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ΠΕΡΙΦΕΡΕΙΑ ΚΡΗΤΗΣ
REGION OF CRETE

Good Practice in Social Integration of Immigrants

Integrationshaus: An Example of a Holistic Approach to Immigrant Integration in Vienna

07/2025



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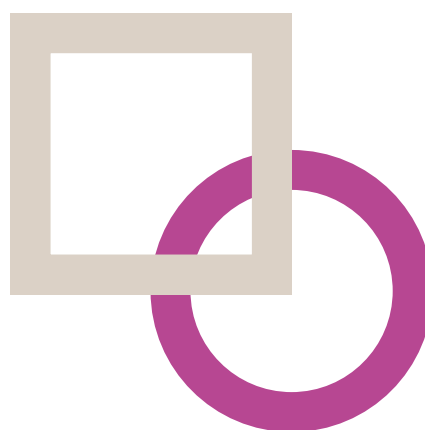


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Introduction



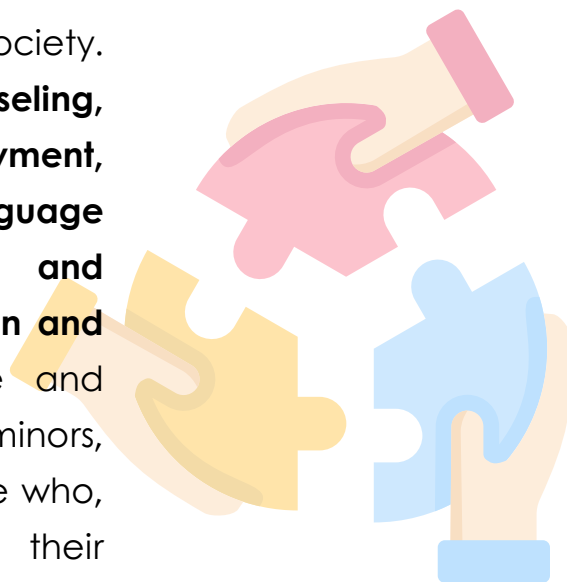
The **Integrationshaus** is considered a good practice in the social integration of immigrants as it applies a holistic approach that combines housing, education, psycho-social and counseling support, as well as access to the labor market. It is an institution that enhances the participation of immigrants in society through language, training and intercultural coexistence and is particularly aimed at vulnerable groups, such as women, children and refugees with traumatic experiences, providing personalized care. It operates in cooperation with public and social institutions, promoting social cohesion, adopts principles of non-discrimination and respect for dignity and is constantly adapting to social and immigration developments. For all the above reasons, it has been recognized for its effectiveness and innovative methodology.



How is it applied?

Migration management in Vienna has been and continues to be carried out by the city's municipal services. However, the two wars in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s caused massive refugee flows to Austria, making the existing state structures and services insufficient to meet the increased needs. Within this context, the Integrationshaus was founded in 1995, a model reception, support and integration center for asylum seekers, refugees and migrants.

The main sponsor of the organization is the **Vienna Social Fund** (Fonds Soziales Wien). However, public funding is not sufficient to fully cover the operating needs, with the result that approximately 20% of the budget is covered by private donations, corporate partnerships, cultural events and other alternative sources of funding.

The Integrationshaus offers a wide range of support services aimed at the smooth integration of its clients into Austrian society. These include **social and legal counseling, support in finding housing and employment, access to educational and language programmes, psycho-social support and special programmes for women, children and young people**. It also provides care and protection for unaccompanied refugee minors, as well as for children and young people who, for various reasons, cannot live with their families.





The organization's contribution is particularly crucial when considering the refugee reality of 2023. According to the Austrian Ministry of the Interior, **59,232 new asylum applications** were recorded (however, reduced compared to the 112,272 in 2022). 29,976 applications came from citizens of war-torn countries, mainly from Afghanistan and Syria. 54% of the applicants were men, 12% were women and 34% were minors. At the same time, Austria hosted 83,405 displaced people from Ukraine due to the war.

In the particularly vulnerable segment of unaccompanied minor refugees, **4,946 asylum applications were submitted in 2023** (however much fewer than the 13,276 in 2022), with 97% of the applicants being boys and 205 of them under the age of 14. For many of them, arriving in Austria means a long wait for placement in appropriate care structures. Recognizing this need, Integrationshaus focused on providing immediate care from the very first day.

The organization is staffed by a multi-level human resource that contributes significantly to the implementation of the organization's work. According to the annual report for 2023, a total of 175 people were employed: 156 employees, 6 freelancers, 13 substitutes and 10 people through community service programs. In addition, 260 volunteers offered their services in various roles – as friends, mentors, educational guides or teachers. Their participation is strengthened and supported through educational workshops, focus groups and systematic guidance by specialized staff and coordinators of the organization.

In 2023, a total of **5,572 people from 72 countries received help and counseling from the various programs of the Integrationshaus**, confirming the importance and necessity of its existence in supporting refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants in Austria.

