

# MEM-VOL Migrant and Ethnic Minority Volunteering

## Summary: Final Report Austria

A Transnational Exchange Programme in Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands and United Kingdom in the framework of the Community Action Programme to Combat Social Exclusion (2002 - 2006)

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## 1. Introduction: Methods used in Austria

The Austrian part of the project consisted in literature reviews, researching whether there are programmes to promote migrant volunteering and looking for organizations and initiatives in which migrants are active as volunteers.

General questions in the project were:

- Which newest studies exist on this theme?
- Which persons / experts are involved?
- Do migrants volunteer in the organisation?
- Is there a database about migrant organisations?
- Does an information centre for migrants who would like to become active exist?

At first we made a list of organisations that might be likely to have migrant volunteers. The questionnaire was sent to these organizations via email and later they were also contacted by telephone. The results are summarized in chapter 5.

Towards the end of the project a national meeting took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June 2003 in the European Centre of Social Welfare Policy and Research in Vienna. Participants were representatives of the Austria organizations identified in the research phase as well as Susanne Huth from Germany and Angelika Münz from the Netherlands.

During the meeting Angelika Münz from Community Partnership Consultants (Netherlands, EU - project partner) gave an overview of the situation of migrants in The Netherlands. Afterwards we discussed the situation in Austria and the differences between these two countries. The results are contained in the summary in chapter 6.

## 2. Overview of the situation of migrants in Austria

### 2.1 Terminology

The definition of the term “migrant” is very closely connected with “working migrants” in Austria. The terms “foreigner”, “migrant” or “refugee” have more or less the same meaning for the general public, whereby there is not much awareness for different connotations of these terms.

### 2.2 Short description of history of immigration in Austria

In 2001 Austria had 8,06 million inhabitants. 9% of the population was foreigners. Most of the foreign population is from Turkey and Ex-Yugoslavia.

After the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War there were not enough workers in Austria, therefore foreign workers were encouraged to come to Austria (1950-1974). At this time Austria became a country of immigration while at this phase immigration was only for the purpose of work. Integration and settlement was not included in the political programs of the Austrian government.

In 1974 Austria declared a ban on recruitment with the target to reduce the number of foreign workers and encourage them to return their countries of origin (Foreign-Employment-Law 1975).

*Table 1: Employed foreigners in Austria*

Year	Number of employed foreigners
1973	226.800
1984	138.700
1993	217.611
2002	334.432

Source: Österreichisches Forum für Migrationsstudien, [http://www.oefm.org/stat\\_3\\_1.html](http://www.oefm.org/stat_3_1.html)  
Münz, Zuser, Kytir 2003: 23

This regulation had the consequence that many employed foreign workers moved to Austria permanently – rather than living in both countries – and many workers brought their families to Austria. This led to increases in the migrant population and thus to changes in demographic structure.

### 2.3 Demographic data

Between 1971 and 1981 the percentage of women and children in the foreign population increased by 7%. There are also differences in the age structure of the foreign population compared to the native population. In 2001 22% of the foreign population were children under 15 while this was only true for 17% of the native population. Also the percentage of the working age population (15 - 60 years) was 12% higher among foreigners than among the native population (foreigners: 73%, natives: 61%). The proportion of older foreigners over 60 was 7%, compared to 22,4% natives (Source: Statistik Austria: Bevölkerungsfortschreibung, Volkszählung 2001).

## 2.4 Legal regulations

In general the chronology of migration is the following:

- Migration
- Living in Austria as a migrant
- Becoming an Austrian citizen or permanent residence

After 6 years of living in Austria and be able to prove sustainable “personal and occupational integration” migrants have the possibility become Austrian citizens. After 15 years they can legally claim citizenship. They have to cancel all other citizenships. Most naturalization is completed after 10 years of living in Austria (Europaforum Wien 2002: 280, 281).

In Austria foreigners neither have active nor passive voting rights and there are no employment programmes for migrants (Europaforum Wien 2002: 290-291). On the basis of the federal structure of Austria there are different laws for migrants in the different provinces of Austria.

