

urban
x-change
network

DOCUMENTATION

Connecting cities and their citizens through adult education



“Humanity globally is facing enormous challenges: the climate crisis, wars and violent conflicts, social inequality and the increasingly rapid digital transformation are changing our livelihoods and require the active cooperation of all.”

– UWE GARTENSCHLAEGER,
DIRECTOR OF DVV INTERNATIONAL

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Humanity globally is facing enormous challenges: the climate crisis, wars and violent conflicts, social inequality and the increasingly rapid digital transformation are changing our livelihoods and require the active cooperation of all. This is certainly true at the individual and local level. But it is also clear that we will only be able to cope with the tasks ahead of us if we strengthen international cooperation – and if we inspire as many people as possible to participate. Think globally, act locally is an often-heard slogan for this.

But how do you motivate people to get involved globally, how do you nurture understanding for the concerns, traditions and needs of people in other countries and regions? The Urban X-Change Network project sought to use adult education institutions to bring together citizens, civil society and local governments from Germany, the USA, Ukraine and the UK to identify and implement joint projects. The objective was to build bridges and increase mutual understanding through joint action.

The testimonies presented in this volume from a total of nine project partnerships between German Adult Education Centres (“Volkshochschulen”) and their foreign

counterparts impressively show that the idea was successful: **Adult education institutions are good anchors that can bring people of the most diverse origins together in smaller or larger urban societies and motivate them to become active across borders.** They can thus make an important contribution to understanding and help safeguard universal values such as human rights and democracy. They can create beacons of solidarity, as demonstrated in particular by the three partnerships with Ukraine.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the nine Volkshochschulen involved and their partners for their overwhelming commitment, which in many cases has gone far beyond mere project implementation. My special thanks go to the Association of German Cities (Deutscher Städtetag) for its manifold support of our work as well as to the Federal Foreign Office for its generous funding of the project.



Uwe Gartenschlaeger

DIRECTOR OF DVV INTERNATIONAL

Whether escalating crises, conflicts and wars, the climate crisis or the threat to the international rules-based order: the challenges currently facing politics, and therefore also German foreign policy, are enormous. Tackling these challenges in a sustainable manner requires exchange beyond government consultations. Spaces for inter-societal dialogue and interpersonal contacts are needed to build durable bridges from people to people. This is a central component of our “foreign policy of societies”, which requires the involvement of local and municipal actors and formats such as town twinning and adult education centers.

The Urban X-Change Network project of DVV International, which is funded by the Federal Foreign Office and about which you can find detailed information in this documentation, forms an important component of this “foreign policy of societies”. **By linking adult education institutions and local authorities, the project supports the network-building of civil societies – not only in Germany, but also in Ukraine, the UK and the USA.** In this way, cohesion is strengthened, cross-border solutions are sought together and mutual learning

is made possible. In particular the “city partnerships” created as part of the project have proven to be a great success, as a platform for dialog and a driver of innovation. It is therefore also thanks to the DVV International and the numerous participants that our societies remain open-minded, tolerant and eager for knowledge.

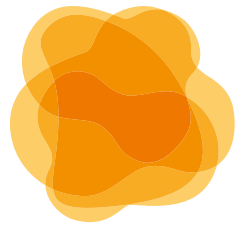
You can find out more about the success of the numerous initiatives that have emerged as part of the project and about the role of cities and adult education centers in foreign relations in this project documentation. I hope you, dear readers, enjoy reading it!

Yours sincerely,



Felix Silin

DIVISION FOR CULTURAL, SOCIETAL AND MEDIA RELATIONS, FEDERAL FOREIGN OFFICE OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY



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Adult Education and Urban Diplomacy

How can Urban Diplomacy Support the Pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals?

In the framework of the Urban X-Change Network, 18 cities from four countries created 9 bilateral city partnerships as novel spaces for mutual learning, dialogue, and exchange. As a unique feature, adult education centres were the key actors of this project: they were front and centre in developing the collaboration, setting the agenda, and involving further stakeholders. Thus, they acquired new roles as leading actors within the framework of an urban diplomacy project.

What is Urban Diplomacy?

‘Urban diplomacy’ identifies municipalities as key actors of foreign policy. Through international partnerships and networks, cities have become central actors on the international stage, thus complementing the traditional state diplomacy at the level of national governments from the bottom up.

As global crises endure, the importance of collaboration and exchange between cities across national borders is increasing dramatically: Cities and their inhabitants are challenged by global crises and are compelled to develop customized local solutions. Cities, therefore, crystallized as central actors for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Through collaboration across national borders, cities can exchange best practices in tackling such challenges, thus mutually enhancing their policies.

In the light of these challenges, the form of collaboration between cities is changing. Traditional ways of city partnerships, comprising notability’s meetings behind closed doors with photo-ops, are a thing of the past.

Today, citizens expect an open dialogue with their city authorities. Partnerships are called to become more inclusive, and comprise civil servants of various agencies and ranks, civil society organisations, and citizens themselves. Further, contemporary partnerships are learning environments as people exchange best practices, share expertise, and inspire each other. Thus, cities can create new spaces for discussion, co-operation, and learning, both locally and across borders, through urban diplomacy.

Collaboration for Sustainability: The Urban X-Change Network

This is exactly what the partners in the Urban X-Change Network did. Each partnership identified one or several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the overarching reference of the collaboration; these included SDG 5 ‘Gender equality’, SDG 6 ‘Clean water and sanitation’, SDG 10 ‘Reduced Inequalities’, SDG 11 ‘Sustainable cities and communities’, SDG 12 ‘Responsible consumption and production’ and SDG 13 ‘Climate action’. The projects referred to the local challenges and involved the local expertise concerning these goals. The contents of the exchange, therefore, were very practical and specific; yet, participants were aware of the bigger picture, and consciously referenced both the local and the global dimension of their work.

Through an inclusive working approach, the Urban X-Change Network created unique learning spaces for a range of stakeholders – from the highest ranks of the

city governments to marginalized groups, from civil society and local authorities, and various levels of responsibility.

Urban Diplomacy and the War in Ukraine

On 24 February 2022, the Russian war against Ukraine unleashed a wave of solidarity at the city level. Within 18 months of the war in Ukraine, the number of twinning agreements between German, US, UK, and Ukrainian municipalities increased, promising active involvement in post-conflict reconstruction.

In the midst of conflict, the adult education institutions in Ukraine and Germany who participated in the Urban X-Change Network wove the threads of mutual support through their projects. In times of war, these institutions built bridges of understanding, communication, and empathy, connecting people and supporting citizens in both countries.

An outstanding example is the creation of the Centre for Peace and Development “Shelter” in Sumy, where about 100 educational events took place in 2022, involving more than 3,000 residents of the city of Sumy. The Centre has become a place of humanitarian and psychological assistance, as well as an inclusive working space for the entire public. “Shelter” proves that a multilateral network can be a powerful force for broader cooperation between citizens and institutions (SDG 16 “Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions”). In Germany, adult education centres played an important role in providing language courses, psychological support, and assistance to refugees.



Educational festival “The art of learning and living together” in Sumy, November 2022. © NGO “Lifelong Learning Center”

To Conclude

The stakeholders of the Urban X-Change Network explored the potential of urban diplomacy, and proved the strength of local interaction, from people to people and municipality to municipality, in challenging times. In particular, they showed the importance of (adult) education for pursuing solutions of global challenges, and striving for the Sustainable Development Goals.

The past years brought a series of challenges resulting from global tensions, among them Brexit, the pandemic, and the Russian invasion of Ukraine, terrorist attacks such as the one by Hamas in Israel and the war in Gaza, wars in Syria, Yemen, and several African countries, resulting in millions of people having to leave their homes and migrate to other countries. In light of this, it is safe to predict that the era of crises will continue for several years. The importance – and power – of urban diplomacy in general and adult education in particular is likely to increase in the future even more.