Regarding the services offered by the Integrationshaus to asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants, these include a wide range of support services and actions, which aim to their smooth integration into Austrian society. Specifically:






▶▶▶ Accommodation and Psycho-social Care

The psycho-social care team in Vienna offers two housing programs for asylum seekers, recognized refugees and people with subsidiary protection status. One program concerns **housing in a special structure with psycho-social support**, which in 2023 hosted 177 people (adults and families) and focuses on housing and support for people with special needs, such as mental disorders or chronic illnesses. The second program, called "**First Flat**", offers a basic level of care and housing to 93 people (in 2023) in dispersed housing communities in various areas of Vienna, with mobile psycho-social support.

In addition, the Integrationshaus provides **socio-pedagogical housing** for children and adolescents. Specifically, these residences constitute a structured and safe environment for accommodation and care for unaccompanied minor refugees as well as for children and young people who, for various reasons, cannot live with their families. The children and young people living in the socio-educational residences, as they have been exposed to particularly stressful and traumatic situations, have undergone psychotherapy to help them accept their experiences. At the same time, the psychologists of the structure do not only offer counseling sessions to the young people, but also to their caregivers on how to deal with the situation and plan the next steps. The program includes three residential communities and covers the needs of a total of 26 children and adolescents, aged 3 to 18 years. The number of children who benefited from the services of the structure in 2023 was 26.

In total, 296 people benefited from the housing structures of the Integrationshaus, of whom 158 are male-boys and 138 female-girls. Their countries of origin are mainly from Ukraine, Syria, Russia, Somalia and Afghanistan.



▶▶▶ Counseling

The Integrationshaus offers **free counseling** and support to refugees receiving basic social support and living in Vienna (in private or organized accommodation), with the aim of strengthening their social integration by providing individualized support at multiple levels of everyday life.


Counseling is provided in a variety of languages, and if another language is required, an interpreter can be called in. For those who do not yet speak German sufficiently, the additional option of accompaniment and practical support from volunteers is offered.

General social counseling covers a wide range of issues: **basic social support benefits, housing, contact with public services and organizations, employment, vocational training and further education, education** (including kindergartens and schools), **health and mental health, social adaptation, legal issues, experiences of violence** (especially against women and girls) **as well as phenomena of discrimination.**

In addition to social support, the Integrationshaus also offers **free, independent legal advice.** This includes guidance and contact with language course providers, education and training providers, understanding qualifications, skills and abilities, help with preparing job application documents and finding a job.

In the area of housing, advisors help with apartment searches, filling out housing applications, drawing up a financial budget, and accompanying people to appointments to find housing or signing a lease.





For young people and young adults, support is provided in learning to live independently and within a daily routine, advice on issues specific to young people and guidance on legal matters. Women and girls receive specialized support in cases of violence, personal crises, physical and mental health, as well as advice on relationship issues (childrearing, divorce, custody and separation). Special care is given to single mothers.

Finally, for people experiencing mental stress, regular appointments are provided, support in finding suitable housing with increased care needs, assistance in finding relevant treatment and legal guidance for representing adults.

It is worth mentioning that **the counseling center is accessible to people with disabilities**, while all the above information is offered in four more languages (French, Arabic, Farsi and Russian) in addition to German and English.

Education and educational guidance

The Integrationshaus places particular emphasis on education as a means of empowerment and social integration of young people, young adults and women. The aim is to gain access to basic education and training, integration into the labor market and, more broadly, social integration. The central axis of all actions is the development of skills in the German language, while the individual programs also focus on the acquisition of basic competencies, familiarization with professional terminology and the development of professional skills.

At the same time, the educational and vocational guidance program “mo.o.v.e. on” is implemented within the framework of the Integrationshaus, which aims to support young people aged 15 to 19 – and in some cases up to 24 – in their transition from school to vocational training or the labor market. The program is aimed at both students who are still in the education system and young people who have already left it.



Guidance for younger students takes place within public schools, while older students receive support in selected upper secondary schools in the Vienna districts. Young people who are no longer in school are supported by the Integrationshaus counseling centers, offering them individual guidance in planning their career path.

In 2023, the “mo.o.v.e. on” programme supported a total of 2,608 young people aged 14 to 24.



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Project summary



Scope

Social integration agency for immigrants



Country / Region

Austria, Vienna



Where is it applied?

The Integrationshaus is aimed at immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Vienna.



When did it applied?

The Integrationshaus began operating in 1995.



Results

The Integrationshaus has been recognized with numerous distinctions and awards for its social work. The following awards are indicative:

- 2021: Received the Austrian Child Protection Award “MYKI” for the psychological empowerment program for children “Bärenstark”
- 2018: Honored with the MigAward in the category “Education and Society”
- 2016: Honored with the MYKI Kinderschutzpreis for the project “Im Leo”
- 2015: Won the Alexander FriedmannPreis for his human and social approach
- 2014: Awarded the ADGAR Social Advertising Werbepreis in the category “Social Advertising”



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- 2011: Ranked 2nd in the ESF Innovationsaward for the program “m.o.v.e. on»
 - 2010: Awarded the Austrian State Prize for Adult Education, in the category “Inclusion through Education” for the project “DYNAMO”
 - 2007: Received the European Label Europassiegel for innovative language programs for the project “DYNAMO”
 - 2005: Received the European Label Europassiegel for the project SquP
 - 2003: Received the European Label Europassiegel for the promotion of early multilingualism.



Other information

The official website of the Integrationshaus is:

<https://www.integrationshaus.at/en/integrationshaus>



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