

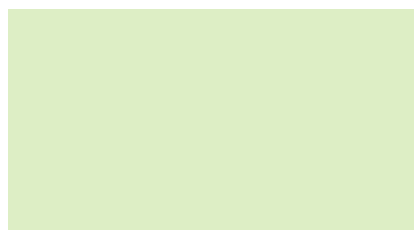
Volunteering with success!

Examples of good practice and framework conditions for the effective promotion of active citizenship

„VoluntLearning Pro“

(2012-1-DE1-GRU06-11342)

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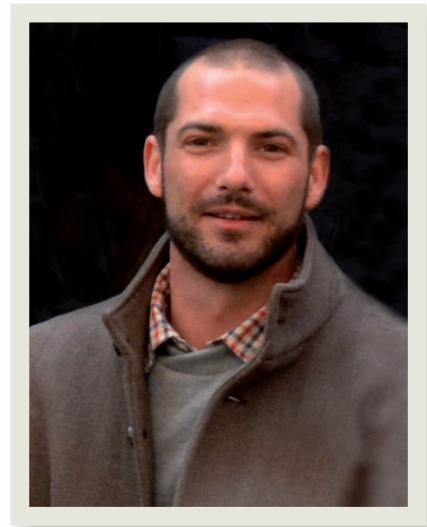
Volunteering with success!

**Examples of good practice and framework conditions
for the effective promotion of active citizenship**

Collection of ideas for decision-makers in associations and politics

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Dedication

We would like to dedicate this document to our friend and colleague Bart Maessen, who passed away in June 2014.

He gave this project a particular warmth with the wonderful way he brought people together.

German-speaking Community Belgium

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H a n a u e r
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Die beste *Alternative*.

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1. About VoluntLearning Pro

VoluntLearning Pro was a Grundtvig Learning Partnership for a transnational exchange of paid staff and volunteers in associations and municipalities. It was funded between 2012 and 2014 by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Commission. Organizations from Austria, the German-speaking Community of Belgium, Hessen and the Netherlands were involved.

The aim of the project was to give representatives of municipalities and associations the opportunity to learn about projects and framework conditions promoting volunteering through a three-day study visit to one of the participating countries. A total of 90 people took advantage of this offer by crossing national borders. However, far more professionals and volunteers on site had the chance for an exchange of ideas with the foreign guests. The local participants arranged and accompanied the visits, allowed insights into their daily work practices, answered questions and discussed good ideas for promoting civic engagement.

The experiences gained left a lasting impression on the participants. Several topics and processes related to the organization of voluntary work were implemented immediately after the participants returned; many more ideas have been earmarked for future implementation.

With this brochure, the participants in the study visits and those responsible for their coordination want to share their impressions with other interested parties involved in associations and politics. We want to particularly emphasize interesting and effective ideas and measures to foster the implementation of projects and to create an enabling environment. The diversity of good practice experienced by the participants of the study visits could only be documented in a limited way. Those examples which are particularly suitable for their transfer to other places in Europe have been highlighted in particular.

The following pages give a first brief overview of the civic engagement in the participating countries, the state of discussion and the latest trends in voluntary work.- Afterwards, three projects per country – representing many other excellent initiatives – will be described in more detail, and exemplary organizational and political framework used for voluntary work will be referred to. The learning experiences of the participants are dealt with in the final chapter.

The project coordinators hope that the brochure transfers a little bit of the enthusiasm experienced by the participants through successfully designed volunteering!

2. Volunteering in the partner regions

“Volunteering is defined as a service that is voluntary (i.e. freely performed, without pressure or coercion) and unpaid for people in external households.” (Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria)

2.1 Facts and figures

In **Austria**, 46% of the population aged 15 years old and more engage formally (in organizations) or informally (e.g. in neighbourhood initiatives). This means there are approx. 3.3 mio. volunteers. The percentage of people involved in formal commitments includes 56% of men (especially in sports clubs as well as in disaster and emergency services) and 44% of women (mainly in the social and educational sectors). In Austria, the majority (54%) of people between the ages of 50 and 69 volunteer. 43% of the 15 to 29 year olds and 36% of people aged 70 or older are still active.

Most frequently, employed people (65%) and people with a higher educational level (61% with university degrees compared to 5% with compulsory education) are involved in voluntary work. People with migration background are active at an above-average level in the informal sector (39%). Dependent on the area in which they operate, volunteers from the formal sector work between 2.6 and 4.3 hours per week, while those with informal commitments are active for 3.4 hours per week on the average.

The largest number of volunteers are engaged in sports (8% of the population), followed by arts, cultural and leisure activities (6% each), rescue and emergency services as well as in church institutions (5% each). With a share of 3% each, the lowest participation is found in the areas of environment, nature and animal protection, political work and education.

Since 2012, Austria has had a law on voluntary work, which inter alia, regulates the Voluntary Social Year, the Voluntary Environmental Protection Year, the Memorial Service, the Peace and Social Service Abroad, the establishment of the Austrian Council for Volunteering, and the Recognition Fund for Volunteering.

Estimates in the **German-speaking Community of Belgium** suggest that a quarter of the population is voluntarily committed. Of those who are not active, 14% reported to have not yet found the right work or do not know where to turn to.

Approximately 45,000 non-profit associations exist in the 426 **Hessian** municipalities. In addition to various organizations, institutions and initiatives, these associations constitute the predominant structure for the work of the 2 mio. Hessian volunteers. Overall, Hessen has a commitment rate of 36% of the population over 14 years old, which is in compliance with the national average.

Apart from a slight decrease in the overall commitment rate, an increase in the commitment potential was observed. While in 1999 a quarter of the respondents expressed their interest in voluntary work (26%), their share was already 30% in 2004 and 36% in 2009. The interest for commitment is particu-



larly pronounced in women and young people.

The vast majority of committed citizens are found in the „sports and exercise“ realms. About one tenth of the Hessian population engage in this field. At the same time, this area has recorded the steepest drop in the last ten years, from 14% to 11%. Only “church and religion“ could gain some importance (2004: 6.5%, 2009: 7.5%). Further decline was seen in the realms of „art and culture“ and „leisure and socializing.“

In terms of settlement types (core cities, urban surroundings and rural areas) the commitment decline was particularly strong in the countryside. While the rate in 2004 still amounted to around 45% in rural areas, it was only 37% in 2009. This may be caused by the effects of the demographic change and the increase of the proportion of the older and very old population in the countryside. Core cities and their surrounding areas remained largely stable.

With regards to a gender perspective, men (a commitment rate of 41%) are significantly more involved than women (32%). Important factors for this result are the large male-dominated sports realm and the many functions in association boards and committees which are significantly more often performed by men.

Commitment according to age groups develops differently. Overall, voluntary work performed by young people has decreased slightly, and the average age group of 35 to 55 year old people still shows the strongest ratios. Regarding the involvement of older citizens, an interesting trend can be observed both nationwide and in Hessen. The age limit up to which people engage is shifting to more than 70 years old. Only in the group beyond 75 years of age, did the commitment rate drop significantly.

The motives of involvement, whether regarding public or individual welfare-related attitudes, play an important role. The majority of respondents (58%) expect to contribute to society. But it is almost as important for the respondents (56%) to get in touch with other people and to do something together with others. For older people, societal participation is particularly important, while for younger volunteers the personal contact predominates.

In **the Netherlands**, people spend an average of two hours per week with different forms of social participation. This includes activities such as voluntary work, informal support of people outside the home, and religious practices.

