

STUDY TRIP REPORT

Activity A.T1.1.

Date 14.11.2019

Name of Partner: Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography (IfL)

Contact Person: Serhii Svyarets



Study trip report

Study trip has been organised within a framework of the project titled “*Exploring social innovation approaches for the social and economic integration of non-EU nationals ARRIVAL REGIONS*”.

- **This form is designed to capture the social innovation approaches for the social and economic integration of non-EU nationals.**
- **The responses from this survey will be collected, analysed and used to prepare the pilot action concepts.**
- **In order to improve the readability of the questionnaire, please delete options that don't apply to the visited initiative.**

Practice summary	
1. Title of the good practice	BLANK PILOTS (FORMULARLOTSE)
2. Geographical Coverage <i>(underline the right answer)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>local</u>
3. Location of the practice (city, country)	Döbeln, Saxony, Germany
4. Main institution involved	Treibhaus Döbeln e.V.
5. Visit agenda <i>(people met, institution visited)</i>	<p>Institution visited: Treibhaus Döbeln e.V.</p> <p>People met: Judith Sophie Schilling (Director of Treibhaus Döbeln), Hartmut Fuchs (Coordinator of Willkommen in Döbeln).</p>
6. Dates of study trip	21.10.2019
7. Thematic area <i>(Intercultural dialogue, Social innovation, Migrants' Economy)</i>	Social Innovation
8. Type of practice visited <i>(delete options that don't apply)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introducing or improving integration programmes for immigrants upon arrival (orientation courses, providing basic information on the way of life, values and norms of the society or various forms of training) • supporting the enrolment of immigrants' children in pre-school • providing measures for job finding (training, job matching, guidance, recognition of qualifications etc.) • other
9. Participants (PPs + stakeholders)	LP (3 participants), PP12 (1 Participant), Municipality of Torre Pellice (2 participants), Migrationagentur Burgenlandkreis (1 participant), Jobcenter Burgenlandkreis (2 participants).
10. Reporting Person	Serhii Svynarets (LP)

Practice description

11. Introduction (include any relevant pictures)

background information, aim/purpose of the study trip, objectives

As most of the European rural areas, small towns and villages in Germany are suffering from demographic change caused by aging and urban-rural migration processes. Moreover, the political and economic transformations of the early 1990s in Eastern Germany have accelerated the dynamics of depopulation. Today - 30 years after reunification – the socio-economic development of German federal states remains very uneven. The New Federal States (ex-GDR) are characterized by higher levels of unemployment and lower average wages than those in the West. In addition to this, dissatisfaction with economic and social transformations in Eastern Germany caused a radicalization of political life in these areas. While big urban centers usually support left-wing and centrist political forces, the rural east is characterized by a growth of support for AfD (Alternative for Germany) – a far-right political party promoting ideas of euro-skepticism, traditional values and strongly opposing immigration to Germany. Since 2014 Germany witnesses a wave of immigration to rural areas caused by the so-called “refugee crisis”. In comparison to the majority of European countries, the relocation of migrants from initial reception centers to the places of temporary residence in Germany is controlled by state and results, in fact, in an inflow of refugees and asylum seekers to all German districts. The districts further distribute the immigrants to the municipalities.

Döbeln is a small town with slightly under 25 thousand inhabitants located in Central Saxony. As of October 2019, there are 1256 foreign nationals registered in Döbeln. Out of those almost one half are immigrants from other EU countries, around one third of the foreigners are refugees and the rest consists of migrants from other non-EU countries that do not have a refugee status. Due to governmentally controlled refugee distribution system in Germany, Döbeln receives around 10-15 new asylum seekers every month. Nevertheless, the local political and social environment is far from being welcoming towards immigrants. Since early 1990’s local political life was dominated by a combination of conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and far-right parties (at first NPD, then AfD). As a counterbalance to the existing political and social environment, in 1997 Treibhaus Döbeln was founded as a socio cultural organization that supports marginalized groups of people and promotes anti-racism and fights with anti-Semitic thoughts in rural Saxony. As of today the organization reaches more than 20.000 people per year and collaborates with kindergartens, schools, theaters, cultural and sport clubs from all over Saxony. The main activities of Treibhaus are:

- Support of locals in the organization of cultural events using a collaborative approach;
- Active support of local youth through cultural and sport activities;
- Support of international cooperation in sphere of youth work;
- Awareness raising in spheres of political education, racism and anti-Semitism and monitoring of far-right activities in the region (FAIR project);
- Provision of various workshops for marginalized citizen groups (sewing, cooking, bike reparation ect.);

- Maintenance and administration of the common spaces (Café Courage, Skateboard Hall and The House of Diversity / Haus der Vielfalt);
- Support of the migrant population (Willkommen in Döbeln project).



Pic. 1. Treibhaus Döbeln's merchandize.

