

Assembly of European Regions

Culture for the Inclusion of Refugees and Migrants

Handbook on Best Practices from Regions

AER
Assembly of European Regions

Inclusion by culture
Sharing of good practice in AER

During the autumn of 2015 the world got to face a new situation with refugees, a situation not seen in decades. This brings huge challenges for Europe, but also huge possibilities. At the same time extreme right parties, and even ultra nationalists and Nazi ideas are gaining ground around Europe. In the network of AER regions have to come together to help people in extreme need to keep Europe a place of humanity and solidarity. By fighting against racist politics and ideas that are dividing the human race Europe becomes stronger and better.

In this work we need different tools and different methods in every area of politics. I, and many with me, know the importance of the culture and culture activities, institutions and methods in this work. I believe that culture can be one of the world's best tools to create inclusion in society.

There are different ways of looking at new cultures coming to a country. I believe that culture can be a way to make people feel included, not just integrated. Asylum seekers and newly arrived need equal starting points and that we achieve by talking about inclusion instead of integration.

In nearly all societies things like music, dance, theatre, food, and art are pillars on which its culture rests. Thus, as something which transcends geographic boundaries, cultural activities have an important role to play in the inclusion of newcomers in societies. Cultural activities with refugees and migrants provide a safe place where they can interact and form connections with locals, learn the language, and express their cultural identities in their new countries. They give a space for refugees and migrants to acquire skills which will boost their employability and gain an understanding of their new country's culture.

In this compilation members from the AER network have shared their experiences of how to use culture to increase the inclusion of refugees and newly arrivals in their regions. This collection of best practices aims to inspire readers and motivate regions to continue exchanging experiences on this important topic. We need to help each other in the challenges that lie ahead.

Thank you for sharing.

Nina Björby
County councillor and chairwoman of the culture committee, Region of Västerbotten, Sweden
President of the sub-committee on Culture, AER

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Various project in Region Gävleborg, Sweden

Region	**Gävleborg**
Project name	Music- the global language
Duration	Spring 2015→
Organisation	Musica Viva
Contact	Alf NORBERG alf.norberg@regiongavleborg.se
Description	Our idea is that, through various channels, create meetings with asylum seekers who already have a strong connection to music; professional musicians, amateur and hobby musicians who need assistance in any form to resume their musicianship. We hope to connect the asylum seekers with those who received a permanent residence permit. Although we have not actively sought meetings, it has come to our attention that among the newly arrived are professional guitarists and pianists. By the Asylum Choir (which is the Church-sponsored), we have met newly arrived children and young people who want to start or continue to make music. We hope initially to form a group of about 10 - 20 newcomers with some sort of musical 'need. " Musica Viva's members would take the role of pilots in the cultural offerings of Söderhamn. Initially, we want to talk about music and what it means for our lives, and to join together - over the threshold - in concerts in various genres. In the longer term, the aim is to stimulate further cultural exchange and celebrate through music making. We hopa that some of the participants can become parts of Musica Viva and be involved in planning our future activities. We also want to inform other compounds, cultural unions and parents about where their children can make music. We hope to create new meetings for all of us through the music. We want to be a bridge between the newly arrivals and the cultural activities that are already in Söderhamn and its surroundings. We are convinced that it is enriching for all of us. The music is the global emotional language!

Region	**Gävleborg**
Project name	We Sing Together
Duration	Spring 2015→
Organisation	The Municipality of Hudiksvall
Contact	Alf NORBERG alf.norberg@regiongavleborg.se
Description	Along with Hudiksvall Chamber choir newly arrivals shall study traditional swedish singing songs together, both to learn the language and to promote the integration of the society. Music is a language that everyone knows around the world, so it can affect everyone and be a big help if for example learning the pronunciation in the Swedish language. Newly arrivals meets Swedes in real life, in the course of Swedish for newly arrivals, and practice singing together.

Region	**Gävleborg**
Project name	Game Culture on Equal Terms
Duration	Spring 2015→
Organisation	E-sports Association of Gävle
Description	Through the use of computers, board games, everyone are equal regardless of their ethnic background. Game culture is one of the fastest growing cultural branches in Sweden, which also helps to reduce crime and alcohol consumption. Game culture is instead used as a motor for inclusion. The association meets many curious asylum seekers, hence the association's facilities are located near the immigration office. The purpose of the project is to integrate asylum seekers and newly arrived in the gaming culture on equal terms and at the same time give them the opportunity to be a part of the association's gaming culture. With this project, they want to show and spread the knowledge of what Gävle has to offer in computer technology, e-sports, board games, etc. Two times a week the association have a "computer cafe" for all ages to meet to give the opportunity for entire families to learn the basics of computers and get access to video games, board games, video games, etc.