40% of the population aged 12 years old or more work as volunteers. In the formal sector of volunteering, the share of men amounts to 42% and that of women to 38% (mainly in the social and educational fields). At the age of 65+, 46% of the Dutch currently work voluntarily. 43% of people between 50 and 64 years old are active, 44% of those between 35 and 49 years old and 36% of those between 20 and 34 years old. Most frequently, people with higher education levels (47%) are involved. On the average, volunteers work 2.3 to 4.6 hours per week.

Women perform more informal support than men, and more informal help is given by people aged 50+

2.2

Current trends

and people with low educational levels. 700,000 mothers are involved in their children's schools and 50,000 women care for dependent people. The demand in this area is likely to grow.

Most volunteers are engaged in sports (9% of the population 18 years old or older) followed by neighbourhood initiatives, work for seniors and disabled people, the church, the social sector, as well as environmental protection and nature. The lowest participation is found in politics, for example trade union work, with 3%.

The community level – not the national one – is responsible for volunteering policies. Since 2011, every student at the secondary level completes an internship in community work of at least 30 hours per year. The municipalities receive financial resources from the state, which they can use to carry out these internships.

2.2. Current trends

A current trend in **Austria** is the recognition of volunteering as a field for informal learning. Connected to this are considerations regarding qualifications acquired by volunteering as equivalent to those acquired through formal training.

At the same time, the focus on health effects through volunteering are closely intertwined with this topic. This aspect of voluntary commitment has been repeatedly put forward since 2011 and has led to a discussion of the economic benefits of voluntary work in terms of health promotion.

The improvement of conditions for the deployment of volunteers is further strengthened by individual organizations, but in recent years also through networks. Examples are given by the Interest Group of Volunteers Centres of Austria, organizing annual conferences on current issues (<http://www.freiwilligenzentrum.at>) and the Viennese Platform for volunteer coordinators (www.freiwilligenkoordination.at) where standards of volunteer coordination are discussed in workshops and socio-political opinions on the subject of voluntary work are developed.

The advancement of quality standards in volunteer management and particularly the introduction of differentiated quality management systems in voluntary organizations are being discussed very intensely. With the redirection of the awareness of funding bodies towards outcomes and impacts, the aspect of modern impact controlling is gaining more and more importance.

Professionals heatedly discussed the change of the Citizenship Law in 2013, which states that migrants may be granted citizenship after six instead of ten years, if they prove their sustainable social integration through voluntary work in a non-profit organization for at least three years. According to the law, this activity must serve the common welfare in a special way and include an integration-relevant added value. The lack of specific criteria for the extent of commitment and the resulting uncertainty about suspected arbitrary assessments by the relevant authorities has been criticized in particular.

A very positive development, however, can be observed in the professionalization of volunteer coordination and management. The amount of high-quality training is increasing, and is being utilized by voluntary organizations more often than previously. In contrast, staff in many voluntary organizations is



still facing the challenge of taking over the function of volunteer coordination, in addition to other tasks which are often considered primary by superiors. Despite the existence of functional profiles for volunteer coordinators, which clearly show the large amount of time needed, these profiles are very often not taken fully into account in the allocation of actual daily work.

The **German-speaking Community of Belgium**, as an independent member state of the Kingdom of Belgium, has created a concept for regional development. This concept contains 16 individual projects, among them, the Future Project “Act Together” dealing with the subject of volunteering. The identity of the community is an essential part. “Act Together” includes three sub-projects:

- Establishment of a “Volunteering Service Agency” in the Ministry
- Organisation of training for managers in voluntary associations (volunteer management)
- Advertising and recognition of volunteering

The “Volunteering Service Agency” offers regular informational events to learn about insurance for volunteers, to discuss tax issues and to present the legislation for voluntary associations. The Service Agency has issued a manual “Volunteering in the German-speaking Community”, which offers practical support for associations. Improving the environment for volunteering is to be understood as a permanent task of regional development.

Continuous training of volunteers, in particular those who work to care for people with dementia and those in terminal care, is considered an important aspect for the near future. A further aim is to establish community-based contact points for volunteers. An information fair “Volunteering in the German-speaking Community” has been designed to help associations find volunteers for their work and raise public awareness for voluntary work in general. An information kit for people who will soon be retiring has been created with the intent of explaining numerous possibilities for active citizenship. The appreciation of volunteering in the form of a “week of volunteering” is intended to strengthen the understanding of meaningful activities beyond professional life. Furthermore, the possibility of a “volunteering card” with reductions on private and public offers for volunteers in the German-speaking Community is envisaged.

The Hessian state government promotes civic engagement in the context of the State Volunteering Campaign “Jointly active” (www.gemeinsam-aktiv.de). In this context, a number of measures exist, inter alia, the Volunteering Card, the “Volunteering Search Engine”, the state programme “Volunteering Pilot”, and a qualification programme. An essential pillar of commitment promotion is the State Volunteering Agency Hessen. As a professional and networking centre, it links staff and organizations of various kinds through conferences, events and joint projects. It provides advice and support to multipliers and acts in close cooperation with the local authorities in building promotional structures.

In addition to these activities, the **Hessian** promotion of volunteering responds to current trends by the pilot projects “Establishment of Generation Aids” and “Volunteering towards the Future”. The first project deals with the development and expansion of organizations that provide neighbourhood assistance. Particularly in rural areas, more and more people must rely on such support benefits because the family networks have become unstable due to the emigration of young people to cities. The second



project focusses on the problem of the dwindling willingness to take on leadership roles in voluntary associations. In this context, local measures that contribute to the recruitment of association boards and to the capacity of associations in general to cope with challenges of the future are being developed.

For several years now, the **Dutch** government policy has urged citizens to become self-managed, to take care of each other, to be active and to participate in the community. Nevertheless, it seems that the proportion of people offering informal help has been falling in recent years, and those who do provide help spend more time doing so. The result is an ongoing debate about voluntary work, which seems to be all about reintegration, active and social participation. This makes volunteering seem less appealing to many people.

Due to the economic crisis, there is a growing need for support, debt assistance and counselling, just to name a few examples. The voluntary association “Schuldhulp-Maatjes” (debt-assistance buddies) started in 2010. It now has 50 locations and has noted an increase from 2,000 to 5,000 clients in one year alone.

Another trend is the blurring of boundaries between professional and voluntary organisations. Professional organisations are being cut back and challenged to cooperate with voluntary organisations (for instance in the social and care sector) whereas voluntary organisations are being challenged to professionalize and more often bring in paid staff in order to cope.

Young people do not feel at home in traditional voluntary work structures. However, if they cannot find a job or are unemployed, for instance, they consider voluntary work as a useful way to spend their time and to increase their knowledge and skills. The result is a growing diversity and a wide range of different types of volunteering, as well as new ways of communication (online).

3.

Examples of

good practice



C

Community



Eupen

27–29 November 2013



House of Encountering

The House of Encountering is a place for people who feel lonely or are looking for a conversation partner to discuss a difficult situation to find one or more people to talk to. It is a place where people experience community life.

Guidance in difficult situations

In principle, the House of Encountering is open to all. People who feel especially stimulated to visit it are singles, psychologically affected persons, people with a physical or mental disability, or people who suffer from loneliness and exclusion.

