

Project TourIK

Tourism & Integration in Carinthia

„TourIK – Tourism and Integration in Carinthia“ is a social collaboration between the following project partners: The Tourismus Wissenslabor Villach, the Carinthian University of Applied Sciences (Management) and Diakonie de La Tour, refugee & inclusion services. The project is funded financially (80%) by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (former Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy) and supported by the Kärntner Wirtschaftsförderungsfonds, as well as the Austrian Bank of Hotel Industry and Tourism and the Public Employment Service Austria (AMS).

Objectives

1. Clearing and analysing the abilities and competences (professions within the tourism sector) of asylum seekers, especially unaccompanied minor refugees (UMF) and persons whose application for asylum has already been declared positive; focus area Villach and Villach Land.
2. Twelve-month pre-training for 30 participants of the target group.
3. Supervised placement in the Carinthian touristic sector followed by an ongoing nine-month long socio-educational support.
4. Scientific monitoring and documentation of learnings and outcomes for subsequent transfer of knowledge into future projects.

Project area

Carinthia; focus area Villach-Stadt/Villach-Land

Project timetable

Start date: 01.10.2017 End date: 31.07.2019 Duration: 22 months

- **Phase 1: Clearing**
01.10.2017 Launch of the project;
Clearing (TW LAB Warmbad Villach/Diakonie de La Tour); start fundraising/scientific monitoring
- **Phase 2: (Pre-)Training**
20.11.2017 Start of the pre-training at TW LAB Warmbad Villach (vocational school); start of the socio-educational supervision.
19.11.2018 End of the pre-training at TW LAB Warmbad Villach
- **Phase 3: Vocational training**
20.11.2018 Start of the vocational training in the Carinthian touristic sector
26.11.2018 Start of tuition program
31.07.2019 End of socio-educational supervision; Final report by CUAS; end of the project.

Project financing

The project is funded by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Digital and Economic Affairs (former Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economics) amounting to 242.196,40 EUR to compensate for the innovative clearing, the twelve-month pre-training, the socio-educational supervision and the scientific monitoring. Partial financing is only provided for 80% of the eligible costs. Therefore, 20% of the remaining costs are declared as private contribution and have to be raised by the recipients. On the one hand by the Diakonie de La Tour amounting to 12.549,10 EUR and on the other hand through sponsorships. Sponsors are partner companies contributing 2.000 EUR per successfully placed participant. The original idea was to place at least 24 participants (80%) in order to raise 48.000 EUR.

Due to the decree denying asylum seekers access to vocational training the planned project financing is endangered despite 14 participants who have already been placed within the Carinthian touristic sector. With our project we have definitely “Unruhe-gestiftet” and therefore we are asking the “Unruhe-Privatstiftung” for help.

Project performances

Diakonie de La Tour, refugee & inclusion services

Socio-educational support

1. Neutral contact person; mediation between stakeholders (hosts/basic support, vocational school, partner of the touristic sector, participants) on demand.
 - i. If necessary specific workshops to related topics can be arranged and performed.
2. Supervision; Empowerment. Assistance when visiting governmental offices, issues regarding basic support and any paperwork referring to the vocational training (e.g. Provincial Government of Carinthia, Public Employment Service Austria, Federal Office for Immigration and Asylum etc.)
3. Low-threshold consulting regarding information about the asylum procedure in Austria. (e.g. family reunion, change of the asylum status and corresponding perspectives. There is also the opportunity for partner businesses to make use of this offer.)
4. Accommodation assistance; e.g. Assistance finding a proper accommodation, moving, official reporting tasks for the participants.
5. Financial assistance; short-term, demand-oriented, low-threshold assistance to avoid personal crisis (e.g. rent, basic furnishing etc.); Covering of the travel expenses emerging through the pre-education or internships (if possible).
6. Outreach consulting; e.g. crisis intervention, de-escalation, basic care and transition to external experts (Life Events, psych traumatology).

Project management

7. Organisation of internships, acquisition of potential partners within the Carinthian tourism sector
8. Forming partnership deals with potential partners
9. Matching/placement of participants

Tourismus WissensLabour der Fachberufsschule für Tourismus Warmbad Villach (vocational school)

1. Twelve-month pre-education (theoretical and practical)
2. Focus on the professions: chef, restaurant specialist
3. Education in the following topics: Operating Organisation & Tourism, Political Education; Economics, German & Communication, furthermore reading, special terms for tourism; basic mathematics, basic computer skills, cooking, service, recipes, food & beverages, sport.

