

## Austrian Rural Network

Thematic Group on Care and Integration of  
Refugees

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*netzwerk*  
*zukunftsraum*  
**land**

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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 jealousy

# 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 „receiving 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 refugees 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

# Contacting the Austrian Network Support Unit



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