Our highest priority is to address the needs of the visitors. Visitors are warmly welcomed. They usually appreciate the common lunch. Some visitors are eager and willing to participate in the preparation of meals or cleaning up the dishes. Everything possible is done to create a friendly atmosphere for storytelling, reading newspapers, and playing games. Regular physical exercises for seniors are also offered. Parties are celebrated. In individual cases, support is given to cope with special problems, such as the initial setting up of a flat, indebtedness or other problems (tax assessments, administrative procedures, telephone bills, pharmacy visits, etc.).

From 2001 to 2013, the annual number of visitors has increased from 1407 to 4611. Other social institutions confirm that visits to the House of Encountering are very beneficial for the clients. We also know that the regular contact has helped delay the admission to a nursing home for some visitors.

Cooperation and network partners

The institution is housed in the premises of the church, and a monthly rent is paid. The Meeting House goes back to an initiative of the Parish Association. Our partners are local social institutions and service clubs who support us financially in the implementation of projects

In transferring the idea, it is important to

- Act on behalf of a public authority or an association,
- Analyse what kind of help is needed and.
- Provide enough staff.

Contact: Haus der Begegnung V. o. G., Kirchgasse 2, B-4700 Eupen
Karl Offermann, E-Mail: karl_offermann@web.de

Statement

Adrienne Greimers: "Participation in this project opens up new perspectives for me. It promotes my ability to empathize with others and gives sense to my life as a Christian. The project helps people at the fringe of society to share in community life."



Wien

27–29 November 2013



Healthy for Life

Frailty is a geriatric syndrome with an increased risk for the loss of independence and autonomy. It implies a loss of quality of life, an increased risk of falls, admissions to hospitals and nursing homes and increased mortality. A combination of a diet and exercise intervention can positively influence these effects and allow for an independent, pain-free life in old age. A scientific study “Health for Life” is being conducted by the Medical University of Vienna and the Vienna Science, Research and Technology Fund on this issue in cooperation with the Wiener Hilfswerk and the Sports Union Austria.

Health Buddies help ...

The Wiener Hilfswerk recruited volunteers aged 50 and more as „Health Buddies“. They help to maintain or improve the quality of life and independence of frail people and gain a positive impact on their own health, too. After their training, Health Buddies visit frail older people twice a week and practice with them for a period of 24 weeks. After this period they are free (since they are no longer participating in the study) to continue the visits on a voluntary basis. Travel costs for visiting the frail person are refunded, and Health Buddies are insured against third party liability and accident risks for the period of time they are visiting the frail person.

... and profit themselves

Evaluation results indicate that the training activity has a great benefit for the frail person. But the Buddies also reported significant improvements in their own health and eating habits. It is essential for professional supervision that the Buddies have a continuous contact person for personal conversations in case of problems, regular team meetings and training opportunities. Of further importance is an established culture of appreciation and recognition.

Contact: Wiener Hilfswerk, A-1072 Wien, Schottenfeldgasse 29 – www.hilfswerk.at/wien

Statement

Manfred Herget, Health Buddy: “My six months work as a Health Buddy was quite successful. The person I was visiting improved her physical condition, her independence, her satisfaction and personal stability recognizably. Thus, the hypothesis has been confirmed that a social project can be useful for different people and interest groups at the same time. My Health Buddy training updated my knowledge about the body and nutrition. It was particularly valuable for me to actively participate in the implementation of a socially meaningful, respected and ultimately useful idea.”



Prokkel

Prokkel is a foundation that aims to ensure that everyone in society is included. This also applies to people with a mental disability, who can and want to participate like everyone else. Prokkel offers people with and without mental disabilities the opportunity for joint activities. This can be anything: a meeting, lunch, working together, painting, sports, a debate, making music, having fun.

How Prokkel works

To start with, a mixed group of local people is formed, for example somebody from the business world, a student, someone from the care sector and someone who is mentally disabled. Then they consider what they want to do together, making sure that it fits with what everyone finds interesting. It is important to keep it simple.

Each year during a week in June, Prokkel activities take place all over the country. Since 2007, more than 1,000 different groups have organized Prokkel activities. Some groups participate every year, others only once or twice. Prokkel activities have given a name and a face to people with mental disabilities. They have become much more integrated into local networks and social relations.

Prokkel works with local partners, preferably a mix of businesses, professionals from education, health-care and welfare organisations and people with mental disabilities.

Tips for implementing the Prokkel idea:

- It is important to encourage and facilitate. Do not organize everything on your own, but create the conditions under which people can do it themselves.
- Connect Prokkel activities to an existing event, if possible with a national effect.
- Ask many organizations and businesses for small and large contributions in cash or extra hands.
- Suggest ways to make Prokkel activities last after the event, for instance an exhibition of works created, or photos documenting the day.

Contact: Stichting Prokkel p/a VGN – Website: www.prokkel.nl – www.prokkel.nl/contact

Statement

“We wanted to organize an activity that many people, young and old, could join. The result should address the general public and still be visible after the two days of the Prokkel event. As it turned out, Prokkel was visible for weeks. Children with and without mental disabilities were acquainted with each other.” (Linda Hofman, Apeldoorn)



Senior and generation assistance

Challenges of the demographic change

The project is part of the Senior Political Initiative of the State of Hessen. It intends – in the light of demographic change – to bring people together and establish an organized give and take among the population. The Voluntary Agency Usingen Country is one of the co-ordinating bodies.

Interest in the population

In a kick-off event in January 2013, more than 60 people expressed their interest in building a senior and generation assistance project. It is about the simple things of everyday life, such as helping with the shopping, helping with visits to authorities and doctors, taking care of the dog and cat while people are on vacation for a few days, taking care of children in cases of emergency, replacing a light bulb or just having time for talks. It is important that these are not in competition with commercial or professional services. Senior and generation assistance projects therefore support people only sporadically and on a short-term basis.

First steps in project building

At the beginning, the initiative clarified all legal issues with the help of the co-ordinating body. This included insurance protection as well as the legal status and structure of the initiative. The participants swiftly decided that support should be given voluntarily, as among neighbours. Those who receive help make a donation to cover travel costs and other expenses. Membership fees and other donations finance the basic costs of the project. Furthermore, a logo was developed, an agreement with helpers set up, a training organized and a telephone service established. By founding a formal association, the initiative achieved its legal independence.

Contact:

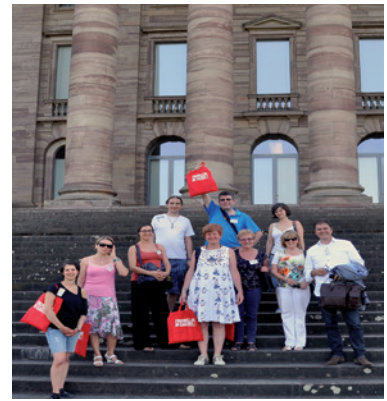
Freiwilligen-Agentur Usinger Land e. V.

Theodor-Haubach-Weg 6, D-61267 Neu-Anspach, Germany

Claudia Bröse, Tel. 01578-8190980, info@freiwilligen-agentur.net www.freiwilligen-agentur.net

Statement

Gabriele Schmidt-Vandenberg, currently taking care of a 88 year old lady who cannot walk well and is almost blind: “Besides my part-time job, I want to donate some of my time to older people who need help. I like to see how happy the elderly lady is when I visit her or give her some support. Who knows, perhaps I will be in need of help, too someday. Then I would be glad to have such an offer!”