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Role of Adult Education Centres in International Affairs

Interview with Liza Warncke, DVV International, Homaira Mansury, vhs Cologne, and Timothy Chappell, Doña Ana Community College, Las Cruces, NM

What is your view of the role of adult education centres in international affairs?

Homaira Mansury: I recognize that in over 100 years of tradition, adult education centers have simultaneously supported personal and individual continuing education by and for people in the spirit of democracy and self-empowerment. Adult education centers reach out to citizens on a variety of levels and are at the heart of society. In this great responsibility that we have lies a wonderful opportunity: to inform and make people aware of complexities, to highlight local and global connections, and to put them in dialogue. Yes, what happens in other parts of the world concerns everyone, and we also work with this attitude in international contexts.

Liza Warncke: International affairs are anchored in adult education centres as they reach out to and teach migrants in the local communities. Adult education centers bring people together: this is their central role in the community. That includes people from all over the globe who receive assistance in their process of settling in a new society. In my mind, this is practical foreign policy work – which is expanded by international partnerships to global levels.

Timothy Chappell: I see adult education centres as a great opportunity to make people aware of other cultures, educational systems, and alternate points of view. Giving students, faculty and staff from adult education centres the chance to learn and experience other cultures makes them better citizens of the world.

Adult education centres can play a role by fostering clubs, organizations, and classes that promote international relations.

Looking from the outside: Do you think that the perception of adult education centres as international players has changed in recent years?

Timothy Chappell: Yes, I do feel the perception has changed. Adult education here in the US was thought of as nothing more than trade schools. People would come take their classes and go get a job. Nowadays I have seen industry and 4-year colleges seeking out our students, when that was not the case in the past. Because we have a diverse population of well-educated students, we can be international players.

Homaira Mansury: Topics relating to international connections and responsibility have always been an integral part of our educational program. These go far beyond the cultural dimension. We highlight socio-political, economic, and ecological factors, and do so in a high quality with qualified speakers. We advocate attitudes of fairness, sustainability, and responsibility. The fact that we also work internationally, create exchanges, and engage in international discourse, is a field of activity that has become an even more integral part of our mission and outreach in recent years.

Liza Warncke: There is certainly still a lot of room for getting more recognized as international players, yet I definitely see a tendency in adult education centers to



The Rita Süssmuth Award is an important occasion to celebrate the increasing role of adult education centres in international affairs. In June 2022, three German Adult Education Centres (Volkshochschulen) received the Rita Süssmuth Award for their successful collaboration with Adult Education Centres in Italy, France, Poland, Israel, Morocco, Belarus, and Mexico. Former President of the German Bundestag Rita Süssmuth, Daniela Schneckenburger of the Association of German Cities, and Syliva Groneick of the Federal Foreign Office handed over the awards. © Sandrino Donnhäuser

work more internationally and also connect with international partners. International projects are first steps of building connections with partners near and far. These connections can grow into long-term partnerships that underscore the importance of the international work of adult education centers.

Against the backdrop of your experiences within the Urban X-Change Network: What are the most significant differences between adult education centres in Germany (Volkshochschulen) and the other participating countries?

Liza Warncke: I guess the most significant difference is the overall organization of these centers. The German Adult Education Association (DVV) is the umbrella of

nearly 900 Volkshochschulen. In Germany, the name 'Volkshochschulen' is a unique and well-known term that most people understand and associate specific characteristics with. I learned that in the USA, adult education can happen in a range of organisational settings, from high school to university, on various levels. In the UK, adult education is often organized by city or communal administrations but carried out by third parties or external institutions. Yet, the overall idea to offer lifelong learning to everyone is shared.

Timothy Chappell: The German schools have a much more diverse population of students. Most of our students are from the US or Mexico. Our bilingual classes are teaching English as a second language to Spanish speakers. The Volkshochschulen have 19 or more lan-

guages they teach. The Volkshochschulen seem to be able to handle a much broader group of ethnically diverse students.

Homaira Mansury: That is because accessibility is so important to us, and I guess more important than in other countries. What Volkshochschulen offer should appeal to all people in a society, regardless of their background or financial means. We offer high quality educational opportunities at the lowest possible prices to reduce barriers of participation.

Timothy Chappell: Another difference is that community colleges in the US are focused on having students attain a degree or certificate. That did not seem to be the case for Volkshochschulen.

Homaira Mansury: I agree. Most of our courses serve voluntary personal development, rather than attaining certificates.

What is your vision of the future of international collaboration in the field of adult education?

Homaira Mansury: I believe in the power of encounter. Those who have met and looked into each other's eyes usually feel a sense of connection and responsibility for each other. That is what we need, more than ever. Yet, creating opportunities so that people can meet is not enough; programs must be sustainable and last for years.

Timothy Chappell: I would like to see the international collaboration expanded to include students as part of the planning, implementation, and exchange. I have seen how faculty, staff and citizens from the community have benefited and continue to benefit from this collaboration. This can only help students see the world with a different and more positive perspective.

Liza Warncke: My vision is an international network of closely connected partners who can swiftly respond to global developments and crises. Looking at multiple crises over the last years, it has become abundantly clear that high-quality education is an essential for all societies so that people can grow and learn to cope with diverse challenges. Adult education possesses very valuable characteristics in this context: there is a stable infrastructure, which is accessible to all citizens. At the same time, adult education centres have proven to be flexible enough to quickly respond to societal needs and changes.

Homaira Mansury: More UXC, please!

ABOUT THE INTERVIEWEES



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Homaira Mansury

HEAD OF POLITICAL EDUCATION, VOLKSHOCHSCHULE KÖLN / CITY OF COLOGNE

Partnerships between the City Administration and Civil Society

Perspectives from Indianapolis, Lviv and Broxtowe

Lviv

LIBRARIES AS HOT SPOTS FOR CIVIL SOCIETY COOPERATION

As of today, the activity and consolidation of civil society in Ukraine has increased significantly. Today, the Lviv city council is developing horizontal links and different kinds of connections with civil society in various fields of cooperation. There is also the option of the participatory budgeting of the city for the implementation of various grassroots projects. City authorities often initiate discussions with citizens in the format of **urban cafés** to develop innovative ideas and projects in Lviv.

The NGO Centers Educatio Network participated in the Urban X-Change Network. It is a network of non-formal education centers based on city libraries.



Anastasiia Nechyporenko, chief specialist, Office of Culture, Lviv City Council, © Anastasiia Nechyporenko



Comic workshop 'Resilience. Courage. Indomitable', 16–17 June 2023, Lviv © Oleksandra Kliushnichenko

You could ask me: why libraries?

In Lviv, city libraries have become meeting points and hot spots for civil society cooperation, facilitated by the NGO Centers Educatio Network. The organization's staff includes public activists, librarians and experts who closely cooperate. Lviv city authorities support libraries to make them comfortable spaces for new educational opportunities.

I would like to give you an example of tripartite synergy in the Urban X-Change Network project: the workshop "Resilience. Courage. Indomitable", which was held in the URBAN Library. The city authorities promoted this event and invited experts in the field of comics. In the workshop, participants created posters that told differ-

ent stories about their own emotions because of the war in Ukraine. These graphic stories were then shown in a street exhibition in Lviv, and will be exhibited in different libraries of our city soon.

Because of the security conditions and martial law in our country, there were many risks for the project, and not all ideas could be implemented. For example, a Ukrainian author could not leave Ukraine because of the closed border for men. Our partners from Freiburg did not have the opportunity to visit Lviv, as we would have planned before. **The war in Ukraine changed everything**, including in our project.

Indianapolis

PRIDE, RESPECT, LAUGHTER AND CREATIVITY

Although the state of Indiana is behind the curve on protecting and embracing the queer community, the city government of Indianapolis continues to pass resolutions and ordinances to prohibit discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation. As a result of Indianapolis' fight to be a safe place for the LGBTQ community, we have seen more LGBTQ+ businesses, groups, and organizations live and thrive. With that comes a bigger community and more opportunity to collaborate with local government for the future.

