



UGAIN

Urban **G**Ardens for the social
INtegration of migrants

Activity:

Begegnungscafé





Weekly open meeting point for refugees and other people creating community and offering support in all different questions.



"Simply start doing it. It is easy to get started and you have nothing to lose."

Activity file

1. Name of the activity

Begegnungscafé

2. Type of activity

Social activity L

3. Description of the activity

The Begegnungscafé Kufstein is a meeting point for refugees, asylum seekers and those who are living in Kufstein for longer. The Begegnungscafé started in spring 2016 and since then takes place every Friday from 4 to 6 p.m. in a common room of the parish. People can come and spend time together. There is no fixed program. The space is open for any activity any participant wants to start. In the last two years the Begegnungscafé was a place for cooking, sewing, painting, playing games together or many times simply for chatting and getting to know each other. People who are new in town use the Begegnungscafé to ask questions, to find support to translate official letters or to do their German homework. It is a place to practice German and to learn from each other's experiences. In the beginning the Begegnungscafé was mainly visited by Syrian men, but now Afghani women with their children are the main user

group.

The Begegnungscafé is the main entry point for people who are new in town or who want to join the association Kufstein hilft. In summer the people from Begegnungscafé go to the community garden and the harvest from the community garden is brought to the Begegnungscafé

4. Competences and training needed

Organising and implementing a Begegnungscafé does not need any special training. The most important aspect required is openness and being ready to meet new people. It helps if organisers do have knowledge about the asylum system or speak English or any of the refugee's languages. Commitment is another key asset. The Begegnungscafé works as a regular offer with constant meeting times. Being flexible and reacting to the needs and wishes of participants is another important feature.



5. Steps for the implementation of the activity

- Space: To start a Begegnungscafé you need a space where people can meet independent from weather conditions. The space should offer a sanctuary, where people feel safe and welcome.
- Organising Team: It needs at least three to four people who can commit the time to organise the Begegnungscafé and to keep it running. As it is important that the Begegnungscafé takes place every week at the same time it needs a core group of people who take their turn in opening and closing the room and do little preparation work.
- Finding participants: Actively contact people who might be interested in coming to the Begegnungscafé, e.g. people from a refugee home, participants from German classes, engaged people who live in town. Use networks among refugees to communicate the idea. Cooperate with other organisations like support programs.
- Start: Start the activity with a special event like a small excursion in town, a small party,... and invite people to come to the first Begegnungscafé afterwards.
- Find good ways to cooperate. : In the case of Kufstein the Parish offers the room for free. The Refugee home informs people about the activity. The regional Volunteer center is a good place to find new participants. The project Mariam organises support-programs for women from Kufstein and refugee women. These support partners use the Begegnungscafé as a

meeting point.

- **Commitment:** It might take some time in the beginning for people get to know and start to come to the Begegnungscafé. The core group in Kufstein had decided that they will carry out the activity for half a year, no matter how many people take part. Between 10 and 15 people attend the activity every Friday.

6. Materials and methods

- **Infrastructure:** A room with kitchen/cooking facility and without the need to buy anything is best suited for the activity. In this case the room belongs to the parish and can be used for free. Tables and chairs. An on-line calendar for the core group to organise who is responsible for opening and locking the room.
- **Materials and human resources:** A sewing machine, games or other materials for painting and handy craft. The persons organising the activity should have the following attitudes: openness, interest and initiative, ideas on how to contact and get in touch with people, not taking it personally if only few people show up or if people are not interested in a certain program offered.
- **Time/Workload:** two hours per week plus a little preparation work like buying tea. In the beginning a bit more work to contact people.
- **Costs:** if the room can be used free of charge only minor costs, e.g. for tea, small snacks, materials etc are required.

7. Learning outcomes for the participants

People learn from each other about their home countries. Refugees learn about the culture and customs in Austria. They can improve their German by using it in a protected environment and find support for German home work. People reduce or lose their fear from a new culture. Non-verbal communication is another important skill to learn in the Begegnungscafé.

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