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1. The City of Oldenburg

1.1 Geographic location, economy and demography

Situated in the northwest of Lower Saxony, 70 km from the Dutch border and 50 km from the North Sea, Oldenburg is a "small-scale big city" that blends tradition with modernity and strong regional awareness with a cosmopolitan lifestyle.

Although hardly a major port city like neighbouring Bremen, Oldenburg nevertheless possesses a global network due to emigration, immigration and trade. This is reflected in the population as well: Oldenburg is home to people from over 140 nations.

While agriculture dominates the region around Oldenburg, the city itself has a large number of highly professional small to medium-sized enterprises, especially in the high tech, renewable energies, high-quality corporate services and IT sectors. Moreover, a number of banks and insurance companies have their headquarters in Oldenburg.

With over 20,000 students enrolled at Carl von Ossietzky University and a variety of institutes of higher learning, Oldenburg is also a strong centre of education.

Manufacturing and processing industry, above all in the food sector or the automotive supplier market, account for a comparatively small proportion of Oldenburg's jobs and economic output.

The high degree of civic engagement in municipal life is a particular quality of Oldenburg. Volunteering, civic associations and an active commitment to communal life are characteristic of the city's political and collective self-perception.

1.2 Migration to Germany and Oldenburg

The most formative migratory movements in 20th-century Germany began at the end of the Second World War. Several million German citizens were forced to flee the former eastern territories of Germany or were displaced westward, to what became the Federal Republic of Germany. During the 1960s and 70s, so-called "guest workers" were recruited to all areas of Germany from Southwest and Southeast Europe, Turkey and North Africa in order to satisfy the demand for labour in the industrial sector. Of the roughly 14 million guest workers, around 3 million settled in Germany, with some bringing their families to join them.

Over 1.5 million ethnic Germans moved to Germany from the territories of the former Soviet Union during the first half of the 1990s alone (approximately 4.5 million persons from 1950 to the present day). Around 400,000 war refugees from the Balkans states also sought protection in Germany around the mid-1990s, although the majority returned to their homes after the end of the Yugoslav Wars.







Until well into the 20th century, the history of migration in Oldenburg was largely shaped by its strong trade relationship with the Netherlands.

Largely unscathed by bombardment during the Second World War, around 40,000 people from eastern and central Germany sought refuge in Oldenburg. To this day, the accommodation and care of refugees and displaced persons during the tempestuous post-War period is considered one of the greatest achievements in the history of Oldenburg, transforming a previously sedate town into a city with more than 120,000 inhabitants.

Approximately 166,000 people live in Oldenburg at the start of 2018. Just under 23 percent (39,000) of them have what is known as a migrant background¹, including approximately 9 percent (14,900) non-German citizens².

Refugees in Oldenburg

Over 4,400 refugees have been assigned to the city of Oldenburg since 2010. They include more than 2,000 Iraqi nationals, the majority of them members of the Yazidi community, as well as approximately 1,000 Syrians. Of this total population, 3,100 arrived in the city in 2015 alone. During the peak periods, 1,400 people were cared for simultaneously in municipal reception centres and decentral housing facilities. Last year, approximately 80 percent of the applications for asylum were approved.

The State of Lower Saxony has virtually stopped assigning refugees to Oldenburg since December 2017.

As of early 2018, around 530 refugees remain in central or decentral municipal accommodation facilities.

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¹ "A person has a migrant background if he or she, or at least one parent, was not a German citizen at birth. Individually, the definition applies to the following persons:

^{1.} immigrant and non-immigrant foreigners; 2. immigrant and non-immigrant, naturalised Germans; 3. (late) repatriates; 4. German nationals born as children to any of the three aforementioned groups." Cf. Federal Statistical Office (2017). Fachserie 1 Reihe 2.2 Bevölkerung mit Migrationshintergrund, p.4.

² Foreigners are persons that are not Germans as defined in Article 116 (1) of the Basic Law (GG). They also include stateless persons and persons with unclear nationality. Foreigners are included in the group of persons with migrant backgrounds. They may have been born in Germany or have migrated to the country. Cf. Federal Statistical Office, Migration und Integration. Integrationsindikatoren 2005-2016. 2017 p. 10.







2. "ARRIVAL CITIES" - The Project

ARRIVAL CITIES is an international European project supported by URBACT, the cooperation programme for sustainable and integrated urban development. URBACT is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the 28 Member States, as well as by Norway and Switzerland.

The aim of ARRIVAL CITIES was for all partner cities to develop Integrated Local Action Plans to overcome the specific local challenges in the wider area of integration.

Among other things, this includes an assessment of the situation so far, identification of challenges, development of actions for their management, and the definition of indicators and suitable mechanisms with which to monitor and evaluate the individual actions and the action plan as a whole.

The project attaches particular importance to the inclusion of as many different social actors and *stakeholders* as possible in the preparation of action plans.

ARRIVAL CITIES launched in Oldenburg on 15 September 2015 and will end on 3 May 2018.