During the urban x-change project we met with various LGBTQ+ government, organization, and community leaders. One of the most important relationships we built was with representatives from the Indiana Youth Group (IYG) and representatives of Anyway Cologne, both of which are organizations that support queer



Youth from Indianapolis visiting the Cologne Pride, © vhs Cologne



Katie Doyle, Indianapolis, © Katie Doyle

youth throughout Indiana and Cologne respectively. During IYG's annual Youth Summit, a space offering information, speakers, and resources for queer youth, IYG created a panel for a group of teenagers to meet with similarly aged youth in Cologne for an open discussion about what life was like in each city, to compare experiences, to share fears and hopes, and to begin to forge relationships. This conversation led to "Pen-Pal" communications between the youths and the project team looking at ways to extending the project through and the possibility of an Indianapolis-Cologne in person youth exchange. This program also enabled Anyway and IYG to build their relationship in advance of visits by each organization to the other's hometown.

Since this was the beginning stage of hopefully a longer opportunity to collaborate, the ideas were much more visionary than concrete. Meeting with local authorities was a start to this, but being able to take what we have learned from this project and seeing where we can connect other groups to assist in furthering equality for all will be a great way to help continue these efforts.

The LGBTQ community has to frequently rely on donor organizations or non-profits to push the LGBTQ agenda further. This project has allowed us to build relationships with these groups and organizations and continue conversations of furthering that agenda both politically and within civil society. Because of this, we have an opportunity to reach more people in the community and work to create a stronger and safer place for all.

You can be sure that the LGBTQ community in Indianapolis will continue to collaborate, innovate, and entertain under an umbrella of pride, respect, laughter, and creativity.



Invitation 'day of democracy', © DVV-International

Broxtowe

OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW AND EMERGING COMMUNITIES

The Urban X-Change Network allowed us to bring together local authorities, civil society, and adult education in a very real sense. An example is the Day of Democracy: a day which allowed us to bring together representatives of the local authority, adult education, libraries, community organisations and members of the local community. It was physically hosted in Beeston Library and Guetersloh vhs, video-linked between the two, with participants joining both in-person and online.

The Day of Democracy allowed a showcase and discussion of local issues and the work of local organisations – both for sharing with similar organisations in Guetersloh, via a live feed, and for discussion and questions from those with us in Beeston Library. Contributors in Beeston (Broxtowe) included an LGBTQ+ network, Beeston Civic Society, a local food bank and an organisation working with people with dementia.

The use of video conferencing technology enabled this exchange between Broxtowe's and Guetersloh's grassroots organisations to take place seamlessly, bridging barriers of time and place effortlessly.

One of the key groups we concentrated on for the project, from an adult learning perspective, was the new and emerging communities within the area – those who come to us as speakers of other languages, wish-

ing to learn English. These learners are often actively searching for opportunities to understand, engage with and contribute to their new communities. A key vision for continued work would be to find more ways to facilitate this, bringing older and newer members of the community together to understand one another and to work together to build ever stronger communities via practical support and broader cultural exchange.



Nicky Reed, Adult Learning Manager at Inspire – Culture | Learning | Libraries, an NGO serving Nottinghamshire, including Broxtowe,
© Nicky Reed

Urban Diplomacy in Times of War

Political Context:

EU-UKRAINE RELATIONS UND UKRAINE'S DECENTRALIZATION STRATEGY BEFORE THE WAR

The European Union and Ukraine signed the political provisions of the Association Agreement in 2014. Its key parts came into effect on 1st November 2014. The goals of the Association Agreement are political association and economic integration; it thus represents a new stage of EU-Ukraine political relations and underpins a shared commitment to a close and lasting relationship based on common values, in particular full respect for democratic principles, the rule of law, good governance, human rights, and fundamental freedoms.

In terms of European choice of Ukraine and their free citizens, Germany has become one of the best strategic partners of Ukraine, as the German side always demonstrated interest in the development of the Ukrainian economy and cooperated in different ways. The project Urban X-Change Network was no exception.

The role of German-Ukrainian city partnerships (as a key element of Urban Diplomacy) has significantly increased in recent years. Despite the sense of urgency in the case of Ukraine, partnerships took their time to get to know the potential partner, involve communal actors, build relationships, form a common understanding about the partnership, and establish an effective mode for communication.

Ukraine has completed a fundamental decentralization reform only half a year before the Russian attack. Many see this as the key for the phenomenal resilience Ukraine has demonstrated in face of the total invasion.

Partnerships in the Urban X-Change Network: The War Changed Everything

After the Russian attack on 24th of February 2022, we have seen an instant response and the mobilization of relief measures by German cities involved in the Urban X-Change Network. Although these measures were mostly small to medium scale and of limited complexity, they were highly targeted and much faster than the responses from the national level. The expressions of authentic solidarity by German partners and the mobilization of diverse support measures by the Urban X-Change network were and still are of critical relevance for the Ukrainian side.

Lifelong learning centers in Ukraine and their partners in Germany (Volkshochschulen) had a significant role of solidarity in the time of war. The cooperation between adult education partners and citizens has reached a new level of trust and cooperation, in particular full respect for democratic principles. A friend in need is a friend indeed.

One example of the changes that were needed due to the war is this: at the end of 2021, Kyiv and Leipzig planned to hold a big conference in the city hall of Kyiv during the Kyiv days at the end of May 2022, including a face-to-face visit by a delegation from Leipzig. Unfortunately, such citizens' dialogues were made impossible by the Russian attack due to security reasons (rocket, bombs and drone attacks), and were transferred to other formats.

During the war all partnerships developed online workshops for wellbeing, support for people in Ukraine, psychological assistance for citizens, virtual conferences

discussing Ukrainian and German education systems, providing assistance during the war in Ukraine and for forced refugees.

In 2021, no one would have expected that a Joint Peace Centre would be set up in a bomb shelter that now provides a safe space for educational activities in Sumy, even during air raids in 2023, as well as for workshops on post-war reconstruction efforts in Ukraine.

Role of the DVV International Representative Office in Ukraine

In the first days and weeks of the full-scale war, it was important to personally withstand psychological pressure, and at the same time support partner organizations in different regions of Ukraine. We believe we have all succeeded. The main role has remained unchanged – to increase the resilience of each person through education and training, be it mental or physical health, or survival in conditions of crises, or learning to adapt in a new region of Ukraine or abroad. Today we must pay tribute to those partner organizations that continue their activities at the local level, especially in the regions that are under fire every day – Sumy, Mykolaiv, Zaporizhzhia, and Nikopol. As an example, the adult education center Nicopol used its sewing machines, and enrolled 40–45 women in sewing courses of just a few days, to learn how to make clothes and bags for the first aid kits of the local defense groups.

We continue to work at different levels. Adult Learning and Education Centers are there to offer what Ukrainians need most today – psychological support programmes and short-term vocational courses to acquire skills to earn a living.

Potentials and Limitations of Urban Diplomacy in the Context of War

Urban diplomacy can play a crucial role in addressing the complex challenges faced by urban areas affected by war.

We have a vivid example of a partnership at the twin city level. Moreover, this is something that was not planned as part of the project. People in Celle reacted to the tragedy of Sumy, a city only 37 km from the Russian border, which was surrounded by Russian troops during the first weeks. Many women with children who were forced to leave the city did not flee to unknown places, but consciously chose Celle, because they knew the local community was ready to welcome them. Many became active participants in the project, and support cooperation even today after the project ended. During this year, the city of Celle established a systematic provision of humanitarian assistance to the city of Sumy, for example, all-wheel drive jeeps equipped for medical purposes, school furniture, etc..