In December 2002 the members of the county council of Vienna decided to give voting rights to migrants in the Viennese districts but two conservative political parties (Österreichische Volkspartei, Freiheitliche Partei Österreich) announced that they will appeal this decision (Verfassungsgerichtshof) (Wiener Integrationsfonds 2003: 30).

The “agreement of integration (Integrationsvereinbarung)” includes the migrants’ commitment to learn the German language. This “agreement of integration” is the basis to earn the right to settle in Austria (“allowance of establishment” = “Niederlassungsbewilligung”). The migrant has to fulfill the conditions stated in the “agreement of integration” within two years of immigration. If the migrant fails to do this, he/she will be sent back to his/her country of origin (Wiener Integrationsfonds 2003: 23).

The „allowance of establishment” has special quotas for immigration every year. In summary 8.070 persons can immigrate to Austria in 2003 and in addition 5.490 family members of people already living in Austria can join them Austria (Wiener Integrationsfonds 2003: 26-29).

The Austrian system is very complicated because the “allowance of establishment” does not automatically include the “allowance to work (Arbeitserlaubnis)”. The “law for foreign workers” (Ausländerbeschäftigungsgesetz) stipulated that not more than 8% of all employees in Austria are allowed to be migrants. These two systems of quotas control immigration to Austria and lead to a very restrictive immigration policy.

The average rate of unemployed migrants in Austria is 12,5% to 8,4% of native Austrians that are unemployed (Wiener Integrationsfonds 2003: 16).

## 2.5 Educational aspects

In the school year 2000/2001 110.600 children of migrants went to school in Austria, these are 9% of all pupils in Austria. 73% of all foreign pupils were from Turkey and Ex-Yugoslavia. Children of migrants are mainly in elementary and secondary schools but not in general schools which qualify for university entrance. An important fact is that a very high percentage of migrant children between 6 and 14 years of age (23,1%) are in special schools that are meant for children with intellectual disabilities, even though this is not the case for them (Biffi/Bock-Schappelwein 2003: 124-127).

The problems of children of migrants in the Austrian school systems and their need for improved integration into this system are evident. The Austrian government has been trying to find a solution for these problems and to integrate children of migrants by implementing special language programs. The bad financial situation, the low educational level of migrants and insufficient information about the situation of the labour market in Austria aggravates this situation and leads to a high demand for improved integration measures.

The issue of volunteering and especially migrants' volunteering has not been very strongly linked to the educational system as yet. Questions like whether volunteer work of migrants can stimulate integration or can volunteer migrants help their peers have not been asked yet in the Austrian discourse.

### 3. Volunteer work in Austria

#### 3.1 Definition

In the International Year of Volunteers (2001) the Austrian government established different working groups to promote discussion on the situation of volunteer work in Austria. The working group “Basic questions of volunteer work and quality” defined volunteer work as follows:

- Voluntary
  - No remuneration
  - Has a certain duration and/or regularity
  - Is not for one’s own good or for that of one’s own family
  - It is in the context of an organization
- ([www.freiwilligenweb.at/pages/umsetz/arbeitskreise/ak1\\_uak1.html](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/pages/umsetz/arbeitskreise/ak1_uak1.html))

#### 3.2 Facts and Figures

According to the only study in Austria about the amount and scope of volunteer work 51% of the population of Austria worked in Austria as a volunteer and the informal support in the community was one of the most important activities (Badelt, Hollerweger 2001: 7-8).

In principle the total volume of volunteer work is regressive, in particular concerning informal support in the community. Volunteer work in formal organizations has slightly increased, above all volunteering in a religious context (Badelt, Hollerweger 2001: 21). There is no statistical information about migrants’ volunteering.

