

## **Project Description: Cultural Participation for Refugees**

### **A KulturLeben Berlin Project: Voluntary based local network promoting cultural participation for refugees in Berlin**

**Duration: 1.1.2016 – 31.12.2018**

#### **1. Introduction**

**KulturLeben Berlin is a non-profit association, established in the year 2010, dedicated to promoting cultural participation and social inclusion in Berlin.** It is KulturLeben Berlin's aim and mission to offer low-income earners a cost-free opportunity to take part in the city's cultural life. Numerous cultural event organizers provide KulturLeben guests with unsold tickets. The seats would otherwise remain vacant. Whenever empty seats are available, registered guests are personally being invited via phone call by the voluntary team of KulturLeben Berlin.

**Since January 1st 2016 KulturLeben Berlin is funded by Aktion Mensch,** Germany's largest private funding organisation for non-profit charitable initiatives. Project aim is to build up a voluntary based local network promoting cultural participation for refugees within a three-year period.

#### **Main project aims:**

- Promotion of free tickets for refugees
- Organization of own cultural and sportive projects/workshops for refugees
- Establishment of a voluntary based accompaniment service for refugees
- Support of cultural partners in enabling cultural participation for refugees
- Exchange of information and networking with refugee relief organizations and initiatives

#### **2. Support by refugee relief organizations and cultural partners**

KulturLeben Berlin cooperates with several refugee relief organizations like local welcome initiatives, refugee hostels, community colleges, refugee information centers and others. Furthermore, there are 430 cultural event organizers, which provide KulturLeben Berlin with unsold tickets. The acquisition of additional network partners and supporters is another objective of the new project. Thus, the newly built network shall become a communicative platform connecting the cultural with the social sector.

##### **2.1 Confidence as a key to cultural participation**

Refugees are often traumatized and experience a loss of confidence towards their new environment and towards themselves. Many are afflicted with temporary psychosomatic disorders, which prevent them of exploring their surroundings and participating in social and cultural activities. In addition to language barriers, depression and a lack of prospects often make it difficult for people with flight experience to explore new (cultural) locations in the city out of their own impetus, even if a basic interest for culture is given. In order to support newcomers in gaining new confidence, lower access barriers and make cultural participation possible for people with flight experience, we developed different ways of communication to reach them.

## **2.2 Free cultural offers for refugees and cultural companions as a bridge to culture**

One main task of our project is to offer unsold tickets to newcomers, enabling them to visit cultural events for free. The target group includes single persons, families and – with the support of social partner organisations – sheltered groups. To help newcomers in becoming familiar with the cultural landscape of Berlin a voluntary accompaniment service for refugees was created. The personal contact between volunteers and refugees and the shared experience of visiting cultural events together helps both parts to develop a mutual understanding for each other.

Supported by our partners we regularly visit refugee shelters, language schools or other refugees help facilities to inform people with flight experience personally about KulturLeben Berlin`s cultural offer. At the same time they have the possibility to register as cultural guests. To overcome language barriers we are supported by voluntary team members who have flight or migration backgrounds themselves.

For many newcomers it is much easier to be motivated for new cultural experiences, if they are contacted in their own family language. Our multilingual voluntary team is able to offer cultural events in Arabic, Farsi, English, French, Spanish and Yoruba.

## **2.3 Newcomers as voluntary cultural ambassadors**

People with flight experience, who have been living in Berlin for a certain time already, are welcome to join KulturLeben Berlin as voluntary cultural ambassadors. As voluntary cultural ambassadors they inform their families and friends as well as their room mates in the refugee shelters or their class mates in the language school about KulturLeben Berlin`s offer. Further more they can help them to register as cultural guests of KulturLeben Berlin and introduce them to the cultural landscape of Berlin.

## **2.4 Own projects and workshops for and with newcomers**

With the aim to enhance the mutual understanding, KulturLeben Berlin regularly arranges events for and with refugees and citizens of Berlin. This includes welcome sessions as well as panel discussions, workshops for children or cultural events especially for newcomers. Via organizing own artistic or sportive workshops, we try to motivate newcomers – especially children and teenagers – to become active themselves and enjoy themselves with Berliners at the same age. Within a group it is much easier to get involved with new (cultural) experiences and make new acquaintances. Artists among the refugees are getting the possibility to show their art. Thus, acceptance, communication and understanding for newcomers in Berlin can be strenghtend.

**Further information about own events and workshops:** [www.kulturleben-berlin.de/projekte](http://www.kulturleben-berlin.de/projekte)

## **3. Culture makes us feel good! – Cultural participation for newcomers and health**

Through the exchange and communication with cultural guests and social partner organizations we know, that cultural participation has the impact to enhance the emotional and physical well-being of people in difficult life situations like for example refugees. To be able to get involved with new cultural events, they need a positive way of individual motivation and attention– and they need time.

The personal invitation of newcomers to cultural events turns out to be the central factor to lower barriers and diminish fears. Especially cultural experiences have a strong after-effect and can influence the personal quality of life in a very positive way. That goes along with a strengthening of self-confidence and independence. Thus, a process of change and opening can be initiated.

**“Cultural participation and health” was the main topic of KulturLeben Berlin`s annual press conferences 2017 and 2018 at GRIPS Theater Berlin. Please find the press kits for download on [www.kulturleben-berlin.de/presse](http://www.kulturleben-berlin.de/presse)**

How cultural participation influences persons in vulnerable life situations, was investigated in the CASTLE-Evaluation (Cultural Space for a Healthy Life) by the interdisciplinary research group of TechEnergy for Africa e.V. in cooperation with Heinrich-Heine-University Düsseldorf and KulturLeben Berlin. The CASTLE-Evaluation was carried out with the methods of Health Technology Assessment (HTA) under the direction of health scientist and medical doctor Dr. med. Beatrice Moreno MPH.

**On KulturLeben Berlin`s annual press conference 2018 the results of the CASTLE-Evaluation (Cultural Space for a Healthy Life) were publicly presented by Dr. med. Beatrice Moreno MPH.**

**Summary of results: [www.kulturleben-berlin.de/aktion-mensch-projekt](http://www.kulturleben-berlin.de/aktion-mensch-projekt)**

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