Austrian Rural Network
Thematic Group on Care and Integration of Refugees

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netzwerk
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How it started

• Austrian NSU is outsourced from MA
• Annual working programmes
• Additional demand: taking up issue of refugees and migrants in rural areas
• Thematic working group
  – Question: „How can we support rural regions and municipalities in care and integration of refugees?“
  – challenges and solutions rather vague (and diverse)
  – intensive discussion
  – process necessary
The outline

• Target groups
  – Representatives of municipalities (mayors, refugee-coordinators)
  – NGO representatives
  – LAG-managers and LAG-members
  – Managing authorities (federal levels)
  – Thematic experts

• Agenda
  – Needs analysis – knowledge transfer – knowledge enhancement
  – Support for TWG members
  – Defining „lessons learned“ (esp. for non-participants)
  – Sensitization

• 2 meetings per year
First TWG meeting in June 2016 (I)

• Invitation via LEADER LAGs, MAs
• 30 participants
• Know How Exchange on challenges and solutions
  – Involvement of local population
  – Re-framing integration
  – Job orientation
  – Letting refugees participate – non-profit work
  – Supporting voluntary work on municipal level
  – Refugees as a lever against rural depopulation?
  – Utilizing new potential: developing and recognize competences of refugees
  – Benefits cause jelousy
First TWG meeting in June 2016 (II)

Reflections

• Actions to overcome foreignness, strangeness and alienness to ease pressure
• Defining new spaces to meet (in a narrower and broader sense)
• Discussions represent the view of Austrians as the „recieving society“ -> how to deal with necessary empathy and integration of refugees´additional perspectives?
• Professionalizing care needs full-time staff to prevent voluntary workers from „burning out“
Second TWG meeting in November 2016

3 municipalities showed their approaches

– Housing
– Occupation and work
– Language training
– (cultural) activities
Occupation and work
(Alberschwende, Vorarlberg)

• Ancillary work for
  – municipalities,
  – social and charitable occasions and organisations,
  – local people who need short-term support.

• Job orientation for asylum seekers and recognized refugees
  – Assessing competences
  – Mentoring programmes (matching potential employers’ needs and refugees’ competences)
  – Agree on training objectives
  – Max. 3 months
  – Managing official permits for asylum seekers

• LEADER-project „engagiert sein“ (being active):
  – 5 managers for voluntary workers are employed for 3 years
  – Aim: mobilizing voluntary civic engagement, coordinating education for voluntary workers, supporting voluntary initiatives
Housing

• „Menschen im Marchfeld“ (people in Marchfeld)
  – Inter-municipal cooperation of 3 municipalities (limited liability company)
  – MiM ltd. rents flats and houses and covers all costs
  – Self-catering for families/ catering for sole-travelling men
  – Support of refugess in dealing with public authorities, several obligations, etc.
  – Organize common activities
  – German language trainings
  – Building up connections between refugees and voluntary organisations (mainly after official recognition as refugees)
  – PROs of local approach: knowing facilities and closer contact to local opinion leaders
  – Financial surplus is re-invested in local charitable projects
Coordination

• Different organisational structures
  – Inter-municipal limited liability company (ltd.)
  – Cooperation between municipality and CARITAS
  – Citizens’ initiative; refugees are also part of the organisation

• Mayors had an outstanding role

• Cooperation of full-time professionals and voluntary staff: capacity building and common rules

• Follow the energy – work with people who are willing

• Focus on women refugees – more difficult to mobilize for voluntary work
Outlook

• 2 TWG-meetings in 2017
• Main topics:
  – Intercultural learning/ intercultural competences
  – Regional coordination of education work für residents and refugees
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