Perhaps this is a very optimistic view, but it seems that when there are many contacts on a human level, then nothing can stop or restrain such a partnership. However, achieving sustainable peace and stability in urban areas often requires addressing underlying structural issues, such as economic disparities and governance challenges. Urban diplomacy alone may not be sufficient to address these root causes.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



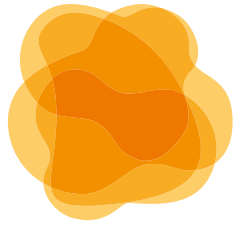
Oleg Smirnov

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Artem Sadomov

PROGRAMME MANAGER,
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PROJECT



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The Urban X-Change Network

Milestones of the Project Implementation

Starting point: Grant notification from German Federal Foreign Office to DVV International, July 8th, 2021
Project start, September 2021

First phase

First signature of a local partnership
APRIL 27TH, 2022

First study visit between UXC partners
JUNE 15TH-18TH, 2022
Coventry delegation to Kiel

Digital conference
DECEMBER 9TH, 2022

First talks with partner Adult Education Centers in different countries (DE / UK / UA)
OCTOBER 2021

vhs Day / Rita Süßmuth Award
JUNE 20TH, 2022

Conclusion of projects
FEBRUARY - MAY 2023
Aachen-Rochdale in May 2023 | Kiel-Coventry in February 2023 | Celle-Sumy in February 2023 | Leipzig-Kyiv in March 2023

Second phase

First talks with partner Adult Education Centers in different countries
JULY/AUGUST, 2022

First signatures: Apolda, Gütersloh and Cologne
NOVEMBER 24TH, 2022

Final conference in Berlin
OCTOBER 25TH/26TH, 2023, BERLIN

First monthly Cappuccino talk
FEBRUARY 1ST, 2023

Kick-off Bonn
OCTOBER 24TH/25TH, 2022

First study visit 2nd phase
DECEMBER 2022
Cologne delegation to Indianapolis

The Programme Team



Liza Warncke

DVV INTERNATIONAL,
SENIOR DESK OFFICER URBAN
X-CHANGE, TEAMLEADER

"Urban X-Change meant to bring together people from different countries and work on important global topics in a local way. People from all involved countries came together to work on ideas on how to make this world a little better through working together."



Robin Gosejohann

PROGRAMME MANAGER FOR GERMAN CITIES
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UK AND US CITIES

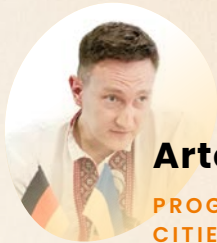
"The Cappuccino Meetings a bit surprisingly became real highlights, our informal monthly online gatherings that we set up, always allowing a deep dive into the realities of the other UXC partners on the ground. These meetings were a wonderful balance between shallow and light and occasionally emotional and deep."



Oleg Smirnov

DVV INTERNATIONAL UKRAINE,
COUNTRY DIRECTOR

"I myself felt that the partners do not close in on themselves, they are always ready to work in any conditions, and this gave me confidence and additional energy."



Artem Sadomov

PROGRAMME MANAGER FOR GERMAN
CITIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UKRAINE

"In very difficult times, it is important to unite. Our Urban X-Change network project provided such an opportunity for lifelong learning centers in Ukraine and their vhs partners in Germany, civil society actors, and citizens in participating communities – even though the war in Ukraine hasn't stopped yet, partners have offered their help to Ukrainian refugees and homeless people in Ukraine."



Cristina Bucinschi

FINANCIAL MANAGER
URBAN X-CHANGE,
DVV INTERNATIONAL



Céline Diebold

SENIOR DESK OFFICER
URBAN X-CHANGE



Natalia Feduschak

DVV INTERNATIONAL UKRAINE,
ACCOUNTANT

Project Highlight: Kick-off Meeting, October 2022, Bonn

On the 24th and 25th of October 2022, the official kick-off event of the second phase of the Urban X-Change Network took place at the Gustav-Stresemann Institute in Bonn, Germany.

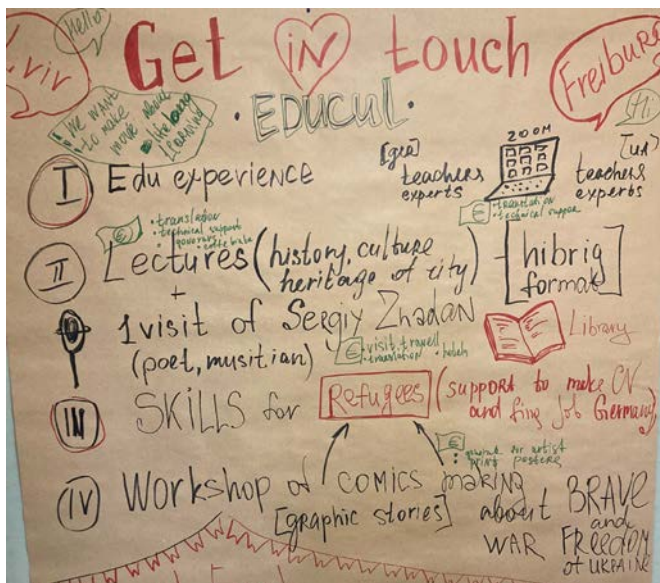
DVV International, in the person of Uwe Gartenschlaeger, and the German Federal Foreign Office, through Dr. Moritz Pieper, kicked off the event with welcome speeches. Afterwards the participants were briefed about the project's essence as well as the expectations that are bound to the city-partnerships.

In an interactive group work, the participants approached the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – originating from the Agenda 2030 of the UN states – which are the fundamental cornerstones and roadmap for the project as a whole. In addition, these can also

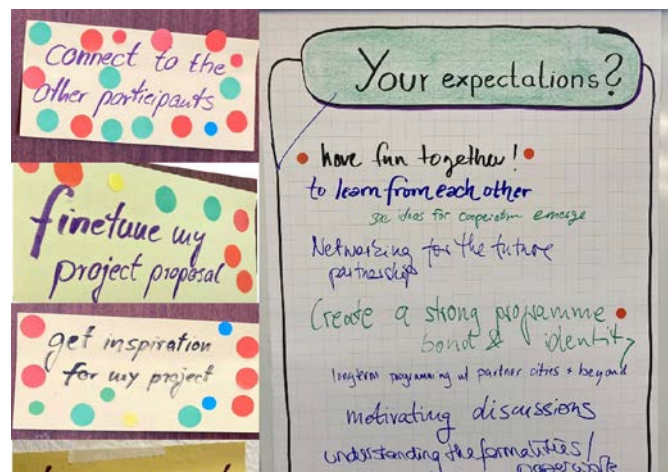
be seen as a framing for the idea development of the individual partnerships.

After a joint lunch, the event provided the setting for more specific exchanges in the partnerships in two group discussions. During these sessions, project ideas, common goals, but also challenges that were associated with the project for those responsible were discussed. The previously presented SDGs provided a framework for this exchange. Each partnership located itself with its action plan at preferred SDGs, which were to be addressed in the activities of the cooperation.

The second day's agenda focused primarily on pragmatic and technical aspects of the Urban X-Change Network. In the third set of group sessions, building on the results of the previous day, the action plans from all partnerships were translated into a budget plan. Delegates then had time to plan next steps and reflect on their own plan. The second day ended with a joint lunch.



Action-Plan, © DVV-International



Expectations of the partnerships, © DVV-International

Project Highlight: Transnational Networking and Closing Conference, October 2023, Berlin

© Berlin Eventfotograf



Questions and answers during the concluding conference.
© Berlin-Eventfotograf



Working group on success factors and challenges with participants
from four countries. © Linus Ehmke

The final conference of the Urban X-Change Network took place in the city of Berlin, and three participants from each of the eighteen cities from Germany, the UK, Ukraine, and the USA were happy to participate.

Many of those who had previously met via Zoom turned the hotel reception on arrival day into a cheerful place of encounters and hugs. The following day of the conference was dedicated to exchanging ideas and getting to know each other – the group was warmly welcomed at the vhs Berlin-Mitte and generously provided with rooms. Each of the delegations consisted of three people from an adult education organization, the city administration, and an NGO – and we were thrown together in a grandiose and pleasantly playful manner using methods such as “Project Trivial Pursuit” or “Human Bingo”. However, the great atmosphere of those present could not hide the fact that our colleagues from Ukraine come from a war-torn country, and that Urban X-Change program manager Artem, as a man of military age, was not allowed to leave the country – and was greatly missed.