The initiative “Willkommen in Döbeln” was established in 2015 as a response to the increased foreign population in the region. As of now, it consists out of several actions/projects:

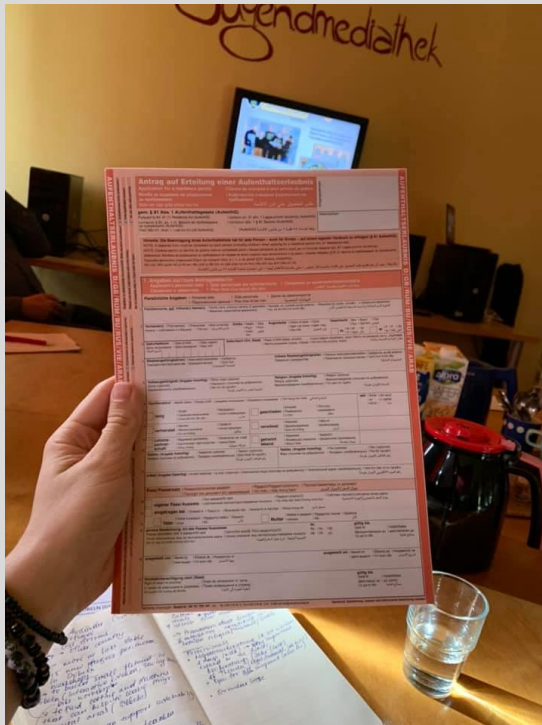
- German language courses for migrants with up to 70 participants a week.
- Provision of real life platforms for establishing new connections in the city (Sewing Café/Nähcafe, bicycle repair shop).
- Support of migrants' communication with friends and families from the home countries through provision of a free WiFi hotspot in Treibhaus.
- Organization of various events and presentations for migrants, local or mixed audiences.
- Regular consultations for migrants in 26 thematic areas (legal rights and obligations, search for job and accommodation, subscription for kindergartens and schools etc.).
- Blank Pilot Project.

As bureaucratic burdens are one of the major obstacles for successful integration of non-EU nationals in Central Europe, Blank Pilots project served as the main focus of this study trip.

12. Implementation of the study trip

The following issues were discussed during the study trip:

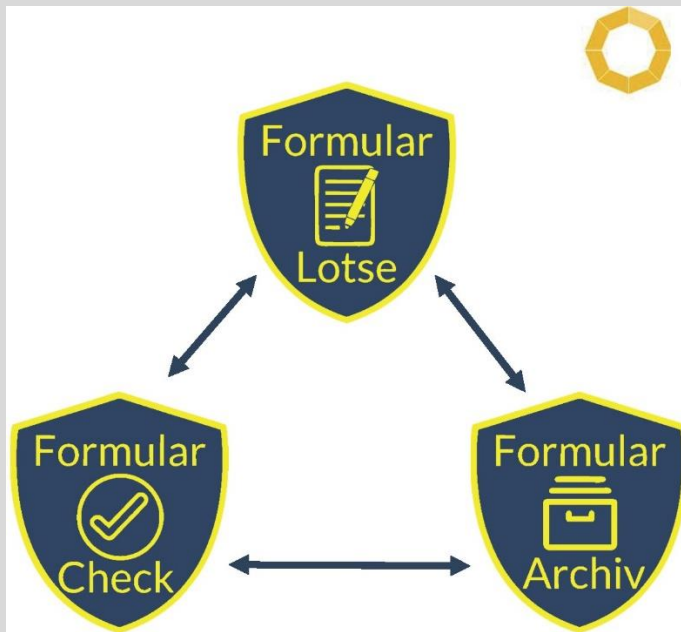
For those, who have just come to a new country fulfilment of official blanks becomes a daily routine. In Germany, for instance, in order to start schooling, get a new job or an accommodation, apply for unemployment money or child allowance, a person needs to fill in a big number of various forms. In order to receive these services there should be no mistake in the information provided. For instance, an asylum seeker who has just arrived to Germany and applies for a residence permit needs to fill in a form that consists of 16 pages and more than 120 lines (see Pic. 2) without any mistake. However, a lot of newly arrived migrants do not have sufficient skills that would help them to fulfill such bureaucratic obligations. The first problem that migrants might face is the complexity of formal or so called “bureaucratic” German language. While the Ministry of Social and Labour Affairs recommends its employees to use a “simplified” language when they are talking to immigrants and refugees, the formal blanks are written in formal German, which is often not intelligible even for native speakers. An additional challenge for many immigrants is the need to follow strict deadlines provided by the bureaucratic system. Besides, bureaucratic institutions usually require to bring a lot of documents for every appointment and in order to achieve success no document can be forgotten. Lastly, laws, regulations and requirements are constantly changing which cause additional issues for those who need to deal with the bureaucratic system on the daily basis.



Pic. 2. Application form for a residence permit in Germany.

The team of BlankPilots provides help to every migrant in Döbeln, who struggles to deal with local official institutions. This help can be divided into 3 main actions. First, a migrant can receive the help of a “Blank Godparent” – a volunteer who is experienced in working with migrants and in filling in various blanks. Secondly, every week Treibhaus Döbeln organises a “BlankCheck” event, where migrants are able to get a consultation and let the supervisors check their already fulfilled documents. Additionally during these consultations the project staff raises awareness about the need to respect the deadlines

and finish all obligations in time. Finally, Treibhaus Döbeln created a “BlankArchive” – a multilingual database of various blanks and guidances. Additionally, this database also functions as an automatized blank fulfilment.