Carinthian University of Applied Sciences

1. Scientific monitoring throughout the complete project timetable
2. Documentation of the process; drafting a final report
3. Surveying all involved parties in order to identify learnings; work out results on the terms dissemination and mainstreaming regarding TourIK providing materials facilitating transfer of knowledge into future projects

Criteria for social innovation

1. Innovation in Project Idea – Novelty

According to sociologist Hartmut Esser, the integration of immigrants consists of four dimensions: structural, cultural, social and identificatory integration. Thereby, a key area of structural integration is integration into the labour market and thus participation in gainful activity. "The labour market is second only to the education system in its importance for the integration process. Employment leads to income and social interaction which then leads to social participation", as is explained by the Expert Council for Integration (2015, p. 65) in the Austrian Integration Report 2015. The Institute for Employment Research (IAB) of the German Federal Employment Agency (2015) states: "that the integration of refugees in comparison to other migrants needs much more time". The WKO Carinthia (2016) notes that "more than a quarter of recognized refugees (...) are under the age of 25 and (...) still have yet to face the majority of their working lives, so it is particularly important to make a meaningful investment in their qualification".

TourIK is addressing the issue of time-to-integrate, as mentioned above, by providing a twelve-month training, comparable to a pre-apprenticeship. This training includes two phases for internships in the tourism sector as well as socio-educational support throughout the whole process, in order to achieve an early and holistic integration of refugee potentials in the Austrian labour market.

2. Innovation in Accessing Target Groups – Involvement

The project addresses the support and inclusion of socially disadvantaged communities in a very special way, targeting the refugee population in general and unaccompanied minor refugees in particular. According to the former Austrian Secretary of Social Affairs and Employment, Alois Stöger, „at the end of June 2016 [there were] nationwide 213 upright vocational training permits for asylum seekers, 199 of which were actually put to use by ongoing employment“*. In light of skill shortage in professions of tourism, this relatively small number clearly demonstrates a market-based shortfall of vocational training and therefore an opportunity for asylum seekers to gain access to the labour market.

The opportunity of supervised vocational training with the project's partner businesses presents a first step towards sustainable economic inclusion for our target group. Additionally, those training opportunities provide the region's tourism sector with encouraging examples concerning the actual feasibility of employing and training refugees.

3. Innovation in the Realisation of the Project – Effectiveness

A unique feature of the project is the fact that it was the only labour initiative open to asylum seekers (ed.; pending procedure) in Carinthia at its time. Therefore, its realisation needs to be as creative as it is courageous or risky, especially since the project faces challenging political tides resulting in regulations such as labour market permits and basic care provisions which have to be considered and overcome.

Today, the access for asylum seekers to the labour market is severely limited by law, labour market policies actually only take effect with the date of one's positive asylum decision or are meant only for asylum seekers with a high probability of receiving such a decision in the future.

Therefore, in order to allow refugees to gain meaningful prospects and achieve economic independence, our project tries to act in disregard of one's asylum status and is aiming to create an early basis for non-precarious employment instead. At the same time, we recognise a high demand for holistic support, meaning enough time and resources during the transitory process from the first stages of clearing until the end of the first year of vocational training.

The greatest threat to the overall success of our project is therefore the decree by the Ministry of Social Affairs of September 12th 2018, number BMASGK-435.006 / 0013-VI / B / 7/2018 on the "employment of asylum seekers", which makes it impossible for the project participants still in pending asylum procedures to engage in vocational training. As a reaction to this, since 11/26/2018 a voluntary tuition program (further promoting German-, math-, English-, overall vocational school-skills) is being offered to the remaining participants as continuation in schooling after the pre-training has ended. The offer is aimed at providing the greatest possible chance to successfully retain the affected participants until vocational training can be started at the time of a favourable asylum decision, respectively during the projects duration; In this case, the already acquired partner companies partly participate with employment commitments or employment-related preliminary contracts.

4. Innovation in Public Perception – Serving as an Example

At this point the project realisation leads to the assumption that positive conclusions can be made regarding the public perception of TourIK. Partners within the Carinthian touristic sector express their satisfaction with their participation in the project as well as their trainees, as demonstrated by the press reviews (see appendix). They also positively acknowledge the newly provided chances to young refugees and their own businesses. Another fact that must be stated here is a decrease in marginalisation for the target group due to their contribution to the region's economic enrichment. At the same time, a vulnerable group gets the chance to develop its full potential at the labour market. Despite the decree denying asylum seekers access to vocational training the overall placement rate of the project participants is quite pleasing, which proves a high level of interest in pre-trained employees by businesses of the touristic sector. Therefore, it can be argued that the combination of training for the labour market at an early stage and the advantages of a socio-educational supervision for all involved parties proved successful.

Sources;

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* Translation provided by the author