult, we always bring to mind the possibility of starting an own business. 1 guest per year on average. - Integrating migrants with special needs: At the moment 1, soon 2 migrants get a protected job in our house. - Reintegrating people with justice-problems: At average 2 people per year do social hours instead of paying fines or going to prison. - Roundtable: We maintain good relationships with local enterprises, hold roundtables.

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

In our project we run a biogardening-project. This year 6 people found an occupation within this project. The healthy vegetables were for the House of Solidarity and outside customers. Because of this experience, we collaborate with local farmers, providing them with workers and accompanying them.

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

We were able to integrate some younger guests into professional schools. Since 4 years we collaborate especially with one local professional school. Their students build furniture for us. We share our experiences and stories with them, reducing their anxieties versus migrants, and organizing chances of encounter.

Category 5, PR impact and awareness raising

We constantly communicate our experiences and learnings via a variety of channels. Social media (3.500 FB-fans), mass media, events, etc. One example of success: A film about the House of Solidarity (the 3rd one) is shown 2018 on the TV in Italy, Austria and Germany.

Category 6, Innovative dimension

As far as we know, it is the first and only House of this kind (acknowledged by media (films, articles, books, reportage in the "Süddeutsche Zeitung", the biggest quality newspaper in Germany, etc.). The key innovative aspects are: -people who live a stable life live together with people who have serious social, psychical and physical problems as a family - enforcing, thus, self-helping- and healing mechanism. -it is a multigeneration house, a refugee house, a cohousing project, and more. -people with different problems are intermingled, helping and supporting each other. -a project housing more than 40 people run by only 2,5 employees. -unbureaucratic, fast and efficient help enabled by the independence from public contributions and political influence. -healthy financial concept based on auto-funding. -motivated volunteers and a strong network of supporters and partners. -looking at the strengths of people and not on their weaknesses. -special atmosphere

Category 7, Transferability

Until now, we have concentrated in constantly improving our concept. Since last year we are in touch with other NGOs, which have opened Houses in nearby cities based on similar concepts. In one case, we are accompanying the process of establishing the House. In generally, we can observe that more and more organizations are taking parts of our concepts, especially due to the diminishing public funds.

Category 8, Embedment in a comprehensive welcoming strategy

Our general attitude is, that integration is a challenge as well as a chance. Welcoming them is the first point of encounter. The more such points we offer, the better for the integration process: -Bridge 1: Our part in the comprehensive welcoming-strategy is to concentrate on the "weaker" members of the migrant-community, the marginalized, multiproblematic ones. We bridge them from an instable to a stable situation, making them from marginalized to full members of the society. -Bridge 2: With regards to refugees, we are on the 3rd place of the integration process. Without getting the money, given to the 1st and 2nd stage, and little cultural and language skills, we bridge them and integrate them in the new society. -Bridge 3: In our house are other organizations and initiatives. They offer many points of synergies. -Bridge 4: Due to our experience we increasingly play the role of mediator between migrants and new society. We are a resource for political institutions and NGOs.

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