<http://www.gwg-kassel.de/extras/nachbarschaftshilfe/schlichten-fuer-gute-nachbarschaften.html>

Nachbarschaftsvermittler - piAno e. V.

Arbitration for a good neighbourhood

The neighbourhood association of the non-profit housing corporation of the City of Kassel helps to solve neighbourly conflicts of all kinds (e.g. noise, clutter in the hallway, use of common areas, etc.). Exclusion criteria for their work, however, are violence, drugs and mental illness.

Tenants who have a conflict with neighbours contact the project coordinator independently or through the Customer Service and submit their problem. The coordinator sends a team of volunteer neighbourhood mediators for a first consultation. Afterwards the “counterparty” is visited and asked about their point of view. The sole aim of these first contacts is to obtain approval of a joint arbitration meeting, which will be held at a neutral site.

In the arbitration hearing, the volunteers provide a positive discussion atmosphere and make sure that both parties get the chance to speak at an equal extent. They encourage the counterparties to express themselves and to solve their problem on their own. They are facilitators, not judges. Four to six weeks after the arbitration hearing, both parties are called to find out if the agreed solution is sustainable.

The success level is impressive. Although no systematic evaluation has been performed, about 90% of the arbitrations lead to positive outcomes. The people involved develop an understanding of the situation of their counterparts and work out a solution. In December 2013, the volunteers received the State of Hessen’s “Active citizenship” award.

Fundamental to the implementation of the project are:

- Professional training of volunteers (two-day seminar)
- Regular team meetings to exchange on cases and team building
- Full-time contact and coordination for tenants and volunteers

Contact: piano e.V., Spohrstr. 2, D-34117 Kassel, Germany

Statement of a volunteer

“People learn how to deal with conflicts at the arbitration hearing, that they can be solved, and that a conflict can include a new start. The project contributes to relaxed neighbourly co-existence. Since dealing well with conflicts and people is important for me, I decided to qualify as a mediator. I can also apply my learning experiences in my private and professional life.” (Elvira Poloschek)



N
Neighbourhood



Breda
05–07 November 2013



Repair-Café – Tientjes

“Toss it? No way!” Sustainability on a local level

Repair Cafés are free meeting places, and they are all about repairing things (together). The Repair Café teaches people to see their possessions in a new light and to appreciate their value. The Repair Café helps change people’s minds. This is essential to stir people’s enthusiasm for a sustainable society. But most of all, the Repair Café wants to show how much fun repairing can be, and how easy it often is.

In a Repair Café, one finds tools and materials to help make any necessary repairs on clothes, furniture, electrical appliances, bicycles, crockery, appliances, toys, et cetera. One also finds repair specialists such as electricians, seamstresses, carpenters and bicycle mechanics. Visitors bring their broken items from home. Together with the specialists they start making their repairs in the Repair Café. It is an on-going learning process. If there is nothing to repair, people can enjoy a cup of tea or coffee. Or they can lend a hand for someone else’s repair job. Everyone can also get inspired at the reading table – by leafing through books on repairs and DIY.

How to start a Repair Café?

The Repair Café Foundation supports local groups around the world to start their own Repair Café with a Repair Café Toolkit. One condition for support is that the Repair Café should be on a voluntary and non-commercial basis. Repair Cafés can have their own local identity, but share certain crucial aspects, like name and logo. This way Repair Cafés will be recognizable all over the world. The idea of a Repair Café in Breda was adopted by Tientjes Breda and two local organizations in March 2013. The Breda Repair Café takes place in four different locations. Worldwide there are now 400 Repair Cafés, 200 in the Netherlands, 50 in Germany, three in Austria and one in Belgium.

Contact:

Repair Café Tientjes Breda – www.repaircafe.nl / – www.repaircafe.org – www.tientjesbreda.nl

Statement

Alex, volunteer at Repair Café Breda after one year of doing repair work: “It is great fun to have a score of almost 80% successfully repaired items and to often be able to give good advice to clients. We do it together, because helping and learning from each other is a basis for success. It is good for the environment, for people of modest means, and is important for the community”.



www.hanau.de/lih/gesellschaft/alter/projekte/039027/index.html

Die HanauBeweger

HanauBeweger means a social exploration of the city by bus and on foot to the social services and organizations in Hanau. In this way, older people from different countries of origin learn about the social institutions and can pass on information to their families and neighbourhood, if necessary.

Migrant interpreters

For the implementation of the project it was considered important that information be given in as many languages as possible. Interpreting is done by people from different countries who are working as volunteers in language and conversation courses of the Senior Office Hanau.

In 2011 there was a particularly strong interest in the social services. The timeframe of the exploration, however, did not allow for a visit to all of the organizations and the chance to get to know them on site. For this reason, thematic city tours have been carried out since then, in cooperation with an organization for people with disabilities, the "Help Central Hanau", the District Center Southeast, the "City Store Aurora Australis" and neighbourhood groups in Hanau.

The social exploration of the city has successfully involved older people from different countries. Their skills were strengthened through the provision of information about the social institutions. In addition to this, multipliers in the volunteer work of the Senior Office Hanau and the organizations visited were gained through the interpreter function.

Cooperation as key for success

It is recommended that institutions wishing to take on the project idea build up multifaceted relations with organizations and provide translations into the language of migrants living in their area.

Contact: Freiwilligenagentur und Seniorenbüro der Stadt Hanau
Barbara Heddendorp, Steinheimer Straße 1, D-63450 Hanau

Statements

"I first heard of the Senior Office Hanau when they asked me whether I would be interested in child-minding on my 60th birthday. This project is perfect because it opens doors!" (Mine Mercimek, Armenian born in Istanbul, living in Hanau since 1980 and working as interpreter in the social city explorations)

„Many people who came from the former Soviet Union have lived here for 15 years and still do not know where to find help. That's why we keep on informing people again and again."
(Irina Hardt, of Siberian origin)



N
Neighbourhood



Wien

27–29 November 2013



“Healthy Neighbourhood!”

Studies show that good neighbourly relations have a positive effect on health. However, most people are not yet aware of this – different from the negative impacts of smoking, physical inactivity or wrong nutrition. Project partner in the pilot region Waldviertel is the organization “Lower Austria Village and Town Renewal”.

Competition for initiatives

The project focussed on the implementation of many local neighbourhood initiatives in the period from April to August 2013. In a first step, the residents of the pilot region were invited for a competition: to become active, to get involved and to implement their initiatives.

From a total of 47 ideas, a jury selected the best, and their implementation was supported with € 300 funding. Thus, a total of 31 neighbourhood initiatives were achieved. The individual initiatives and actions were fostered by clubs, working groups or individuals who wanted to commit themselves to neighbourhood issues. The variety of submitted ideas was amazing, for instance repairing a common garden house, establishing a group of older women 80+ or organizing a regular children’s programme in town.

Overwhelming response

In total, over 5,000 people were reached through “Healthy Neighbourhood!” in the pilot region. In addition to the initiatives carried out, there was also a training focus on the health-promoting impact of a well-functioning neighbourhood.

Information: www.gesunde-nachbarschaft.at

Contact: DI Elisabeth Wachter, project manager, Dorf- und Stadterneuerung Waldviertel

E-Mail: elisabeth.wachter@dorf-stadterneuerung.at

Statement

Josef Pruckner, initiative “hunters – farmers – fishermen”: “Due to the new social media, we often do not talk directly to each other. A combination of three archetypes of human society – hunting, farming and fishing – in connection with culinary delights has brought different people together again – without external influence.”