The second day began with city tours and exhibitions. Some participants had come to Berlin, Germany or even Europe for the first time and made good use of the very central location of the hotel at Potsdamer Platz. The more formal part of the conference took place in the afternoon, and it was a British participant who ended up summarizing the four main themes that moved us at the conference: funding adult education, its participation in social and, yes, diplomatic processes, solidarity of adult education institutions and the uncompromising application and defense of human rights in all their forms. This conference was a worthy finale – but I believe that Urban X-Change will not end here, the will for further cooperation is too strong.



Robin Gosejohann

PROGRAMME MANAGER FOR GERMAN
CITIES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH UK AND
US CITIES

Key Results of the Evaluation of the Pilot Phase of the Urban X-Change Network

The main purpose of the evaluation of the pilot phase was to better understand the impact of the project, and to inform the main phase and future projects in the field of urban diplomacy. Methods included desktop research and 19 qualitative interviews with the project team and project participants.

Key findings:

Operational level: Success factors and challenges regarding the implementation of the partnership projects

- › All partnerships chose 'glocal' themes: local challenges linked with global developments. The choice of locally relevant themes was instrumental for building partnerships, including the heads of municipal government, various agencies, adult education trainers, participants – including many migrants and refugees – and the broader public.
- › The German-Ukrainian partnerships had to adjust to the war. Remarkably, they chose not to give in, but to double down. Partnerships were used to channel humanitarian assistance in Ukraine and support for Ukrainian refugees in Germany.
- › Challenges included the short time frame and limited funding.

Impact on Institutions

Adult education centres (AECs) raised their international profile and expressed intent to extend their work on an international level. They acted as agenda setters and central communication and organisational hubs,

both locally and internationally, thus deepening their project management and communication skills. Adult education trainers were particularly active participants and benefitted widely in their professional roles.

Local authorities helped raise the profile of the project, and embed them in the overall international strategy of the city (e.g. town twinning). Some city authorities committed to additional funding for sustaining specific projects, and/or new staff supporting the AECs' international orientation.

Civil society organisations were supporters of the partnerships in different roles, e.g. as subject matter experts, trainers, and hosts during study visits, thus mirroring the diversity of the local civil society.

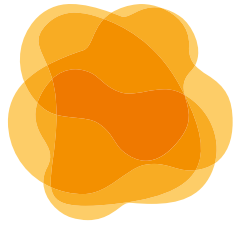
Lessons for Urban / Citizen Diplomacy Projects

- › (Adult) education increases peoples' capabilities in dealing with local and global challenges. Hence, the role of (adult) education should be stressed in urban diplomacy programmes.
- › The project proved the AECs' competencies in involving various stakeholders in an urban diplomacy project, including target groups that would otherwise be considered 'hard-to-reach'.



Peter Bleckmann

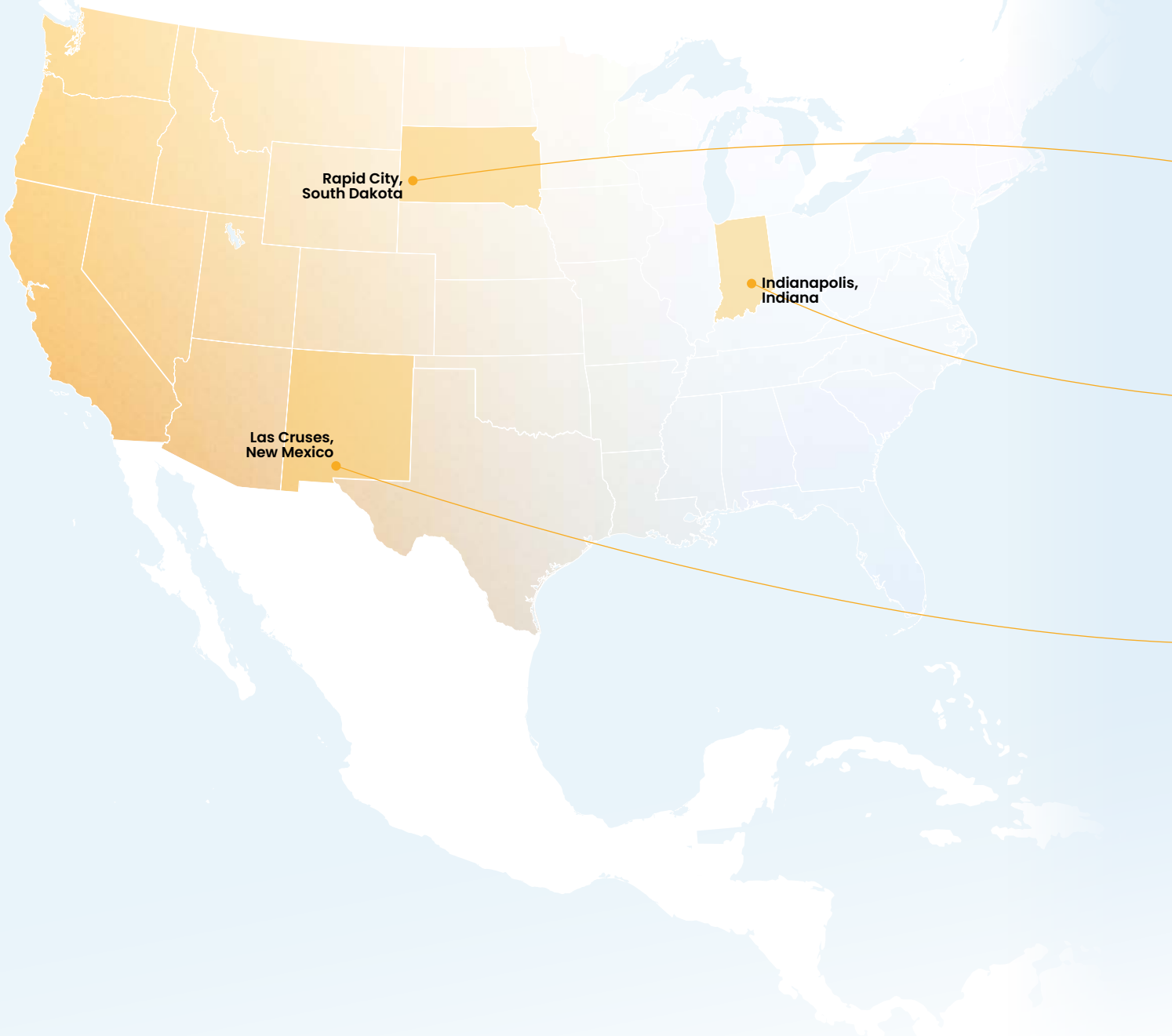
CHAIRMAN OF THE INSTITUTE
WELT:STADT:QUARTIER



urban
x-change
network

The City Partnerships

Map of City Partnerships



Within the framework of the Urban X-Change Network, 9 city partnerships were established between German Volkshochschulen / Adult Education Centres and their counterparts in the USA, the UK, and Ukraine.



GERMANY/GREAT BRITAIN

Aachen–Rochdale

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule Aachen, Rochdale Borough Council

Civil society organisations

NRWeltoffen, Big Life Health Improvement Service, NHS Heywood Middleton and Rochdale Clinical Commissioning Group, Action Together, Rochdale

Local authorities

City of Aachen, Rochdale Borough Council

Overarching theme(s)

Willkommen! Bienvenue! Welcome! Fostering a Welcome Culture and Preventing Racism and Discrimination



Group photograph taken at the Mini Conference Rochdale, May 2023.
© Rochdale Borough Council

Key projects

- › Mutual visits of Adult Learning and Education professionals
- › Impact of migration on society: Comparing our cultures of welcome
- › Exchange on institutional racism in municipal structures and its prevention
- › Welcome in the UK and Germany: Joint conference
- › Visit to Rochdale: Talk English class & conference on Lifelong Learning

Technical report Urban X-Change Network Aachen-Rochdale

BY ROBIN GOSEJOHANN

The main theme of the project between Rochdale and Aachen was to compare the cultures of welcome towards new immigrants in Germany and the UK.

