

Komm.AN- One project, many faces!

Mobile Counselling for Asylum Seekers in Lower Austria (MFB) provides care and counselling for asylum seekers in rural districts north and south of Vienna. Counselling takes place in two forms, one mobile and one stationary: either MFB visits arranged accommodations or clients can come to our service points. The integration of refugees is an interactive process with a social, political, and individual dimension. It engenders a challenge both for refugees and the host society. Mobile Counselling has been supporting refugees in their settlement in Lower Austria with innovative approaches and ideas since almost 15 years. The field of service-provision for refugees is in public discourse characterised by a polarisation and political populism. Due to this tension and a chronic lack of resources, innovative action becomes crucial for our everyday work. Mobile Counselling is first and foremost a platform for the support of refugees and strives to facilitate exchanges between our target group and representatives of the majority population.

Short description of the project

Komm.AN provides a variety of small-scale exchange, education and occupational projects for asylum seekers which were developed out of concrete needs in the everyday work with the target group. It contains, among other services, a popular programme with games, joint study of German, making music, sports, excursions, an afternoon club exclusively for women, basic IT-training and so on. These programmes were all developed with the participation of our clients who also contribute to the further development of the projects which are continually adapted to their specific requirements and desires.

Target group

The target group are men, women and children who are asylum seekers within the designated area of action of the MFB and who live in private or arranged accommodation. Especially clients living in arranged accommodation are increasingly affected by isolation and a lack of community life as the places are often located in remote rural areas with a lack of local infrastructure and an insufficient transportation system. Added to these difficulties are very restricted financial means for transportation and language barriers.

Objectives

- Creation of daily structure and occupation for asylum seekers in Lower Austria.
- Support of exchanges between the majority population and clients.
- Creation of education opportunities for clients and volunteers.

The following list offers insights into the different facets of the project:

Komm.CLUB

By providing tailored free time and creative activities, asylum seekers get an opportunity to exercise occupational, purposeful, productive and creative activities. Thus, clients experience self-efficacy and as well strengthen their confidence in their own capabilities and skills. On one specific day a week, "komm.CLUB" is open for participants and is providing a diverse programme. The focus of this project is the training of German in a playful way, creative handicrafts, art, culture, and exchange of information. Painting workshops, music sessions, or guest presentations on topics like housing, education, or the labour market are taking place. Visits of local exhibitions, theatre plays etc. facilitate the social participation of asylum seekers in their new living environment.

Komm.Cult

The experience in Komm.CLUB made us aware of the clients' desires for the visit of cultural events and museums. For one of our events, a day trip to the Natural History Museum, 60 people wanted to register. As we could only take half of the people with us, we put the rest on a waiting list for the next visit. In due course, we developed Komm.CULT: once per month we organise a cultural excursion for our clients and their children. Destinations are e.g. museums in Vienna and its surrounding or a zoo.

GRÖBI

Tailored occupational and free time activities give young asylum seekers in arranged accommodations the opportunity of a structuring, purposeful and productive activity. We offer sport, cultural free time activities, and handicraft workshops in various accommodations. This programme is offered twice a month for groups of 30-40 people in the districts of Mödling and Bruck an der Leitha. The programme is designed in accordance with the interests of the participants.

NIRO

In our previous work we have found that girls and young women need a special setting in order to address certain topics. NIRO is targeted at the empowerment of this particular group and is designed to strengthen their autonomy and self-responsibility. Every two weeks we organise free time activities and theme days with topics like health, education, law, including violence and sexuality etc. The project is set out to provide orientation within the Austrian society and access to knowledge and legal aspects that are of particular importance to women. Within this sheltered space, girls and women are encouraged to talk about issues that are of concern to them and to experience a good time together. This can lead, among many other effects, to the development of friendships among the participants which can later serve as a basis for mutual support. The objective of NIRO is the mutual acquaintance of women and girls from different countries of origin.

Komm.Tech

The need for low-threshold trainings for asylum seekers in IT is usually unveiled when time is already pressing, that is, with the recognition of asylum status. At this point, with the right of asylum, former refugees are supposed to care for themselves within two to maximum four months which means to find accommodation and a job. Komm.TECH was designed to offer IT-trainings for refugees in order to make the best use of the time that they are forced to wait for their asylum decision for the acquisition of new competences. Competences in IT are however already useful during the time of the asylum procedure: basic information about asylum law, state and law, online banking, or language learning programmes are of interest to our clients. Competences in IT also go hand in hand with a responsible use of communication technologies. Therefore, we put an emphasis on issues of risks and legal consequences of actions within the field of new communication technologies.

Komm.Raus

Komm.RAUS offers day care for children in the district of Weinviertel during their school holidays. During the winter holiday week in February we offer free time activities for children (e.g. excursions, ice skating, children's museum, aquarium etc.). In the summer holidays we offer two weeks of fun and action for children at one of our locations. Our intention is to bring refugee children, children of Caritas-employees and other children of the region together in order to get to know each other. The educators accompany a broad variety of activities: e.g. soap bubbles, karate training, playing the guitar etc.

Komm.Box

Clients can participate in a free boxing and kick-boxing training at the location Wr. Neustadt. Boxing has a positive effect on the development of the personality of the trainee. Furthermore, it supports the development of social competences. Trainees experience their own limits and learn to accept and respect the limits of others. Especially young clients are encouraged to develop empathy for others and are taught to assume responsibility for themselves and their actions.

Komm.Yoga

The stimulating effect of yoga on body and soul can be very beneficial for people in situations of distress. This programme offers the participating women a possibility for personal growth. Within this protected space, without husband and children, women learn to relax and do something for their own wellbeing.

Komm.Lern

This after-school educational support was implemented for the youngest and most eager to learn: children of school grades 1-4 are supported on two afternoons per week in learning the German language by involving them in playful games and meaningful social interaction.

Komm.Lach

For this programme, clown shows are organised in cooperation with Clowns Without Borders at our location in Wiener Neustadt. The clown shows aim at making language learning for children a more pleasurable experience with a casual and humorous approach.

Komm.Deutsch

The acquisition of the German language is one of the central elements to feel more at home in the new environment. If one is able to express one's own needs and thoughts and is able to understand the ones of others, it is easier to feel emplaced and to resume agency within society. Most of our clients are constantly searching for courses of German but free language courses were cancelled by the federal state government of Lower Austria. The demand for German courses has therefore risen enormously in the last couple of months. This is why our current A1-courses are going to be expanded, both with regard to the quantity of courses as well as supplementary A2- and B1-courses.