

***Preventive support for successful integration –
www.pufii.de –***

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1. Introduction

Active participation, mutual acceptance, equal opportunities as well as becoming part of society are significant factors for successful integration. It is a multilayered process and a long-term task for society as a whole. In order to address this great challenge an extensive network and the involvement of stakeholders from all sectors of civil society, politics, administration and science are necessary.

Preventive work can make an important contribution to this process, because of the close link between integration and prevention. Both are especially effective, when they address specific cases early on and at the same time follow a long-term orientation. Furthermore, a systematic and foresightful integration policy on the federal, national and especially the municipal level is the most effective preventive strategy. Municipalities play an important role, since comprehensive, early preventive measures can be best implemented and coordinated on the spot.

A nationwide overview about the various initiatives and a transparent access to already existing information as well as an opportunity to exchange experience was needed in order to support the efforts by individual communities as well as to prevent the duplication of work, organise integration work more efficiently and ensure practitioners an overview about the various integration initiatives and activities throughout Germany. Hence, the digital platform pufii.de was created: Pufii.de supports all stakeholders by offering the possibility to develop, bundle and communicate preventive strategies and concepts and by building a nationwide network. The platform provides all parties transparency and guidance by gathering the multitude of information in the field of integration and prevention in one central platform.

2. About pufii.de

At the end of the year 2015 forced displacement worldwide reached its highest level since decades.¹ According to the UN Refugee Agency 65 million people were dis-

¹ <http://www.unhcr.org/news/latest/2016/6/5763b65a4/global-forced-displacement-hits-record-high.html> (accessed on 25. June 2017).

placed and forced to leave their homes. In the years 2015 and 2016 around 1.1 million displaced people sought asylum in Germany – more than ever before in the history of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees with an increase of 135% of asylum applications compared to the year before.²

Due to this abrupt rise, stakeholders on the federal, national and local level were confronted with an enormous task. In the first place accommodation and support for further basic needs had to be organised as quickly as possible, stretching several municipalities to their limits and exhausting their capacities. Thereby, the civil society in Germany played a crucial role in the organisation and supply of this primary aid.

Following those first efforts, all parties involved had to start looking towards the future. Next to the remaining challenges of finding long-term solutions for suitable private dwellings and personnel, the stakeholders had to lay the groundwork for a sustainable integration process. Regarding the continued instability within many countries of origin, it is estimated that at least half of the asylum seekers will settle in Germany permanently. In addition, Europe and Germany are facing constant escape and migratory movements. Despite the fact that the number of asylum seekers in Germany fell by 72% in 2017 compared to the first half of the previous year³, Germany remains a country of immigration.

Therefore, it is important to support newly arriving people with opportunities for integration and to encourage their active and equal participation in the community at an early stage. Integration is a long-term task for society as a whole. Thereby, a holistic approach, which envisions integration into all aspects of society, needs to include the arriving people as well as the receiving society. This is a significant way of preventing social distancing, intercultural conflicts and divisions within society.

In order to support this process preventive work can make an important contribution. With years of experience and accumulated knowledge preventive work has a substantial advantage: next to the gained expertise in working with an interdisciplinary network, the responsible professionals are familiar with effective projects and measures.⁴ Moreover, they focus on developing programmes not only for a specific group, but also for the community as a whole. Prevention work allows to identify and to recognise potentially critical situations at an early stage. Preventive measures can support

² <http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2016/01/asylantraege-dezember-2015.html> (accessed on 25. June 2017).

³ <http://www.bmi.bund.de/SharedDocs/Pressemitteilungen/DE/2017/07/asylantraege-juni-2017.html> (accessed on 25. June 2017).

⁴ Wiebke Steffen, „Prävention und Integration – Anmerkungen zu einigen aktuellen Schnittmengen und Perspektiven“, in: Kerner, Hans-Jürgen u. Erich Marks (Hrsg.), *Internetdokumentation des Deutschen Präventionstages*. Hannover 2016, S.4 <http://www.praeventionstag.de/dokumentation/download.-cms?id=2534&datei=POD-LPR-NRW-2016-2534.pdf> (accessed on 31. June 2017).

integration work in particular by anticipating uncertainties and unawareness among the general public, including the recognition of feelings of anger, fear and anxieties.⁵

Short after the arrival of displaced persons in Germany a variety of innovative ideas, concepts and initiatives reducing prejudices and promoting social interaction on a state and non-state level emerged. Due to the abrupt increase of asylum seekers and therefore the rapidly raising demand the field has grown very quickly, however entailing a lack in coordination and information exchange. Each municipality tried to cope with the challenging situation on their own. There was no centralised network for professional exchange and no opportunity for sharing good practices as well as new ideas and developed strategies. The integration work lacked in transparency and a comprehensive overview.

In order to counteract these developments, the three initiators

- the German Congress on Crime Prevention⁶,
- the Crime Prevention Council of Lower-Saxony⁷ and
- the German-European Forum for Urban Security⁸

launched pufii.de: a digital platform gathering and organising the existing information and knowledge associated with integration and prevention as well as pave the way for a lively exchange.

3. Our goals, our vision

Providing a variety of information, bringing together different parties from research, administration and practice, building up a strong and interdisciplinary network and support an active exchange: this is what the online portal “Preventive Support for Integration-Initiatives - pufii.de” is aiming for.

Starting in March 2016 pufii.de is located at the interface between prevention and integration work. Preventive and integrative actions are both particularly successful, when they both allow for an early reaction to specific circumstances and at the same time are oriented towards a long-term and lasting strategy. The platform aims at establishing a systemised and coordinated integration work throughout Germany. By setting up a single, central portal at the nexus of integration and prevention for integration practitioners and all those interested, it is intended to make a sustainable contribution to an efficient and effective integration work.