S
Seniors



Rotterdam

30 September –
02 October 2013



“Granny’s Finest”

“Designed by the new, produced by the best, worn by the greatest”

Design and mastery of knitting and needlework

Granny’s Finest connects young fashion designers with older women who have a thorough mastery of knitting and needlework. Thus, beautiful fashion is created in a traditional way. High-quality handmade products are made using the right natural yarns. They are sold and the profits help to achieve the social goals of the foundation. Young creative talents acquire brand recognition, portfolio construction and a feeling of having done something positive for society. This also goes for models, photographers, make-up artists and stylists. The experiences gained through the project will make it easier for them to find future jobs.

Promoting wellbeing of older people, learning from each other

Granny’s Finest prevents loneliness by offering seniors an opportunity to practice their hobby crafts in groups led by young designers. Young people learn from the old and vice versa. By bringing older ladies together, Granny’s Finest has an easily accessible community centre function. The participants develop friendships, not just at the handicraft club. Even among the different handicraft clubs, social contacts thrive. The social network is not limited to the neighbourhood where the participants live. Through participation in Granny’s Finest, ongoing commitment arises.

Participants of the handicraft club meet every week at the same time. They look forward to the appointments and consider them important. There are open gathering opportunities for women who prefer to meet more often. Participants in Granny’s Finest feel useful and are proud of what they create. When a product is ready, the ‘Granny’ writes a personal message and puts her name on the label attached to the product. The buyer receives a post card to say thank you and sends it back to the person who made it.

Contact: E-Mail: info@granniesfinest.com – www.granniesfinest.com

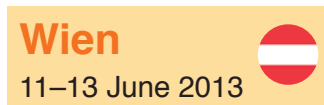
Statements

“Activities of Granny’s Finest stand for high quality services at a low cost. This way Cordaan has an opportunity to meet older people who live in the neighbourhood and offer them our support.”

(Ms Janse, adviser of the care provider Cordaan)

“Nice initiative to connect young and old people in a way that shows respect for each other.”

(Crowdfunding, anonymous comment)



AFTER.WORK

With AFTER.WORK, the Independent State Volunteer Centre initiated a programme across Upper Austria that promotes active aging and lifelong learning through volunteering. AFTER.WORK addresses people before their actual retirement, informs them about opportunities for volunteering and wants to increase interest in a variety of working realms. AFTER. WORK is directed towards companies and organizations that aim to promote the social commitment of their older employees according to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). The AFTER.WORK training course, which covers issues of pension, resilience, volunteering, how to set boundaries, and a practical exchange, gives a first orientation for the new phase of life.

New perspectives for pre-retired people ...

For individuals who are approaching retirement or have recently retired, AFTER.WORK provides preparation and new perspectives for the phase of life after occupation. Active citizenship can promote their health, well-being and self-esteem as well as strengthen solidarity and responsibility. Further, AFTER.WORK offers the opportunity to make use of personal experience and skills, to acquire new skills and to get in touch with new people.

... and people of all ages

Based on the positive experiences of the cooperation with companies and institutions in Upper Austria, the idea of the AFTER.WORK project has been extended. AFTER.WORK is now available for people of all ages, before or after retirement, who are interested in voluntary work and who want to spend their free time helping others in a meaningful way.

Contact:

ULF Independent State Volunteer Centre, Martin-Luther-Platz 3, A-4020 Linz, Austria

Johannes Meindl from the University for Applied Sciences of Upper Austria has examined the effect of the AFTER.WORK project in his master thesis: "Active aging with voluntary work".

He concluded that volunteering has a positive effect on people's health and well-being: "Active citizens associate mental and physical fitness with their voluntary work in particular; the feeling to be needed, positive social contacts, compensation for everyday activities and increased self-confidence." (Johannes Meindl, p. 94)



eudomos

All residents of the German-speaking Community Belgium have a focal point particularly designed for senior citizens which provides them with a contact person. Whether the needs require a little or a lot of assistance, EUDOMOS gives information and advice, organizes and coordinates all kinds of help from one source. The individually adapted range of help and care includes assistance for people who want to stay at home as long as possible or return to their domiciliary environment as soon as possible from hospital. All kinds of support is provided, such as information on local offers for senior citizens, e. g. meeting clubs, or consultation on the different services of the local nursing homes.

Different service packages

In concrete terms, a package can include different services, for instance being provided with home care and meals-on-wheels, getting a lift or receiving the visit of volunteers. Many professions and services are available including household help, Kinese therapy, speech therapy, podiatry, social counselling (for financial and administrative matters), emergency call equipment, medical assistant material, adaptation of the housing environment, palliative care, support groups, home renovation and gardening etc. In summary, all the practical, social and medical assistance required by a person who has suffered a (partial) loss of autonomy is on available.

Integrated care

As a coordinating body, EUDOMOS provides its task free of charge across the German-speaking Community. All services have been incorporated into the integrated structure of EUDOMOS and can be used when drawing up individual care and support plans.

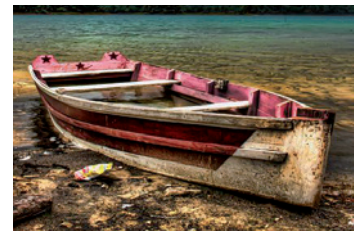
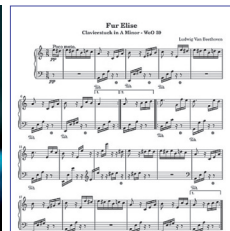
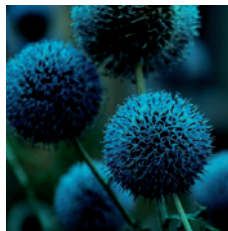
EUDOMOS was created upon the agreement of a network of service providers to put their offers together. The coordinated service of EUDOMOS relies on the individual service providers.

Organizations that want to take on this idea should have identified the need for such an umbrella structure and be willing to cooperate in a constructive way with all stakeholders in the sector.

Contact: Eudomos - Ihr häuslicher Begleitsdienst VoG - Seltersschlag, 13 - B-4700 Eupen
www.eudomos.be/de

Statement

“Caring for people at home is a complex task that is carried out by relatives, volunteers, domestic helpers, professional services and the general practitioner. Everyone needs to complement and support each other. EUDOMOS ensures integrated supply and arrangements, especially if the situation of the person in need of care changes. This relieves the parties in their responsibilities.” (Gabriele Francken)



The Ferrywomen

Music makes the heart soft. Music opens the doors to the soul very quietly and without violence. (Sophie Scholl)

Since 2010 there has been a choir in the region of Eupen called “Ferrywomen”. 13 voluntarily engaged women sing at celebrations with and for the grieving people. They contribute a dignified, personal and loving farewell to the person that has passed away with their diverse consolation and songs of hope. A very personalized selection can be made for the most suitable songs. The songs are simple and catchy and can easily be sung by the mourners. They deal with life, love and farewell, of growth and decay, of change and new beginnings. They are about qualities like devotion in the flow of life, thanks and appreciation to the past or confidence on what is to come. They can be sung as a form of farewell and in death and grief counselling.

Spreading of the idea

The director and initiator Alwine Deege, who has already gained a variety of rich experiences in the design of funerals and farewell celebrations with the existing “Ferry choir”, wants to initiate a new movement and spread the idea further. She intends to develop a network of farewell choirs which include both people committed in this area as well as those interested in contributing to a new farewell and mourning culture.