In early 2022 several online meetings took place to design the action plan. In September 2022 meetings between British representatives from local politics and administration, as well as integration experts with their German counterparts followed in Aachen in the context of a four-day stay. The return visit of the German group to Rochdale took place in May 2023.

The cooperation focused on SDGs 4, 10 and 16 – ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities, and ensuring equal opportunities and inclusive societies with a focus on peace, non-violence, global citizenship and valuing cultural diversity.

A grand day out from Rochdale

BY HELEN CHICOT

It doesn't take much imagination for anyone to understand that there's more to learning than its constituent parts. But it's so difficult to maintain an understanding of that in policy amongst the noise of the busy transactions in public service – in part because its benefits don't sit neatly within the realms of one policy space. By nature, it is without boundaries, and yet all these parts of local systems are so busy trying to integrate, they fail to see what's right under their noses.

We knew there was a German connection but none of us were ready for the excitement upon seeing an exhibition board stating:

“After the war, Professor Robert Peers saw adult education as a vital part of our post-war construction, and in 1947 invited a delegation from Germany to see the provision at the University to use as inspiration in the establishment of an adult education course in Aachen.” That flame passed to Aachen in 1947 and they have done such beautiful things with it – what joyful connection!



Group photograph taken at the Festival of Integration.D Depot, Aachen (September 2022) © vhs Aachen

So what do we do? Well we learn our way forward, of course! Adult Education has enormous potential in the times we're in.

Our group has been struck by this given understanding amongst our colleagues in and around the Volkshochschule Aachen: that learning is just intrinsically good and is an important function of a local municipality to ensure its availability.

“Adult education must not be regarded as a luxury for a few exceptional persons here and there... it is a permanent national necessity, an inseparable aspect of citizenship and therefore should be both universal and lifelong.”



A professor of adult learning and an English language tutor at the “Wissensmacht!” Conference. Rochdale, May 2023 © Rochdale Borough Council:

GERMANY/GREAT BRITAIN

Kiel–Coventry

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Förde-Volkshochschule, Kiel,
Coventry City Council Adult Education Service

Civil society organisations

ZBBS–Zentrale Bildungs-und Beratungsstelle für
Migrantinnen und Migranten e.V. (Migrants Counsel-
ling Centre), Kiel; Migration Forum, Kiel; Coventry
Refugee and Migrant Centre

Local authorities

City of Kiel, Coventry City Council

Overarching theme(s)

Shared Lives – Connecting Coventry and Kiel Resi-
dents | Strengthening existing twinning arrangements
through administrative and institutional networking



Hybrid project meeting in Kiel. © Förde vhs

Key projects

- › Adult education courses for Kiel residents in Coventry and vice versa
- › Mutual visits: insight into local structures
- › Professional exchanges between teachers from Coventry and Kiel
- › Photo Voice” project: Seeing the city with new eyes – created by participants of the Integration courses in Kiel and Coventry.

Coventry visits Kiel: Trip report (June 2022)

BY ROBIN GOSEJOHANN

In both Coventry and Kiel, the adult education institutes are characterised by learners who have immigrated or fled for various reasons. German or English as a foreign language, the shaping of positive coexistence and preparation for professional integration have a large share in the respective programmes.

The first highlight of the project was the visit of the Head of Adult Education from Coventry Judy Hallam and her three staff members Houria Burrows, Aminjit Dehele and Kelly Broomfield in the run-up to Kieler Woche. Adriana Theessen and her colleague Katharina Hammann from the Förde-vhs organised workshops with local teachers, visits, guided tours and a talk in the town hall with the city president Hans-Werner Tovar followed by a guided tour of the town hall for the four visitors.

The visit was characterised by intensive exchange and the will to cultivate long-term cooperation. It became clear that the spirit of adult education here and there is the same: democratic, approachable, constructive with very similar requirements and difficulties. The meeting was a great enrichment for all participants.



City-president Hans-Werner Tovar with delegates of the city-partnership. © Förde vhs



Project partners of both cities meet with Lord Mayor Cllr Kevin Maton at the Council House in Coventry. © Förde vhs

A journey to remember: Visiting Coventry BY VHS KIEL

About the Coventry Resource Center: We were impressed by the level of professionalism and respect with which all three teachers treated their participants as well as the abundance of materials and media they used in class. The clear structure of the lesson and at the same time the constant change of working forms and methods.

The small groups and the individual support of the participants with special learning needs by their assistants.

GERMANY/GREAT BRITAIN

Gütersloh–Broxtowe

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule (vhs) Gütersloh, Stadtbibliothek Gütersloh, Inspire Learning Broxtowe/Nottinghamshire

Civil society organisations

Multiple local NGOs

Local authorities

City of Gütersloh (mainly vhs and city twinning office), Nottinghamshire County Council

Overarching theme(s)

Join in – Mach mit! Teilhabe in unserer vielfältigen Gesellschaft – Participation in our diverse society. | Increase the involvement of marginalised groups

Key projects

- › The Day and Night of Libraries
- › ‘Third Places’ concept: Participants engage with libraries, adult education centres, and online platforms.
- › Digital connection for learning: virtual visits with English and German courses
- › The Hybrid Day of Democracy
- › Inclusive exchanges and visits



The Gütersloh delegation visits Nottingham Playhouse along with colleagues from different branches of Inspire Broxtowe to see the Inspire Youth Arts programme. © Inspire Broxtowe

Friends and colleagues visiting from Broxtowe in May 2023

Ten delegates from Broxtowe visited Gütersloh as part of the Join in! – Mach mit! project, which is funded by the Federal Foreign Office as part of the Urban X-Change Network. It is a cooperation between the adult education centre and the municipal library with the Broxtowe institution Inspire, which is responsible for adult education and library services in the English twin town. Five employees of Inspire and five learners/users of Inspire's services travelled from England. The group was welcomed in the auditorium of the Adult Education Centre by Dr. Mariella Gronenthal (Deputy Head of the Adult Education Centre), Gitte Trostmann (2nd Deputy Mayor) and Anja Krokowski (Deputy Head of the Library). A three-day colourful programme with guided tours and workshops had been prepared for the visitors.

Self introduction of Gütersloh delegates to their Broxtowe peers

1. I am M., I am 39 years old, born and raised in Berlin and just moved to Gütersloh in 2020. I hope that the trip will allow me to lose my inhibitions of speaking English and I hope for many impressions, new ideas and great memories.

2. Hey I'm K., 24 and a trained specialist in media and information services. It's my first time ever abroad. I'm excited to meet all the nice people we worked with on the night of the libraries, and I look forward to exchanging experiences.

3. My name is C.. I am nearly 75 years of age and retired 10 years ago. I have been volunteering in a primary school for a number of years assisting children in their needs to improve their education.. My hope for this exchange would be to have the opportunity to meet and speak with the local people.