Region	**Gävleborg**
Project name	Lyckebokören
Duration	November 2015→
Organisation	The Municipality of Ovanåker
Contact	Björn INGESSON, Integration Director Municipality of Ovanåker, +4670-675 00 45
Description	In Ovanåker Municipality, Hälsingland, there are three homes for unaccompanied newly arrived youths. They come mainly from Afghanistan, but also from Eritrea, Sudan, Albania, Kuwait and Ethiopia. Björn Ingesson was working as integration Director at one of lodging when he noticed that the young people became interested in Swedish music and songs by Youtube. The Region of Gävleborg granted the municipality 25 000 SEK, to employ a choirmaster. The choir meets once a week and practice together for about two hours. Young people in all of the three lodgings can choose the choir as their "Swedish weekly activity". In the choir there are about about 20 active participants. The Study Promotion Association is a partner to the project and will pay for a studio recording of a disc when the choir are ready for it. The members of the choir has been in some different music events together and also made an official appearance for the audience.

REGION VÄSTERBOTTEN

Story Regions

Region	**Gävleborg**
Project name	Västerbotten
Duration	Autumn 2015
Organisation	Region Västerbotten
Contact	Anders KARLSSON, Project Coordinator Story regions Anders.karlsson@regionvasterbotten.se
Description	Story region was applied at the students at the course “Swedish for immigrants program”. The project we have been testing uses narrative technique to increase the language learning. The purpose was to make people from different backgrounds feel included, because all cultures have stories. For example the teachers in the language class made the students do exercises by theatre, interpretation of images, using wordless books and making of own stories. Noted in the project was that many stories from different countries are much alike. That makes the students feel confidence and allows for understanding between their culture and the new Swedish culture became stronger. After the fall the students in the group had learned Swedish in a more efficient way then the teachers had seen before.

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Region	**Nordland**
Project name	Kulturfabrikken
Duration	2014 →
Organisation	Kulturfabrikken
Contact	Tone TOFTEN, director Kulturfabrikken, tone@kulturfabrikkensortland.no
Description	Kulturfabrikken is a cultural center in Sortland that contains cinema, library, gallery, museum, arts, workshops, voluntary exchange, adult education and cafe, as well as multi-purpose halls where one can experience everything from concerts, to theater for conferences and parties. To collect everything in one place has been an important tool in the local integration. Kulturfabrikken is a house used by everyone and where people can meet across cultures and generations. Refugees are active library users and there are several unaccompanied minors who participate in our youth initiatives “Ungdsomfabrikken”. There is also a partnership with the Red Cross where they help to inform refugees about activities in the building.

Region	**Nordland**
Project name	Food Across Borders
Duration	2015
Organisation	Sortland Voluntary Central Organisation
Contact	Tone TOFTEN, director Kulturfabrikken, tone@kulturfabrikkensortland.no
Description	Food across borders is an initiative of integration by Sortland voluntary central organizing in cooperation with NAV Refugee Service. People meet over stews and bake buns to learn how to cook meals from different countries. The goal is to make contact between Norwegians and settled refugees by cooking and eatating together. The project was a huge success with participants of all ages, from teenagers to those in 80 years, and was free-free to attend. As a result of the project an international cafe was arranged where participants made and sold their food in an open cafe. This has been very popular and gathered a large crowd.

Region	**Nordland**
Project name	Dame Choir Palette
Duration	2015
Organisation	Sortland Voluntary Central Organisation
Contact	Tone TOFTEN, director Kulturfabrikken, tone@kulturfabrikkensortland.no
Description	As part of the introduction program for refugees in Sortland the municipality offers all the female refugees to sing in choir. The choir was named Palette and was established in February 2015. The school of culture is responsible for the teaching and the musical lead. In addition to immigrant women, there are several Norwegian ladies who voluntarily sings in the choir. That's how the project create good integration and meetings across borders and cultures. The repertoire consists mainly of Norwegian songs, which contributes to greater understanding of language and phonetic language learning. The choir often performs in different contexts, both alone and with others. Performing is helping the women to build confidence.

Region	**Region Jämtland Härjedalen**
Project name	Craft Kitchen Friday
Duration	Ongoing
Organisation	County Culture Handicraft Consultants
Contact	Karolina NÄTTERLUND, Regional centre of design, karolina.natterlund@regionjh.se
Description	A creative encounter place with a mix of crafts, food, dance and music, etc. for young people, with a desire for integration between Swedes and newly arrived youngsters. Each occasion mixes music, performances and personal creativity. The project requires cooperation between several devices as the museum, performers and the municipalities. It's also a space for various non-profit organizations to work together.