In order to share their experiences as well as the songs to those interested, she offers seminars and regularly sends out the „Ferry letter“ with information on the subject.

Alwine Deege has also launched the night of spiritual songs, which has since been held in many places with her active participation and support. Many thousands of people were brought together to sing. The vision is to spread the Ferry choir in other cities. The “Ferrywomen” have issued a CD with their songs.

Contact: www.alwine-deege.de

Statement

“We offer to be a gift to the mourners, providing comfort and love. Through the singing and the rituals, mourning people are touched in their hearts. It is often a valuable aid for them to unfreeze them from pain. For me personally, this task is very satisfying and feels good. It is also important for me to deal with the finiteness of life and with ‘living life to the fullest’. It is exciting to work on these issues in regular seminars, training sessions and workshops with my singing colleagues. It enriches us.”
(Marlene Lausberg, Ferrywoman)

3.1

Further projects



Education

Bücherwurm - jedes Kind braucht ein Buch (Bookworm – each child needs a book): Engagement of one young mother in a district with a difficult social environment. Created for the promotion of reading and financed by a special residents fund. <http://www.kassel.de/miniwebs/wesertor/16117/>

Tientjes Breda with Tientjes Academy: National network that helps people to (re)discover their passion and talents, go for it and, if possible, earn a living. www.tientjes.breda.nl

Vrijwilligerscollege (Volunteers' College): Volunteers learn from each other by mutual training and coaching. <http://www.i-doe.nl/Vrijwilligerscollege>

Family

Familienzentrum Hand in Hand (Family Centre Hand in Hand): Intergenerational activities, including seniors reading books to children, for example. http://binewe-usingen.bibernetz.de/familienzentrum/.ws_gen/

Mehrgenerationenhaus Wehrheim (House for Generations Wehrheim): Intergenerational house offers possibilities including joint lunch, play and learning circles, and voluntary grannies, for example. <http://www.mehrgenerationenhaus-wehrheim.de/>

Women

Begijnhof Breda (Beguine yard Breda): Founded in 1240, religious lay-community of women living together in a beguinage. www.begijnhofbreda.nl

Oudere Vrouwen Netwerk Nederland (Older Women's Network Netherlands): Network and watchdog function for policies at national and EU level affecting the lives of older women. www.ouderevrouwennetwerk.nl

Vrouwenstudio Maxima (Women's Studio Maxima): Women of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds learning and working together. <https://nl-nl.facebook.com/pages/vrouwenstudio-Maxima>

Community work

Community Centre Geeren Zuid & Gerardus Majella: Focal point and service centre for civic engagement, social meeting and active participation in Breda. www.surpluswelzijn.nl

Freiwillig in Kassel! (Voluntarily in Kassel): One of the oldest volunteer centres in Germany, established in 1994 and working as a development agency for civil commitment since 1999. www.freiwillig-in-kassel.de

Freiwilligen-Agentur Usinger Land (Volunteer Agency Usinger Land): Focal point and service centre for civic engagement in the Usinger Land, including project development, advice, support and training of volunteers and organizations. www.freiwilligen-agentur.net



Sozialfestival „Tu was, dann tut sich was“ (Social Festival “Do something, then something will happen”): Organizational framework for people with good ideas for improving community life.

www.tu-was.at

Venzo – Vrijwilligers en ZO (Venzo – Volunteers in South-East): Strengthening civil society by developing and supporting voluntary work in South-East Amsterdam. www.venzo.co.nl

Wiener Freiwilligenmesse (Viennese Volunteers Fair). www.freiwilligenmesse.at

Wiener Plattform für FreiwilligenkoordinatorInnen (Viennese platform for volunteer coordinators). www.freiwilligenkoordination.at

Health

Engagiert gesund bleiben! (Stay healthy through engagement!): Awareness raising and informational group with a focus on health promotion for older women and men through social participation.

www.engagiert-gesund-bleiben.at

Gesunde Bezirke Wien (Healthy districts of Vienna): Municipal Health Promotion in the City of Vienna. www.wig.or.at

„Ihre gesunde Idee für den Bezirk“ (“Your healthy idea for the district”): Opportunity for individuals to develop and implement health-promoting initiatives supported by an allowance.

<http://www.wig.or.at/Gesunder%20Bezirk%20-%20Gesundes%20Grätzel.2.0.html#open=graetzel>

SpiritOn: Living with cancer; programme for development and to make use of opportunities through a personal inspiration process. www.spiriton.nl

Culture

Deutsche Bibliothek (German library): Lending of books combined with cultural programme, (for instance author readings, discussions and films), managed by 18 volunteers including board members.

www.deutschebib.de

Dorothea-Viehmänn-Heimatverein Kassel (Dorothea Viehmann Heritage Society): Living history around the storyteller Dorothea Viehmann and the Grimm Brothers.

<http://www.heimatverein-niederzwehren.de/>

Hessenpark (Hessian Park): Museum village with many volunteers showing visitors life and crafts of yesteryear. www.hessenpark.de

Lebensspuren – Begegnungsraum Bibliothek (Traces of life – meeting room library): Initiative making use of libraries as centres for integrative cultural work. www.lebensspuren.net

Hessisches Puppenmuseum (Hessian doll museum): Museum well-known beyond Hessen, whose only full-time employee is the director. www.hessischespuppenmuseum.de

Sculpturemuseum Beelden aan Zee (Sculpture museum Beelden aan Zee): Museum near the seaside, for the most part run by volunteers. www.beeldenaanzee.nl



Neighbourhood

Stadsdorp Zuid (Town village South): Co-operative organization of older citizens in Amsterdam with the aim of living independently at home and in the community through mutual support and joint social-cultural activities. www.stadsdorpzuid.nl

Stadstuin Emma's Hof (City garden Emma's yard): Preservation of a publicly accessible garden by volunteers to enhance the quality of life in the surrounding neighbourhood. www.emmashof.nl

Seniors

EVIM: Voluntary work in the residence for seniors at Usingen.
<http://www.evim.de/seniorinnen-senioren/alle-einrichtungen/sz-kortheuer-haus.html>

Lebenswerte Lebenswelten für ältere Menschen (Attractive environments for seniors): Pilot project for communities to support the active and successful aging of their residents.
<http://lebenswelten.meduni-graz.at>

Senioren auf Draht (Seniors on the ball): Intergenerational offers by the senior advisory committee, including a computer course with students from the local elementary and junior high school, for example. <http://www.sozialnetz.de/ca/ba/dgj/>

Senior Guides: Older women and men who implement their own ideas and projects for seniors.
www.senior-guides.eu

Uitvinderswijk (Inventors' quarter): Senior citizens service group in a quarter in Den Haag, offering support to each other. www.uitvinderswijk.nl

Von SeniorInnen für SeniorInnen: Zeigen Sie anderen die Leopoldstadt von ihrer gesunden Seite! (From seniors for seniors: Show others the healthy side of the district Leopoldstadt!): Senior volunteers develop and implement health tours. www.queraum.org

Social Inclusion

Annahuis (Anna House): Association supporting people in their combat against injustice and exclusion.
www.annahuis.nl

Francien's Weggeefwinkel, Stichting WW - Help Ons Helpen (Francien's give away shop, Association WW - Help us help): Free or very low cost furniture for people with no or only a very small income. <http://www.swwhoh.nl>

Sports

Breda Actief (Breda Active): Service centre for voluntary work and sports. <http://www.breda-actief.nl>

Mr. Wilson „Indoor-Skatehalle“ and „Kesselschmiede“ (Mr. Wilson “Indoor skating hall” and “boiler shop”): Sports and cultural project for young people and cultural workers. <http://kesselschmie.de/>

3.2 Options in

organizations

3.2 Options in organizations

To encourage people to commit themselves to activities in projects and initiatives in an optimal way, organizations need to create adequate framework conditions. The participants in the study visits were asked about useful and beneficial conditions for voluntary work.