#### 3.3 Supporting and promoting volunteering in Austria

In the International Year of Volunteers 2001 the Austrian Federal Government aimed to raise awareness for the importance of the volunteer work for the social system in Austria. The “Austrian National Committee” presented their work in the “Volunteer Manifesto” 2001. This manifesto includes following demands:

- Better legal regulation of volunteer work
- Improving the sustainability of volunteering, by improving efforts to motivate all segments of the population (especially young and old people) to volunteer
- Improving the quality of volunteering through educational programs for
- Recognizing the relevance of qualifications earned in volunteering for employment
- Enabling more research in the area of volunteering

There are no references to promoting migrants’ volunteering in all of the documentation concerning the Year of volunteering. To implement these demands, the Ministry of Social Security and Generations installed the “Austrian Counsel of Volunteer Work” to represent the interest of volunteers and volunteer organizations and to advise the Austrian government on these issues. The

“Austrian Counsel of Volunteer Work” has 46 members representing different institutions (members of federal states and provinces, NGOs, ... ) (see: [www.freiwilligenweb.at/ministerratsbeschluss.html](http://www.freiwilligenweb.at/ministerratsbeschluss.html), 16.07.2003) and will commence their work shortly.



## 4. Migrants' organisations in Austria

After 40 years of immigration a wide variety of formal and informal migrants' organizations have developed. In Vienna there are 500 migrants' associations, in particular those of migrants from Turkey and Ex-Yugoslavia (Sohler/Waldrauch 2003: 96-139). One third of these organizations aims to integrate migrants in to the community that they live in (Sohler/Waldrauch 2003: 167-170).

*Table 2: Integration and education work in migrants' associations in Vienna*

Integration in general	21%
Promoting contacts to the native population	9%
Gaining knowledge on Austrian culture	4%
Gaining other knowledge about Austria	9%
German language courses for adults	9%
German language courses for children and youth	4%
Other education activities for adults (Computer course, job orientation courses, ...)	12%
Other educational activities for children and youth (Learning aid, ...)	5%

*Source: Sohler/Waldrauch 2003: 168*

On the average 8 persons work in these associations, 44% are women. The rate of youth and older volunteers is only 12%. The highest levels of members are Austrian citizens of foreign origin.

## 5. Examples of migrants' volunteering

While contacting organizations that potentially work with and for migrants, it became clear that the perspective of migrants' themselves volunteering is quite unknown and new for many of our contact persons. So these first contacts already gave us information that volunteer work of migrants is a new way at looking at things in Austria. While there are different organizations that offer advice and care for migrants in Austria, most of them do not have migrant volunteers in their teams.

The few good practice examples that were found focus on

- General education
- Culture, leisure activities and socializing
- Social care
- Political participation

The organisations of migrants are in the cities of Austria and full time persons work with volunteers together in different projects. The general target is to integrate migrants in the social system of Austria. They are very often financed by special projects, they have no basic financing.

### **CARITAS: project „volunteering“**

CARITAS includes volunteers as a principle in their social work. They offer volunteer opportunities for people of all ages and cultural background. People who want to volunteer in the social services of the CARITAS can do so after participating in a basic training course. Main activities of volunteers are visiting older people at home or offering students help with their homework.

### **Foreigner –integration advisory board (AIB) Linz**

The target of this volunteer advisory board is to represent the interest of migrants in the provincial capital Linz. As a result of the advisory boards' work, migrants in the province of Upper Austria are eligible for a housing allowance, that they did not have access to previously.

### **Neighbourhood-centres**

Neighbourhood-centres are focused on work in the community for people of all ages and nationalities. Volunteers get receive training and supervision regularly. The target of the Neighbourhood Centres is to be a platform for information and exchanging mutual help.

### **Association of and for older migrants**

In Austria the number of older migrants is increasing. This volunteer organization supports the self-help of older migrants, also in the terms of regaining access to the labour market. The association is run by volunteers and currently has 20 active members.

**ZEBRA – Centre for legal, health and social care for foreigners in Austria: Project “volunteer group for people” deportation counselling – (Schubhaftbetreuung)”**

ZEBRA advises foreigners in Austria, helps them find a job and support migrants in their further education and integration. The volunteer group helps people that are in danger of being sent back to their home countries by offering them translation services, legal advice and social support.

**Zeit!Raum – Association for promoting social and cultural work**

This organization operates in a district of Vienna, which has a high percentage of migrants. The target is to communicate the positive aspects of a multicultural society by youth work and intercultural and intergenerational projects.

## **6. Perspectives' on ethnic minority volunteering in Austria**

In the following we will give a short of the results that emerged from the literature search, the research on migrants' organizations and the final meeting in Austria.

