

GARTEN DER BEGEGNUNG



Collective gardening, crafting, socialising & knowledge exchange, sewing workshops and design together with locals, asylum seekers, school classes, kids and other interested people.

The Garden of Encounter is a social agriculture & intercultural crafting project for people with or without flight background – with following activities:

- Learning from each other while working in our organic garden and in our sewing workshop.
- Supporting local environmental and social projects, esp. planting fruit trees
- Assisting asylum seekers in Austria to enable inclusion after granted asylum.
- Networking in the fields of organic agriculture, migration and integration.

The garden is open for everyone. People can get to know each other, experience a healthy and meaningful outdoor activity, while learning a lot from each other.

THE BEGINNING

The garden of encounter was founded in the summer of 2015, when the Camp in Traiskirchen was crowded with waiting refugees.

Civil society people wanted to help and so we created a place where people could meet and come together, regardless of nationality, religion and age.

Around 25 volunteers from different walks of life and professions then founded our NGO. We came together in the attempt to relieve one of the worst hardships of the refugees: being condemned to do NOTHING but WAIT.

Working together in the garden, at the sewing or wood workshop is like a lifeline for many of them. Language, culture and encounter, having fun while working together!

OUR ACTIVITIES



COMMUNITY AGRICULTURE:

A field of 10.000 m² for our organic farm. Since 2016 we have been sowing, planting, harvesting, cooking and we receive visitors and school classes at the garden. Farm animals are also an important part of our project. Our overflow is given to the Traiskirchen social market "Der Gute Laden".

The interest of schools has grown overtime and we offer education, not only for kids, on organic agriculture, sustainability and integration/inclusion.

TEXTILE WORKSHOP:

A wonderful place for a tailor's workshop. Here we create shirts, bags, backpacks and other useful things. We can also foster our refugees' skills and motivate them to create new things of use for themselves.

We organise various festivities & organic farming seminars, have created a market stall with our products, receive many visitors every Saturday at our "oriental breakfast" and participate in local ecological initiatives.

WHAT WE HAVE REACHED SO FAR

Meanwhile our NGO has run up to 80 members and there are many regular visitors and helpers. In 2018 at least 50 refugees came to work with us 3 times a week and we met and worked with many interested people from the surrounding area who are curious about our social and agricultural structures.

After 3 years we have reached over a hundred migrant people, helped them to have valuable encounters in a beneficial atmosphere and supported them in their everyday routines, such as helping with public transportation tickets, language courses, private housing and more.

THE CHALLENGE: ACTING LONG-TERM

Today Traiskirchen is not so much in the public focus any more, but many of our staff members are still waiting for their asylum procedures. Unexpected change of living place through the regional authorities has a strong psychological impact on refugees. The garden or the sewing workshop play a big role to help them stabilizing.

Now the challenge is to put the project on stable legs. To be able to carry on acting and functioning as a flagship-project in "integration through communal action", we need your help.

We face every year current expenses for seeds and seedlings, tools, occasional services, materials, constructional timber, cooking ingredients and kitchen furnishings, tickets and much more, that we cannot cover completely with the revenue of our market activities. For the rest we have to rely on donations and the help of the municipality of Traiskirchen.

For the fourth year our organisation is planning to professionalize our social and ecological contribution to society and to expand it in three dimensions:

1. to deepen the social and educative contribution as a preparation for entering the world of employment (after asylum has been granted) by giving more responsibility to the refugees and offering various training courses for important topics like for instance environmental protection
2. to combine meeting with other cultures and a local supply with fresh organic products by extending the market season, delivering our products to other cities, offering oriental food at the garden and as a catering service elsewhere
3. to exert a positive influence on the topic of climate change by raising - with what we do in the garden and in the upcycling sewing workshop - the awareness of refugees as well as of local residents.

UNIQUE, SOCIAL AND CUTTING-EDGE

The „Garden of Encounter“ and the sewing workshop in a unique way combine the social advantages of a meaningful occupation for asylum seekers during the long time of waiting for legal proceedings with intercultural encounter and ecology. In addition, our association plays an important and multi-dimensional educational role for staff members, children and teenagers as well as for all visitors.

This beacon project shows how – especially in a small town with a long history of initial reception of refugees – human dignity as well as inclusion can be lived in practice.

By commonly cultivating vegetables, fruits and herbs, pupils, grown-ups, people with or without the experience of flight discover their connectedness with earth, which is the basis of life for every human being independent of their place of birth.