The Broxtowe delegation visits the Volkshochschule in Gütersloh.
© vhs Gütersloh



The Broxtowe delegation takes part in a Westfalian cooking class together with German colleagues. © vhs Gütersloh



Reading at the Inspire Library in Beaston during the Night of libraries with book Author Jonathan Emmett. © Inspire Broxtowe

GERMANY/UKRAINE

Celle–Sumy

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule Celle
NGO „Lifelong Learning Center“ Sumy

Civil society organisations

Sumy State University, Sumy Youth Leisure Centre, NGO Council of Young Scientists, Sumy, NGO „Centre for Civic Education and Business Initiatives in Sumy“, NGO Centre for Euroinitiatives, Sumy

Local authorities

Celle City Council, Sumy City Council

Overarching theme(s)

Partnership for the goals, Gender equality, Peace, justice and strong institutions

Key projects

- › Joint Peace Centre of the twinned towns of Celle–Sumy: “Art of learning and living together: Education for democracy, human rights and sustainable development”
- › Joint Peace Centers
- › Educational festivals: The art of learning and living together
- › Educational course: Balance between work and life – (public) health



Educational Festival: “The art of learning and living together”.
Sumy, November 2022 © NGO „Lifelong Learning Center“

“Education for Life”

BY ARTEM SADOMOV

During the Urban X-Change project, the project partners created Joint Peace Centers in both cities. Its mission was to help during the war, which included helping the refugees from Sumy to Celle, as well as to promote the reconstruction of Ukraine after the war. In Sumy, such a center is located in an air-raid shelter, where educational activities can now be held even during air raids. Joint urban educational festivals “The Art of Learning and Living Together” have been launched (in Celle in summer 2022 and in Sumy in autumn 2022). A joint educational course “Balance between work and life – (public) health” was developed and piloted (trainers from Celle and Sumy were jointly involved). This course was open to all residents of Celle and Sumy. A long-term cooperation strategy between vhs Celle and the Center for Adult Education “Education for Life” in Sumy was developed and agreed with the stakeholders (city administration, educational institutions, public organisations and city libraries). A memorandum of cooperation between vhs Celle and the Center for Adult Education “Education for Life” in Sumy in the field of education for children and civic education was signed.



Meeting between vhs Celle (Lilliana Steinke), General Consul of Ukraine in Hamburg (Iryna Tybinka) and Head of NGO “Lifelong Learning Center” (Yuriy Petrushenko). – from left to right.
© vhs Celle



Educational Festival: „The art of learning and living together”.
Celle, June 2022 © vhs Celle



Work meeting in Joint Peace Center, Celle. © vhs Celle



Educational Festival: “The art of learning and living together”. Sumy,
November 2022 © NGO „Lifelong Learning Center”

GERMANY/UKRAINE

Leipzig–Kyiv

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule Leipzig and NGO "Association of innovative and digital education" Kyiv

Civil society organisations

NGO "Ukraine-Kontakt" e.V., Theater der Jungen Welt, State Scientific Institution "Institute of education content modernization" of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, NGO "Ukrainian Students' Association", NGO "Association of Adult Education", Leipzig Helps Ukraine

Local authorities

City of Leipzig, City of Kyiv, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

Overarching theme(s)

Quality education | Gender equality | Peace, justice and strong institutions



Theater rehearsal at „Theater der Jungen Welt“. Leipzig, December 2022, © vhs Leipzig

Key projects

- › Lifelong learning project "Come together, learn together": Ukrainian Educational Hub in Leipzig
- › Educational Hub website
- › Theater der Jungen Welt in Leipzig

Educational Hub and Club Polis

BY ARTEM SADOV

Together the partners set up the Ukrainian Educational Hub in Leipzig, which aimed at the integration of Ukrainian and German citizens in Leipzig. Another product of this collaboration is the creation of an Educational Hub website which can be used as an online learning platform.

Within the framework of the project, the educational centre has more than 80 events, including psychosocial support, adaptation of Ukrainians to Germany, career management, artistic master classes, and speakers clubs.

During the project period, more than 3000 people have participated in the Educational Hub formats; this is a 1/3 of the total number of adult refugees from Ukraine in Leipzig.



vhs Day in Leipzig: Liliane Steinke (Director of vhs Celle), Liza Warncke (DVV Project Coordinator), Mariya Boguslav (Coordinator of Ukrainian Educational Hub in Germany) © Liza Warncke

Another successful development of the partnership was the theatre project “Club Polis”, which created a safe space for participating teenagers. The implementation included more than 20 theatre rehearsals, four workshop events and the presentation of a 45-minute work show and a stage play as a final result. Main partners for that was the Theater der Jungen Welt in Leipzig. The project brought together people of different cultural and social backgrounds and enabled stakeholders and key persons to get to know each other.



Cooking evening “Ukrainians treat” with Ukrainian refugees and participants of the Hub’s events. Katholische Propstei St. Trinitatis, November 2022 © NGO “Association of innovative and digital education”



Ukrainian Independence Day with Mariya Boguslav and Ukrainian refugees, Leipzig City Library, August 2022 © NGO “Association of innovative and digital education”

GERMANY/UKRAINE

Freiburg–Lviv

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule Freiburg e.V.
Centers Education Network, Lviv

Civil society organisations

Freiburg: German-Ukrainian Society, City Library, Kommunales Kino, Amt für Schule und Bildung, Frau und Beruf | Lviv: City Library Network, UA-Comix, "What if" creative studio, Ukrainian Catholic University

Local authorities

City of Freiburg, City of Lviv

Overarching theme(s)

Quality education | Peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development | Assistance for citizens during and after the war in Ukraine

Key projects

- › Life Learning-Experience project: Psychological support for citizens in the time of war in Ukraine
- › Culture integration with public lectures of authors
- › Creative and healthcare workshops for citizens
- › Library cooperation
- › Comic Workshop with Olesia Sekeresh in Freiburg



Yoga Session, Freiburg, April 2023. © Svitlana Georgi

“What is my homeland?”

BY ARTEM SADOVYCH

The main idea of the partnership was to support people in Ukraine during the war. Among other activities, this happened through a citizen-led comic workshop, which was held in both cities. The topic “What is my homeland?” appeared in a particular perspective in regard to the war in Ukraine.

Public libraries in both cities have also played a large part in the project: public readings were held in its rooms at various events and discussions took place about everyday life during the war. Additionally, psychological assistance was provided to refugees as well as to participants in Lviv.

During virtual conferences, the project partners discussed the German as well as the Ukrainian educational system.

Graphic Stories Workshop in Freiburg

BY ARTEM SADOVYCH

On the 5th and 6th of June 2023, as part of the “Get in Touch” project by Adult education institutions of both cities, a graphic story workshop was held under the direction of the professional artist Olesia Sekeresh. This provided the opportunity for all participants to embody their favourite childhood memories in their own personal comic strip. The participants were a mixed group of Freiburg residents and Lviv refugees who fled from the war in Ukraine.

Olesia Sekeresh, who is from Ukraine, not only helped all participants in the stamping and stencilling master techniques, but also showed them how to overcome creative blocks and find inspiration through quick sketches.

Especially for guests from Ukraine, this led to a special event in which they could enjoy creating their own unique comics and immerse themselves in pleasant, warm childhood memories.

On the second Day, all participants presented their unique stories.



Opening event Lviv: Discussion with Vitaliy Portnykov “Social experience of war as a chance for (un)understanding”.
17 March 2023, Lviv, © Mariia Hlavatska



Comix illustration by Angelina Lancuta: “Diary”. © UA Comix

GERMANY/USA

Cologne–Indianapolis

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule der Stadt Köln, Max Kade German-American Research and Resource Center, Purdue University Indianapolis

Civil society organisations

Freundeskreis Köln–Indianapolis, Indianapolis–Cologne Sister City Partnership Committee, Queer Youth Center Cologne, Indiana Youth Group, ColognePride, Kurt Vonnegut Museum and Library, AmerikaHaus NRW, Friedrich Naumann Stiftung NRW, Aktion Verbrannte Bücher Köln

Local authorities

City of Cologne, City of Indianapolis

Overarching theme(s)

Foster dialogue and exchange between Indianapolis and Cologne and their LGBTQIA+ communities | Queer visibility and networking



Meeting in front of Indiana Youth Group. © KO:IN Pride

Key projects

- › KO:IN pride
- › Multiple transnational exchange events
- › Participation in each other's Prides
- › Create networks between LGBTQIA+ serving organisations in each community.
- › "Centering Queer Art" exhibition in both cities

“Queer Rights are Human Rights”

BY ROBIN GOSEJOHANN

In December 2022, the VHS Department of Socio-Political Education launched a project together with the Max Kade German-American Center of Indianapolis University (IUPUI). The broader project setting included the sister city associations, the Freundeskreis Köln-Indianapolis as well as the joint Sister City Partnership Committee.