### **6.1 Visibility of and research on migrant volunteering in Austria**

As mentioned above, people from ethnic minorities as volunteers are a topic, which is hardly known in Austria, and not widely recognized on public level.

This was also mirrored in our literature search on the topic. There is hardly any research on ethnic minorities' volunteer activities. Volunteer work of migrants is a new field of volunteer work in Austria. Volunteer work combined with the development of migration policy or with participation of migrants is not considered at all. Recently, the self-organization of migrants is becoming a focus of research and social interests, however there is no specific work on volunteering (Perchinig 2003: 373).

### **6.2 Migrant volunteering – a step towards integration?**

"Integration instead of new immigration" is the political motto in Austria currently and we also find it in the "National Action Plan to Combat Social Exclusion of Austria" (NAP 2001: 16-18). However, the role of volunteering as a possible step towards integration of people from ethnic minorities has not been acknowledged yet. While volunteering can be a step towards integration, in some cases volunteer work and active engagement in associations can lead to the development of "in-groups" and thus contribute more to segregation than to integration. This aspect needs to be kept in mind.

### **6.3 Older migrants as a resource**

The demographic data of the last years poses a strong case in point for encouraging volunteering and participation of older migrant. At the moment the percentage of older migrants of all migrants is 7%. But the prognoses of the institute for demography show us that the percentage of older people among migrants will approach the 22% of the native Austrian population (Reinprecht 1999: 9). If we connect this with the fact that to this to date only 8% of older migrants are volunteers in contrast to 36,5 % of older Austrians, it becomes self-evident that it is important to improve older migrants' opportunities for volunteering - in particular with respect to experiences in the labour market and education.

### **6.4 Cultural differences in volunteering**

In the course of the project it became very clear that people with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds have quite a different approach to volunteering. Whereas many Austrians volunteer in

associations and organizations, many people from ethnic minorities are more active informally in the framework of large social and family networks. Also, there are differences between people from ethnic minorities and native Austrians in their motives to volunteer. A study on older volunteers showed that volunteers from ethnic minorities were more focused on doing things for others and the Austrian volunteers were more likely to mention self-centred motives. In the course of the study no organizations mentioned culturally sensitive offers for volunteers from ethnic minorities.

## **6.5 Prerequisites for volunteering**

Especially in the final meeting, it was mentioned that people from ethnic minorities might have more difficulties concerning the personal prerequisites that are necessary for volunteering. These can be financial resources, time, support from friends and family, some qualifications, language skills etc. It became clear that in some cases volunteers from an ethnic minority will encounter more barriers to volunteering than their Austrian peers.

## **6.6 Promoting and supporting volunteering**

As mentioned in part 3, active support and promotion of volunteering has slowly developed in Austria in the past few years and has until now culminated in the activities connected to the UN-Year of volunteers in 2001. In the course of this project, we found one project in the province of Syria that promoted active participation of people from ethnic minorities.

The organizations and initiatives mentioned in part 5, are very different in size and organizational level. Whereas some have a complete infrastructure for volunteers (insurance, training, reimbursing out-of-pocket expenses, etc.), others so not have this framework. There is a large scope for introducing measures to promote ethnic minority volunteering in Austria.

## **6.7 Consequences for the future**

- There should be an increased effort to raise awareness for the benefits of active engagement of people from ethnic minorities in Austria.
- There should be further research on the issues that should raise questions; such as what does volunteering mean for migrants in Austria and what are the benefits for all of those involved.
- Promoting volunteering for people from ethnic minorities should be culturally sensitive and consider the specific needs of those involved.
- Specific groups of people from ethnic minorities, such as women, older people or youths should be considered, and if needed specific programs should be designed for them.
- Opportunities for volunteering of people from ethnic minorities need to be easily accessible in terms of geography, but also in terms of reducing social and cultural barriers.
- While the Austrian part of the project comes to the conclusion that promoting volunteering for people from ethnic minorities should be improved, it also has to be clear that this should not be mixed up with e.g. compulsory activities in the framework of integration programmes.

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