Region	**Sörmland**
Project name	Språkmöten (language meetings)
Duration	Autumn 2016
Organisation	County Council of Sörmland, Åsa Folk High School, Regional Adult Education Association (LBF), the study associations ABF and NBV in the municipality of Flen.
Contact	Mikael PALO, Culture & Education Manager at the County Council of Sörmland, +46 70-5187242, Mikael.palo@dll.se
Description	The aim of the project is to create more meeting places in the municipality of Flen and thereby promote the inclusion of asylum seekers by enabling Swedes and asylum seekers to be to get together and talk, share experiences, learn from each other and increase understanding between people. The project consists of a Language Café twice a month to offer language-training and community-building activities twice a week. Responsible for the organization and implementation of the activities are two hourly paid tutors. The asylum seekers are invited to participate voluntary. Study material, transportation, refreshments, etc. for students and asylum seekers is included in the project.

Region	**Landstinget Västernorrland**
Project name	Mer Dans Åt foket (More Dance for the People)
Duration	October 2016 – June 2017
Organisation	Norrdans (Dance company)
Contact	Mira Hellenius, Artistic Director, mira.hellenius@norrdans.se
Description	A dance project that gives asylum seekers and refugees, from young to old, the chance to meet high quality culture in a very non dramatic way, but also to create opportunities for people to dance them self. The project wants to inspire people from different culture backgrounds, offer a meaningful activity and encourage people's own creativity. The project includes regular dance classes for asylum seekers and refugees but also the opportunity to experience Norrland's own performances around the region for free.

Region	**Landstinget Västernorrland**
Project name	Film På Asylboende (To create film, at the refugee camps)
Duration	2017
Organisation	Film Västernorrland
Contact	Marie Nilsson, Head of Film, marie.nilsson@filmvasternorrland.se
Description	To create workshops in film making at several different asylum accommodations in the region, a very hands on creative activity. The project aims to provide the participants with the basic knowledge in the film making process. Basically how to go from an idea to a movie. During the three days of the workshop the participants will work with screenwriting, filming and editing. Another focus of this project is to locate people who are professional film makers or have been working with in the film industry in their former countries.

Region	**Landstinget Västernorrland**
Project name	Slöjdspråk (Crafts and Language)
Duration	November 2016 – June 2017
Organisation	Hemslöjdskonsulenten, Länsmuseet Murberget
Contact	Annso Grahn, Consultant for handicraft Västernorrland, annso.grahn@murberget.se
Description	When you work with your hands and are creative you relax and then you can absorb knowledge more easy, like learning a new language. This project takes place in different refugee camps around the region of Västernorrland. Some of the gatherings focus on children and youth creativity and some are aimed towards women. This is both a way to practice the Swedish language, a chance to be creative and learn different craft techniques and it offers a break from the monotonous life at the camp.

REGIONE AUTONOMA
FRIULI VENEZIA GIULIA

Region	**Fiuli Venezia Giulia**
Project name	Calciozenia
Duration	2017 - 2018
Organisation	Friuli Venezia Guilia and Lega Calcio Fiuli Collinare
Contact	Mario Zoletto, mario.zoletto@regione.fvg.it
Description	Friuli Venezia Guilia's project Calcioxenia involved the organisation of a seven a side football tournament, which was attended by the nearly 300 associations affiliated with Lega Calio Friuli Collinare. Leading up to the mixed team tournament where different municipalities competed against each other, refugees practiced and trained with local athletes which helped foster the inclusion of migrants into everyday society. The choice of the name root word xenia, which means hospitality in Greek symbolises the long-held Italian values of openness and generosity. An integral part of the refugees' and local culture, football offered something which could unite both parties across linguistic and experiential barriers. Football gave the participants a shared sense of belonging and identity, helping to weave the refugees into the fabric of each community.