In accordance with the UN Sustainable Development Goal 5 Gender Equality, the KO:IN Pride project aimed at making queer life more visible in unsteady social times in both partner cities, bring LGBTQIA+ communities together for the first time and unmistakably promote in the city societies: “Queer Rights are Human Rights.”

Wonderful things have come out of this project: warm and thoughtful encounters in both cities, intensive exchange, public socio-political discussions, art exhibitions, clearly visible human rights statements. Above all, however, the project initiated interpersonal relationships between Cologne and Indy.



Meeting at Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany in Chicago between partners of the UXC-network. © KO:IN Pride



The KO:IN team presents the partner-project on two days on the politic-stage of Cologne Pride 2023. © vhs Cologne



Event „Sister Cities Stand Together“ at FORUM vhs Köln, 06.07.2023. © vhs Cologne

Excerpt from the KO:IN booklet

BY NICHOLE NEUMANN AND HOMAIRA MANSURY

KO:IN Pride partnered with the Indiana Youth Group (IYG), an Indianapolis-based organisation that looks to support queer youth throughout Indiana, to bring the Cologne queer youth centre into a transnational conversation. During the annual IYG Summit, a space offering information, speakers, and resources for queer youth was created. Through this, IYG provided a panel for teenagers to meet with people of a similar age. In this setting, discussions about what life is like in each city, including fears and hopes, could happen. The teenagers had the opportunity to compare their experiences and begin to forge relationships.

Teenagers from both cities were invited to continue their engagement through participation in the IYG Pen Pal Program.



GERMANY/USA

Apolda–Rapid City

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Kreisvolkshochschule (KVHS) Weimarer Land in Apolda, Western Dakota Technical College, Rapid City

Civil society organisations

Rapid City Sustainability Committee, South Dakota School of Mines & Technology, Dakota Rural Action, Black Hills Builders Association, WDTA Board of Trustees, Städtepartnerschaftsverein Apolda, etc.

Local authorities

City of Apolda, City Hall Rapid City

Overarching theme(s)

Sustainable lifestyles in the local context | Apolda: Sustainable Textile Industry | Rapid City: Sustainable Agriculture.

Key projects

- › Deepen the ties between towns on the basis of the existing partnership
- › Sustainable fashion: bilingual brochure, upcycling courses, clothing exchange and podcast
- › Earth Day celebrations
- › Clean-up day promotion in communities



Sewing workshop with a focus on sustainability (sustainable fabrics and second hand clothes were used). 12.04.2023 until 30.08.2023.
© KVHS Weimarer Land

Sustainability brings Weimarer Land and Americans together

(THÜRINGER ALLGEMEINE: 02.08.2023)

In a ten-month joint project as part of the “Urban X-Change Network” the Weimarer Land District Adult Education Centre (KVHS) and the Western Dakota Technical College address the question “What can each individual do to protect the environment and climate?”.

The partnership devoted itself to sustainability through various offers and courses including a clothes swap meet, a sewing workshop and an upcycling workshop. Some sub-projects on the topic of sustainability have already been implemented successfully, according to Fanny Kratzer, director of KVHS.

As part of the project, there were also visits to the respective partner cities. A delegation from the Rapid City college visited the Apolda Fashion Night with their German project partners. Together with MDR journalist Conny Mauroner, Fanny Kratzer visited Earth Day in Rapid City, which corresponds to the “Clean up day” in Germany in September: “There was a fair with stands of universities and other institutions on the topic of sus-



Fitting of the dress for the closing event that was sewed in the sewing workshop (made of sustainable/GOTS certified fabric).
Apoldaer Bildungswerk on 09.08.2023. © KVHS Weimarer Land

tainability. We also presented our work at the KVHS at a talk there. What I took away from there is not to point fingers at others. You could see on that day that there are different approaches, and if everyone makes their contribution, a lot can be done,” she explains.



One of four clothes swap events. Apolda, 02.07.2023
© KVHS Weimarer Land

Apolda visits Rapid City

(NEWSCENTER1, RAPID CITY, SD)

On April 22nd officials from Apolda met with Rapid City’s Mayor Steve Allender as part of their partnership in the Urban X-Change Network.

They attended WDT’s Earth Day Expo, where they learned how families are taking part in educating themselves on how to be more sustainable. Fanny Kratzer, Head of School and Adult Education in Apolda, and Conny Mauroner, a Journalist from Apolda, perceive sustainability not just as a political issue, but a family one as well. While the sustainability grant program is set to end this September, the lessons learned from it will have a lasting effect. The program has allowed for different regions to share their knowledge and practices to become more sustainable, creating a more environmentally conscious community.

GERMANY/USA

Nienburg–Las Cruces

Adult education institution/vhs involved

Volkshochschule Nienbur
Doña Ana Community College, Las Cruces, NM

Civil society organisations

Sister City Committee, Freundeskreis Las Cruces – Nienburg, historical societies, cultural groups, Wasser-schutzbehörde des Landkreises NI, DACC water treatment students etc.

Local authorities

City of Nienburg, City of Las Cruces

Overarching theme(s)

Celebrating Sister Rivers – Past, present, future: Exchange on resource management | Exploring and celebrating the importance of water

Key projects

- › Connectedness to respective rivers: Weser and Rio Grande
- › Challenges and opportunities brought by the proximity to the rivers (abundance of water and fear of flooding; water scarcity and geopolitical tensions).
- › Mutual visits and hybrid lectures: The past, present and future of water in the cities
- › Establish connections from both cities to experts



Las Cruces delegation in Nienburg. © vhs Nienburg



Delegates from both partner-cities visiting the Roadrunner Statue At The Las Cruces Scenic View Rest Area (24.04.2023).
© Las Cruces Sister Cities

Las Cruces Bulletin: Postcards from Las Cruces' German sister city

Mayor Ken Miyagishima and a delegation from Las Cruces recently visited Nienburg, Germany, to celebrate the 30th anniversary of their sister city partnership. The delegation included members from different organisations (City of Las Cruces, Las Cruces Sister Cities Foundation, Deputy director of Water for Las Cruces Utilities and city partnership founding members). As part of the visit, the Las Cruces delegation visited Nienburg's Waste Disposal Facility to exchange ideas and resources that will improve wastewater treatment plants in both cities.



Dinner at La Posta, Mesilla with delegates from both cities.
26.04.2023 © vhs Nienburg

Addressing climate change in UXC Pressemitteilung Landkreis Nienburg: 18 April 2023

Stephan Kaps, head of the vhs Nienburg, succeeded in getting the district of Nienburg involved in the DVV International's Urban X-Change project. The effects of climate change will be the main focus for the joint project "sister rivers - Geschwister-Flüsse" between Nienburg and Las Cruces. Prolonged drought of the Rio Grande in contrast to flooding of the Weser - the consequences of climate change are obvious - structural changes are needed.

At the end of the week, a delegation including representatives from vhs Nienburg, Nienburg city and local organisations will fly to Las Cruces, USA for a week.

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Imprint

Editor: DVV International
Königswinterer Straße 552b
D- 53227 Bonn
<https://dvv-international.de>

Concept, copy-editing, and realization:

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Welt:Stadt:Quartier | Institut für Bildung, Forschung
und Entwicklung e.V.
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Design Concept and Graphik:

Claudia Machnik
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Layout:

Pia Weißenfeld
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Funded by:

Federal Foreign Office



Federal Foreign Office





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Tackling global challenges requires local action and international collaboration: This dual approach is the gist of urban diplomacy.

This documentation brings together testimony from nine international partnerships including 18 municipalities in Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA, and Ukraine, who took part in the Urban X-Change Network, initiated by DVV International. This project sought to use adult education institutions to bring together citizens, civil society and local governments.

The documentation provides ample evidence that adult education institutions acted as competent and inviting supporters of urban diplomacy projects, in support of the Sustainable Development Goals.



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