Overall, it is essential that the organizations offer internal structures and processes, framework conditions and infrastructures for voluntary work as well as qualified staff members with time allocated to support volunteers.

All participants shared the opinion that one central contact person for volunteers is very important. Thus, all questions and suggestions can be collected and the volunteers are sure to be “heard” and are given the feeling that someone is there to take adequate care of their needs.

In addition, easy and low-threshold access to projects, activities and initiatives encourages people to get involved. A wide range of involvement possibilities attracts different target groups (for example in terms of age, sex and origin) and raises their interest in voluntary activities.

As is the case regarding the range of areas available, it is also important that volunteers can decide about their temporal obligation. Some people want to engage in time-consuming projects, others prefer a fixed time agreement and regular appointments, and some prefer to engage in short-term activities and initiatives.

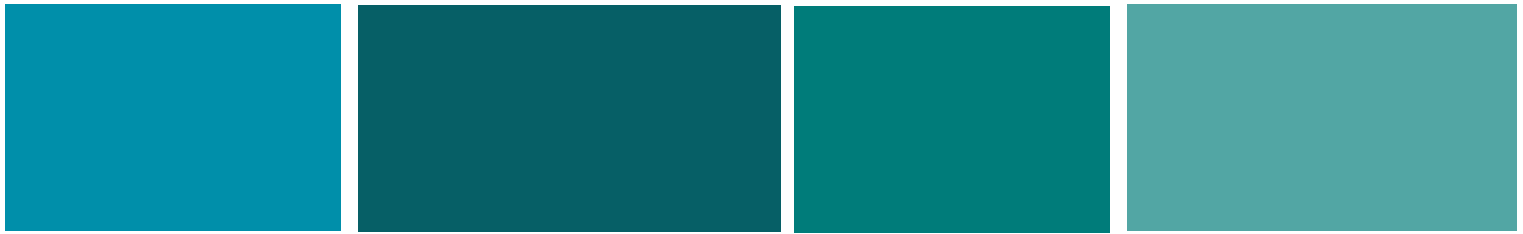
At the organizational level, it is also important that volunteers discover their talents in certain areas. Volunteers should be able to “get a taste” of different working fields and afterwards be offered the opportunity to develop these talents with the support of the organization.

A very important framework condition is the chance for personal development. Qualification programmes are a possibility for volunteers to continue their education in a special area. Furthermore, these programmes demonstrate a form of appreciation for their commitment. But even people who are not yet involved in voluntary work can develop interest in volunteering through a training or qualification programme.

A written confirmation of performed voluntary work can be important in the professional field, and represents an attractive recognition of volunteering.

Recognition of the work of the volunteers demonstrated by the organization is very significant. Outspoken praise and honest appreciation of their contributions belong to the framework conditions that can promote volunteering. This recognition can be expressed by an accident and liability insurance or by a Volunteer Card, for instance, through which the volunteers can get discounts. Another form of appreciation is, for example, the organization of an annual “thank-you event” for volunteers.

Regarding the further promotion of conditions, the participants of the study visits indicated the cooperation of paid staff and volunteers, good agreements between each other and the opportunity for the



reflection of work with volunteer coordinators and other staff. Both the paid staff and volunteers benefit from this interaction.

In addition, a certain amount of latitude in the design of work is important so that volunteers can contribute and implement their own ideas. This also implies the integration of volunteers in decision-making processes.

To make volunteering more attractive, the reimbursement of incurred expenses or a fixed allowance is recommended. As a general principle, volunteers should have no additional expenses due to their work.

Furthermore, some specific spatial and organizational conditions can promote voluntary work. These include a certain infrastructure, such as an adequate and accessible room, access to office supplies (equipment), regular exchanges with other volunteers (without obligation to purchase anything in these locations) and enough opportunities for volunteers to give feedback and make suggestions for changes.

An important issue for voluntary organizations is security. It is important that organizations have agreed on rules of conduct, especially when volunteers are working with children. In the Netherlands for example, a certificate of good conduct for volunteers is mandatory in this case. The cost of this certificate can be reimbursed by the voluntary organizations or by the state.

It can be helpful to seek external support in promoting a successful participatory process in voluntary work. This can facilitate the implementation of an initiative or an activity, but is also useful after the completion of a project or action. An external intervention or evaluation is always a benefit for organizations because successful and less successful processes in voluntary work are equally reflected.

Public relations and work with the media are important. Reporting about an activity or a project is a form of appreciation for the volunteers involved. Additionally, newspaper articles and newsletters or short radio spots inform people who are not yet involved in volunteer work about these opportunities.

One of the most basic and important framework conditions for the promotion of voluntary work is an explicit commitment for the “culture of participation”. This also includes the promotion of volunteering, and in organizations, it often takes the form of a mission statement. It shows internally and externally that voluntary work is welcome and encouraged. The decision to work with volunteers must be shared by the entire organization, including the board and the management level.

3.3 Options in politics

The promotion of volunteering is part of the political agenda in all participating countries. In manifold ways, governments are trying to create a positive environment for active citizenship. Since commitment cannot be ordered, but only encouraged, supported, accompanied and linked in networks, statutory provisions are only part of the governmental activities. Rather, it is a package of measures which ranges from financial support to informational offers to non-monetary forms of recognition and acknowledgement, etc. Different emphasis in the particular countries is given to the individual aspects due to differing “volunteering cultures”. Nevertheless, derived from the experience of the exchange programme, certain conditions initiated or set by policy can be considered beneficial and necessary.

A very important requirement for volunteering is insurance protection. Active citizens wish to be insured in their activities. In this realm, many arrangements have been made in recent years that provide clarity for volunteers and their organizations. Third-party liability, i. e. damage caused to others through voluntary activity has been largely regulated. The legal framework has also been adapted for accident insurance protection in Germany. The aim is that no one may fall through the gaps in the insurance system. In many cases, organizations and institutions working with volunteers also create a corresponding insurance framework.

Recognition is the reward of volunteering. Political efforts in this field can be very diverse. One example is the “EhrenamtsCard” which allows – for volunteers working above-average – reductions in the price of various public and private offers. Furthermore, special events can be organized for volunteers, or awards and honours for outstanding contributions can be given. Volunteers consider the awareness of policy for their activities particularly important. This is the reason why visits from political decision-makers in local projects and initiatives are important elements in a culture of recognition.

Presenting good examples and providing information are also found among the examples of good practice. Many voluntary activities are subject to constant change and adaptation processes. Therefore, it is important to obtain suggestions and necessary information in order to implement the activities, and information portals that are operated at different governmental levels should exist. In addition, good examples that encourage the transfer to other locations should be presented.