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Region	**Grand Est**
Project name	Refugee Food Festival
Duration	November 2017 – December 2017
Organisation	Strasbourg Metropolitan Municipality and Food Sweet Food
Contact	strasbourg@refugeefoodfestival.com
Description	From December 18-24, the Strasbourg Christmas market welcomed refugee chefs from Syria, Afghanistan, and Tibet each cooking dishes from their native cuisines at the Refugee Food Festival Stall. Founded in 1570, the Strasbourg Christmas market has been a staple in Alsatian culture ever since. For many years, the Strasbourg Christmas market has remained largely traditional in its selection of cuisine, featuring local Christmas cookies, vin chaud, and tarte flambée. However, by featuring non-traditional cuisine, the refugee food festival allows residents of Strasbourg and tourists to explore new dishes and flavours while giving the refugees the chance to connect to local culture. The Refugee Food Festival is a citizens-led endeavor by Food Sweet Food, an organisation whose stated aim is to forge connections between people through culinary events and books and documentaries.

Provincie Noord-Brabant

Region	**North Brabant**
Project name	Kunstkamaden
Duration	2015 →
Organisation	Cultuurkantine
Contact	info@cultuurkatine.nl
Description	In many cities, asylum centres are geographically isolated from the most frequented areas of town making it difficult for refugees to befriend locals. Even when refugees have obtained status and live in municipalities, ethnic enclaves often develop reinforcing refugees' lack of social contact with native residents. Cultuurkantine believes art can be a powerful mechanism for the inclusion of refugees in society by connecting cultures and communities, and have dedicated themselves to ending refugees' social isolation. Thus, in 2015 they founded the Kunstkameraden project for refugees living in asylum centers in Breda. The project pairs young, artistically inclined refugees with professional artists where they collaborate to create different works ranging from pottery to paintings.

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RÉGION DE BRUXELLES-CAPITALE
BRUSSELS HOOFDSTEDELIJK GEWEST
BRUSSELS CAPITAL REGION

Region	**Brussels Capital**
Project name	Lives and Cultures to Share
Duration	2016
Organisation	Tournai Anama
Contact	omemartine@gmail.com
Description	Lives and Cultures to Share organises visits to museums and cultural exhibitions for newcomers where they are guided by locals. With a diverse array of museums ranging from the Belgian Beer Museum to the Musical Instrument Museums, Brussels' museums offer a window into the country's rich history and culture. Consequently, Tournai Anama's project gives refugees the opportunity to better understand their new country while establishing social connections with locals. The project was primarily funded through a grant available through the Foundation Roi Baudouin.

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Kanton Zürich

Region	**Zurich Canton**
Project name	Refugee Theatre
Duration	2015 →
Organisation	Malaika
Contact	info@fluechtlingstheater-malaika.ch
Description	Refugee theatre was founded in 2014 as a small initiative for visitors of a weekly lunch, supported by the Solinetz and the parish of Aussersihl. Originally a group of 20 composed of people from 9 nations, 4 religions, and 3 generations, they created the short 30-minute play Diversity Zurich, presenting it twice a week in front of 100 spectators. Since then, the initiative has grown and now produces multiple plays every year which lead to the foundation of Flüchtlings Theater Malaika. With such a diverse cast the plays bring together multiple cultural influences and allow participants to learn from each other's cultures. Moreover, the initiative helps to improve the newcomers' German while increasing their confidence in expressing themselves in a new environment. Finally, refugee theatre has helped to include the refugees in Swiss society by forging connections with locals.

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Region	**Basel-Stadt**
Project name	Gastschafftfreund
Duration	2016 →
Organisation	Gastschafftfreund Association
Contact	imail@gastschafftfreund.ch
Description	In Gastschafftfruend (guest friend), the Gastschafftfruend Association helps bring refugees and locals get together to bond over a shared meal. The association collects invitations forms from families, couples, and singles living in the Basel region and determines which hosts would be best suited for interested refugees. Once the matching has been completed, each party is informed with the hosts often calling the guests to arrange a time. According to creator Marta Casulleras, the inspiration for the project came from a report on a Stockholm based teacher who brought together refugees and locals over dinner. Casulleras has now created her own version of the initiative in Basel Stadt, bringing together locals who would otherwise rarely meet. While the focus is on the encounter and not the culinary art, dinner holds a special place in numerous societies. In multiple cultures, the table is a place of family gathering and is a symbol of togetherness, serving as the backdrop to intimate conversation. Indeed, conversing over a common cultural aspect such as dinner helps to bridge other linguistic and cultural barriers by adding an element of familiarity to the situation.

Region	**Vienna**
Project name	BBQ Masters
Duration	2017 →
Organisation	City of Vienna
Contact	Goran Novakovic
Description	In Vienna, public barbecues are an integral part of local gastronomic culture, popular among those who do live in small flats or do not have a garden. Similarly, it is popular among those with a migrant background. However, in the past when newcomers have used the public space conflict has arisen with local neighbours, cyclists, and pedestrians. The project barbecue masters bring together locals and newcomers in public barbecue areas allowing them bond over food and enjoy an important aspect of Viennese culture. Moreover, the project ensures that newcomers are aware of relevant rules, norms, and regulations surrounding use of the space, mitigating the likelihood of conflict.