Pic.3 Project's Structure

13. Evidence of success (results achieved)

According to Treibhaus Döbeln, with the help of Blank Pilots foreign immigrants in Döbeln:

- get better understanding of German bureaucratic system;
- become aware about the importance of legal obligations and deadlines;
- decrease the level of frustration and anger in case of unsuccessful applications;
- activate self-learning process;
- increase their participation in local social life;
- improve their financial situation;
- receive better social recognition through successful employment.

The project received a recognition by several governmental and non-governmental organizations which are willing to transfer its innovative idea to other cities in Germany (Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg, Kassel and Bremen). Additionally, Treibhaus Döbeln has established partnerships in order to improve the project's concept and to support the legal integration of foreigners all over country:

- 1) Together with LEB Niedersachsen (an organization supporting education of elderly people in rural areas of Lower Saxony) Treibhaus Döbeln elaborated a common training methodology for potential Blank Godparents.
- 2) Contact and Information Center for Refugees and Migrants Berlin (KuB Berlin) helped Treibhaus to translate their Blank Archive into several non-European languages and updates the visualization of the blanks in case of their modification.

- 3) Treibhaus Döbeln was approached by Langenscheidt (one of the biggest vocabulary publishing houses in Germany) for the creation of the new issue of vocabulary “German in Official Offices” (still in negotiation process).



Pic. 4. In the office of Blank Pilots.

14. Difficulties encountered

The only difficulty that Blank Pilots Project had so far is the lack of financing. As of today, this project is funded by the crowdfunding campaign (see below). As the funds received by crowdfunding cannot cover all of the current needs of the project and guaranty its further development, Treibhaus Döbeln is currently in search for an additional source of financing.

15. Which structural funds support this good practice?

Blank Pilots project is funded through a crowdfunded campaign. As for now Treibhaus Döbeln managed to collect almost 11.000 € with the help of crowdfunding (<https://www.startnext.com/formularlotse>).

16. Is there any cost to participate in engaging with this good practice?
If yeas, what are additional costs incurred by project participants?

No - all services provided by Blank Pilots are free of charge.

17. What is new and/or innovative about this good practice?

The concept of legal consultations for marginalized social groups is not unique and is provided by several non-governmental organizations in Germany and other European Countries. However, Treibhaus Döbeln is the first organization that was focusing on migrant populations. The results of this project show that there is a big demand for such kind of consultations from migrants' side, as governmental institutions in Germany do not have enough capacities to provide constant legal support.

18. How has this good practice boosted immigrants integration?

As it was written before, the project implicitly influences the improvement of the legal situation and financial welfare among immigrants in Döbeln. Moreover, with the help of Blank Pilots the new-arriving migrants can master the number of soft skills (i.e. punctuality and thoroughness) that are valued in the German culture and may become important preconditions for a successful social and economic integration.

19. What lessons did you learn? What are your overall conclusion?

One of the biggest obstacles to a successful integration of non-EU nationals in Germany may become the overcomplicated bureaucratic system. Usually official institutions are not able to provide proper help to migrants in such situations, and consequentially the civil society is the only actor which can support newcomers. The experience of Blank Pilots shows that there is a big demand for such projects from migrants' perspective as the quality of their applications may influence their current legal status, future employment opportunities and social protection. Additionally, such help may reduce stress level and support development of various soft skills which can indirectly improve migrant's quality of life. The concept and idea of Blank Pilot project is easy to transfer to other regions. However, the experience of this project shows that there is a need for a stable and secure source of funding, as crowdfunding cannot cover all operational needs.

20. Outreach and dissemination

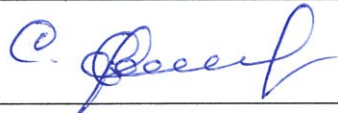

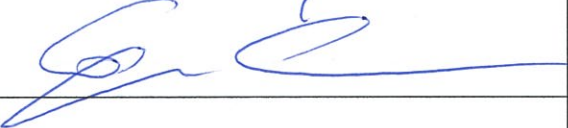

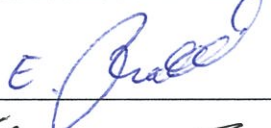
Newsletter, useful websites, mailing group, local government

- List of the attached document(s): attendance list
- Link to website: <https://willkommenindoebeln.com/FormularLotse/>
- Contact information of the good practice:
Hartmut Fuchs - willkommenindoebeln@gmail.com
Judith Sophie Schilling - info@treibhaus-doebeln.de

D.T1.1.4 – STUDY TRIP REPORT: TREIBHAUS DÖBELN

DÖBELN (GERMANY), 21.10.2019

List of Study Trip Participants

Organization	Last Name	First Name	Signature
Leibniz-Institut für Regional Geography	Synarets	Serhii	
torre pellice MUNICIPALITY	ALLISIO	MARIZIA	
//	COGMO	MARCO	
IFZ	Leiser	Tim	
IFC	Tudeh	Erik	
Jobcenter Burgenlandkreis, Migrationsagentur Burgenlandkreis	Berngruber	Maria	