⁵ Marks/Plich, www.pufii.de - Präventive Unterstützung für Integrations-Initiativen in: forum kriminalprävention 1/2016, S.3, <https://www.forum-kriminalpraevention.de/files/1Forum-kriminalpraevention-webseite/pdf/2016-01/pufii.pdf> (accessed on 31. June 2017).

⁶ <http://www.praeventionstag.de/nano.cms/leitbild>.

⁷ <http://lpr.niedersachsen.de/nano.cms/leitbild>.

⁸ <http://en.defus.org/nano.cms/history-and-objectives>.

Run by three experienced (crime) prevention organisations, pufii.de supports the circulation of knowledge and expertise among all professionals working in the field of integration and makes it available to other parties more quickly and comprehensively. Thereby, the emerging synergies and improved transparency promise to reduce the workload and to promote the integration process.

By offering an opportunity for exchange, state and non-state parties can benefit and learn from each other. They can easily access nationwide presentation of projects and concepts, recent activities and new developed guidelines. The dissemination of devised strategies, new approaches and innovative ideas prevent stakeholders to constantly develop new options of action from scratch. By gathering and bundling information existing approaches can be supplemented and reinforced. Moreover, a systematic pool of information supports publicity work and public awareness as well as prevents prolonged internet research. In this way the integration practitioners can preserve their resources and facilitate their work. Moreover, scientific results and practical experience are taken into account in a better way and exploited more effectively.

The vision for the platform is to function both as an intermediary between integration practitioners from all sectors of civil society, politics, administration and science as well as a central place for all integration and prevention related topics in Germany.

4. Our activities

Pufii.de provides a centralised hub for exchange and information that is freely accessible on its website for all professionals and volunteers working in the field of integration. The digital platform gives a user-oriented overview about the nationwide existing initiatives, recent activities, strategies and developed concepts. All parties can use the portal as an information platform as well as an active tool for the own public relations.

The **information-database** provides an extensive list of links for online and locally based activities as well as information on specific topics, like the labour market, education and law. The various lists of links range from consumer information for refugees to recent judicial decisions up to offers on prevention of radicalisation. Moreover, the platform gives an overview on recent research projects, studies and publications associated with the issues of integration and prevention. Also a nationwide summary about current national and regional funding programmes as well as developed handbooks and guidelines are available. The often time-consuming research for a specific contact is facilitated by a detailed list naming all significant state and non-state actors.

To guarantee the users a transparent and easy access to the information all lists are thematically sorted and categorised. With the help of the search function each user can narrow down and target efficiently the necessary information based on his or her needs. Each individual search result is categorised locally and thematically.

The **database for initiatives** provides a short description and contact details for each project. An interactive map offers an user-friendly overview on nationwide and regional initiatives. The user can get directly in touch with the listed projects. The individual projects benefit from being included in the database, as it enhances their public exposure and impact.

The **event calendar** offers a list with upcoming local, regional and nationwide events, such as symposiums, workshops, trainings and webinars. The event calendar can be navigated by limiting the search results according to a specific region or a particular subject.

Furthermore, pufii.de gives an **overview about the activities within individual municipalities**. The users can explore the various ideas, concepts, offerings, events and initiatives in each municipality. Exchanging good practices among communities and learning from others' experiences creates further impulses and stimulates new ideas. In this way integration practitioners in Hamburg can for example share their competences and experiences with neighbouring municipalities or even professionals in Munich.

Pufii's website is updated on a daily basis and all current information on integration work and refugee support are included in a **weekly newsletter**. In a **blog** pufii.de gives deeper insights and more detailed information in the fields of integration and prevention for example on an upcoming event, a new project or a concept of a municipality.

Based on the broad range of information provided, the platform offers an innovative tool for research activities. The easy navigation and clear layout of pufii.de facilitates the work of professionals and volunteers, helping to preserve their scarce resources.

5. What is going to be next?

The next important steps focus on extending the active involvement of the integration practitioners and enlarging the services provided by the platform.

Firstly, pufii.de will offer demand-oriented events, such as workshops or webinars. The format of the event is tailored according to the specific aspects in focus, for example knowledge transfer or the personal exchange of practical expertise.

Secondly, pufii.de will create opportunities to build new partnerships and found co-operations. Already existing networks on the regional and local level will be linked nationwide. This new collaboration promotes the mutual exchange of positive and negative experiences and encourages to reflect upon one's own work. By publishing their own information straightforward and quickly, partners of the platform are given the opportunity to use the portal for their own public relations in order to reach the largest possible audience.

Furthermore, it is time to evaluate the initiatives and strategies and review their effectiveness. After the initial phase of primary aid and the enormous growth of projects and ideas, it is now necessary to identify sustainable, efficient and transferable concepts in order to support long-term integration work. Thereby, good practices and effective approaches are circulated among municipalities, volunteers and organisations.

6. The conclusion

Pufii.de has established an informal network and a platform for exchange for many stakeholders working in the field of integration. It stands out due to its focus on providing and centralising up to date information, initiatives and good practices. The portal offers opportunities for all integration practitioners to share their knowledge and learn from each other.

A key challenge for pufii.de is to secure resources in order to increase the project's activities. As more and more people are using the platform, contributing and including their experiences and expertise, the platform is continuously improving.

The bundling, development and communication on preventive and integrative measures and ideas in a single platform supports a sustainable and systematic integration work throughout Germany.

The user-friendly and easy access to thematic information and relevant contacts enables municipalities as well as other interested actors to reduce their workload, build up common approaches, raise awareness and share ideas. Moreover, pufii.de encourages the mutual interdisciplinary exchange between all stakeholders in the field of integration.

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