Region	**Vestfold**
Project name	International Dance for Women
Duration	October 2016 – June 2017
Organisation	Red Cross House Horten
Contact	Niana Thorvaldsen, pavja@hotmail.com
Description	International Dance for Women brings together women who have different backgrounds, ethnicities and life experiences, but share a common love of dance. As international forms of expression, dance and music have allowed Norwegians to connect with migrants and refugees, giving them the chance to network in Horten. Moreover, the project has given the newcomers a place a security and comfort, helping to ease their transition to their new societies. Open to women of all ages, the space is also accepting of women who just want to come sit and talk with everyone.

Region	**Vestfold**
Project name	SESAM
Duration	October 2016 – June 2017
Organisation	The Norwegian School and the Red Cross
Contact	Ellen Midtvik, ellen@midtvik.on
Description	Collaborating with the Norwegian school, women of different nationalities convene at the health house where they learn Norwegian through stitching, knitting, and cooking. Conducted every other week, there are currently 12 Norwegian women volunteering with the project. Although the target audience is new arrivals, the space is open to migrants who have been living in but wish to improve their Norwegian. By using common leisure activities for women in many cultures such as sewing and knitting, the project hopes to create a relaxed environment where migrants feel comfortable expressing themselves and practicing their Norwegian.

Brașov County

Region	**Brașov**
Project name	Brasov Multicultural Day
Duration	October 2016 – June 2017
Organisation	Brasov Migration Center
Contact	Astrid Hamberger, astrid2001ro@yahoo.com
Description	An annual event in Brasov, the Multicultural Day Festival is organised to educate locals and promote cultural diversity. The festival has three main components including stage performances which include traditional dances, plays, and music, cultural exhibitions created by recently arrived migrants, and international cuisine where locals are given an opportunity to taste traditional dishes. The event is designed to encourage intercultural dialogue, exchange, and understanding through cultural activities locals would not normally be able to experience. Furthermore, the event gives refugees and migrants the ability to bring with them important aspects of their former homes' cultures, continuing longstanding traditions.

Tirol

Austria

Region	**Tyrol**
Project name	Traveling Together
Duration	October 2016 – June 2017
Organisation	Austrian Alpine Club
Contact	Alpine Club Website
Description	As a culture which values outdoors activities, Traveling Together tries to include newcomers in Austrian culture by inviting them on hiking and climbing trips. The projects wish to showcase Austria's welcoming culture and awareness of their responsibilities to include refugees in society. Traveling Together's scenic treks give newcomers the chance to see the diverse Austrian landscape-from mountains, to low lying springs-where the calming influence of nature gives refugees an escape outlet from their worries and concerns. Hiking alongside locals also offers refugees the chance to build social connections while practicing their German.

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Region	**Timiş**
Organisation	Timiş County Council, Via Rumania Cultura
Contact	José Miguel VIÑALS jm.vinals@viarumania.com
Description	The affluence of migrants from different cultures into Western societies (generic denomination that would also include all EU countries, the American continent, Australia and New Zealand) is a way of enriching our often old societies with young people, very necessary workforce to maintain our economies at cruising speed. But it can also be a source of problems linked to the diversity of perspectives and the difficulty for the newcomers to adopt the set of values that form the base of the societies they plan to stay at. Culture is not a passion for concerts, art, literature and theater. Culture is the way a group of people (nation, country) understands life and organizes to respond to these understanding. It is before all a set of values. The success of the inclusion (integration) of newcomers has a unique point of departure: their determination and total wish to integrate, meaning with this their conviction that they want to adopt the values of the place they want to live at. If this first condition is fulfilled the following necessary requirements are as follows. 1.) They need to receive help to integrate: A team of dedicated people from the society need to be ready to attend the newcomers and to assist them in their first steps. These professionals will transmit cultural values together with all the necessary information for the best of integrations. 2.) The immigrants have to know that law has to be respected. Local law is part of the set of values and has its foundations in the culture of that society. 3.) The immigrants need to feel that they are accepted by the rest of society. If not they will look for reasons to not renounce to their own set of values and this will be the root of future conflict. 4.) Public authorities need to monitor and supervise the ongoing integration evolution in the long term. It is extremely hard for one person to change their mindset to adopt a new one. Support, counseling and monitoring need to be available at any moment.