Many volunteers want to take care of “their project” and not be burdened with cumbersome bureaucracy. Here technical support and guidance by paid staff is very helpful. On the one hand they can relieve the volunteers from administrative tasks, while helping to guide, support and network on the other. Local governments can support non-profit organizations in legal and tax issues, as well as by the simplification of permits and grants. Paid staff safeguards the continuity in many different workflows, so that, when volunteers change, projects are not endangered through the loss of knowledge in activities. Many volunteers want the support of professional staff because they consider it a relief from having to carry all the responsibility alone.



More and more often, volunteers perceive their activities within the framework of a personal learning process. They want to do something meaningful and gain learning experience at the same time. Therefore, qualification and training opportunities are becoming increasingly important. Many organizations and government bodies have adapted to this trend and offer a wide range of continuing education opportunities. These include the classic range of issues of non-profit work in organizations, as well as topics such as communication and the design of group processes.

Due to financial constraints, government subsidies have been reduced in many areas. The share of state funding in voluntary activities also continues to decrease. It is important that policy ensures support in providing a location and covering material costs at the very least. For many activities, it is sufficient if volunteers simply have a roof over their heads. Rooms and meeting points are prerequisites for development.

4.

Learning experiences

and outcomes

4. Learning experiences and outcomes

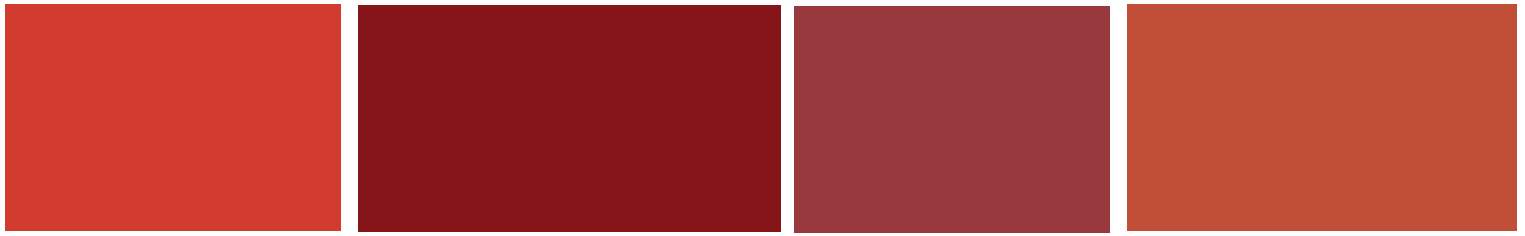
The participants from the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Austria have expressed great satisfaction with their learning experiences in the cities or regions visited. They were particularly impressed by the high value of civic engagement shown by the successful cooperation of volunteers and their organizations with municipalities, regional authorities and business partners. An “enabling culture” going along with the possibility of creating personal initiatives, a bottom-up understanding of volunteering and the knowledge and professionalism acquired through project-oriented training offers tailored towards volunteers are preconditions that were described by participants as particularly helpful. In addition, the involvement of companies and external support in the form of know-how, infrastructure and financial assistance was referred to as enhancing factor.

The appreciation for volunteer work manifests itself in publicity actions for volunteering, the personalized form of recognition being the reimbursement of various costs, the Volunteering Card, excursions, etc.

A starting point for volunteering which was generally welcomed as a base concept was health (defined by WHO as mental, physical and emotional). It was very impressive for the participants to discover and appreciate the method of “staying healthy through commitment” an experience in which volunteers can recognize the benefit from their commitment towards their own personal benefit. This is a combination of prevention and intervention. Younger seniors, for example, are trained to do physical exercises at the homes of older seniors, to exchange information about nutrition and to share the positive effects of including both aspects in one’s daily routine. As a result, the volunteers stay healthier and the older people as well!

Many innovative approaches have been discovered to improve the quality of life for the citizens in their own city: social city exploration, movement equipment in public parks, fairy tale excursions, “brain walking” as memory training or the “skating hall” as a successful intergenerational project to improve interaction and communication with each other. The successful event with volunteering fairs in Vienna with their positive and concrete results was also very impressive. In addition, the following projects have been identified as interesting for transfer to another location: “Grannies finest” to be provided as a collaboration of older women with young designers, the Women’s Studio Maxima with common activities of migrants to acquire languages, and the Inventors’ Quarters, which makes new use of underutilized infrastructure.

In the implementation of volunteer work, it is appropriate to start with small initiatives and activities in one’s own social environment. For many, it is also interesting to turn to areas that have no connection with their professional activities. Another way to initiate open-mindedness for volunteering was shown by the project AFTER.WORK, in which employees are motivated to become active in the post-profes-



sional phase.

In general, the learning experience has made the participants feel validated and supported by the appreciative interaction between the various parties. Thus, innovative approaches could be detected and recorded, mutual learning be practiced and motivation for continued involvement strengthened.

More visits to Belgium and the Netherlands will be organized by volunteers beyond the lifetime of the projects. As another result of the study visits, offers were extended with neighbourhood groups according to projects that were visited, such as the Repair Café. Searching for people interested in volunteering occurs systematically, however, emphasis is placed on highlighting the needs of the individuals involved, not those of the organization.

The future transfer of more projects is envisaged. This has aroused particular interest in the regions visited. The importance of civic engagement as a factor of economic character and social value can be further enhanced by the recognition of socially relevant forces.

The motto here is that volunteering is a treasure which must be dealt with carefully.



4.1 Testimonials



“Following the model of computer courses offered by pupils for older people we could, in cooperation with secondary schools, organize readings in institutions for seniors who like German literature, but cannot read well any more. Pupils could complete their internship in this way.”

(Dutch learner)

“In Austria, the distance between volunteers and municipal authorities is much smaller than in the Netherlands. Volunteers can act more freely and they never work alone.”

(Dutch learner)

“The view of new things in a foreign country also expands the view of one’s own activities. Many things appear in a different light upon return. Existing values become more valuable. The exchange between paid staff and volunteers was particularly inspiring. Everyone has a different perspective because of their position. The various good examples inspired many discussions.”

(German learner)

“Cultural differences in active citizenship and in the local framework conditions became clear. Everyone looked a little enviously at their neighbours. The Dutch, for instance, longed for clearer and more solid structures for their commitment and the Germans for less rigid and regulated areas.”

(German learner)

“I was particularly impressed by the culture of appreciation in Hessen. It strongly encourages the participation of volunteers. The “Ehrenamtscard” makes it possible to get free or discounted access to cultural events, etc.”

(Belgian learner)

“In Vienna, I was particularly pleased with the cordial and effective cooperation between the organizations that work with volunteers. There was no sign of rivalry. On the contrary, the constructive spirit of cooperation could be felt everywhere, and I thought that was an example of good practice.”

(Belgian learner)

“What impressed us very much was the extraordinarily appreciative interaction with the volunteers, whose dedication was rewarded on many different levels. We experienced a huge increase in our levels of motivation as well as many new perspectives for the enormous societal potential of voluntary work. Additionally, the input regarding quality assurance was very enriching.”

(Austrian learner)

“For me there is little more valuable than the thematic exchange with people from other organizations and other countries. A great space for mutual inspiration and learning. I thank you for the opportunity!”

(Austrian learner)

A

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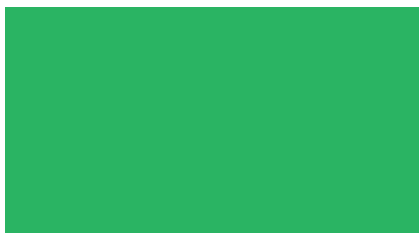
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