Besides Oldenburg, the following cities were participating in the project:

Amadora, Portugal (Lead Partner)
Val de Marne, France
Dresden, Germany
Riga, Latvia
Vantaa, Finland
Thessaloniki, Greece
Patras, Greece
Messina, Italy
Roquetas de Mar, Spain

2.1 Core elements of ARRIVAL CITIES

Aside from ARRIVAL CITIES, the URBACT cooperation programme is currently responsible for 23 other projects – so-called "Networks" – that address an immense variety of topics within the overarching field of integrated urban development. All of them apply the same underlying methodology comprising shared core elements that are characteristic of URBACT projects:

The Local Support Groups – At the heart of the project

Each partner city within an URBACT Network establishes a Local Support Group. These support groups should be as diversified as possible, and all *stakeholders* in the







network topic should be represented. In this regard, the term *stakeholders* describes all actors that are involved in the issue of integration, irrespective of the level. The objective is to build a Local Support Group comprising members of the city administration, as well as representatives of civic society, organisations, associations, the business community and advocacy groups. The purpose here is to bring together a complete range of perspectives, interests, experience and competencies.

The Integrated Local Action Plan – The project objective

The work of each URBACT Network in participating cities should culminate in the preparation of an Integrated Local Action Plan. Produced in collaboration with the Local Support Groups, this paper is intended to identify local needs within the relevant area, analyse chances and opportunities, and indicate where there might be sustainable and viable solutions. In this regard, it must state clear actions, timeframes for their implementation and how they will be financed.

The Toolkit – Equipment for the work on the ground

The URBACT Toolkit is a collection of methods to integrate *stakeholders* and local actors, as well as to coordinate work on the ground. These methods help to prepare and analyse the local needs, challenges and potential solutions, to provide training and strengthen competencies among the Local Support Groups. They also provide best practice examples and materials for self-assessments of the project at local level.

Transnational Workshops – Cross-border learning

Although the Local Support Groups operate in a specific situation in their respective cities, there are many similarities between challenges facing the various cities in the individual countries. Several "Transnational Workshops" are held in each Network in order to learn from these similarities and differences, as well as from the various perspectives and interventions initiated in the Partner Cities. Each of these workshops addresses a specific theme. Lasting several days and attended by delegates from the various Local Support Groups, the events include visits to the projects and facilities in the host Partner City and provide a framework to get to know each other and discuss technical details.

URBACT Experts – Comprehensive advice

URBACT makes a pool of experienced Experts available to each Network. Their specialty fields extend from the establishment and organisation of Local Support Groups, to technical issues, budget planning and public relations.

2.2 Challenges and potential – Oldenburg's participation in the project

The Syrian Civil War broke out just shortly after the Oldenburg Integration Concept was adopted in 2010, spreading quickly to become an international conflict with







ramifications for the entire region. Since then, the refugee movements it unleashed and which were not felt in Central and Western Europe until around 2013 have dominated discussions on integration policies and how they should be implemented, and – quite apart from the likelihood of further refugee movements – they will continue to do so for at least the medium term.

The city of Oldenburg's participation in ARRIVAL CITIES presents a significant opportunity to ensure ideal preparation for the shifting tasks and challenges of practical integration that lie ahead. Here, it is necessary to emphasise that this is not restricted to the management of refugees alone. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the situation over recent years has acted almost as a catalyst for in places fundamental issues that have already existed for some time.

Overall, three overarching challenges for practical integration can be identified in light of recent developments:

From arrival to participation

The arrival of refugees in Oldenburg and their accommodation in initial reception centres before they transition to their own housing after obtaining a residence permit, are merely the very first steps in a chain of development that lays the foundation for downstream integration actions.

What can be done to support this process? How can it be ensured that the environment provided actually fosters social participation and equal opportunities? What can be done to check that services are used and opportunities taken?

Clarifying these issues and developing a practical concept for the city of Oldenburg requires a two-pronged, reciprocal approach: first it is necessary to decide which definition of "integration" should apply as the municipal objective. Once this is done, the environment and actions applied in both the municipal integration policies and the integration work itself must be constructed to suit this defined objective. In other words, experience acquired from practical integration must flow back into the definition of objectives. Adherence to this reciprocal procedure will enable the creation of effective and efficient integration policies to manage future immigration.

Diversity of actors

It would not have been possible to provide initial care and support to the large number of refugees that have arrived in Germany and Oldenburg within a very short period in recent years, without the support of the numerous dedicated volunteers. Indeed, a large number of volunteers continue to assist refugees in coping with everyday life and negotiating the various areas of our modern society, even beyond their arrival in the state reception centres and municipal accommodation facilities. In doing so, they make an invaluable contribution to the integration process, augmenting the work of the refugee counselling centres and the municipal social workers for integration affairs in the city of Oldenburg.

While this new, independent culture of volunteering for many provides an easier, more direct way of becoming without direct membership in an organisation, the







absence of some benefits inherent to an established structure is evident nonetheless. These benefits include a clear idea of who is currently active and where acute assistance is needed. Moreover, there is inadequate networking with municipal offices or independent organisations providing voluntary or charitable services.

This creates the following challenges: to provide practical assistance and motivation for the work of individual volunteers; to perceive their experience and activity as an important resource within integration work; and to bring them into an effective network with other organisers in relevant areas, without inhibiting their personal autonomy.

Co-creating integration

New formats for planning and communication are necessary in order to allow the important experience and competencies that dedicated citizens of Oldenburg provide to flow into the integration work and to ensure collaborative partnership between the extremely varied actors. In view of the sharp rise in volunteering especially, it is essential to engage in dialogue with everyone actively involved in the process and to coordinate the work of all *stakeholders*.

Besides promoting dialogue between professionals and volunteers, it is important to integrate newly arrived migrants within the existing structures. Migrant associations and organisations within the community, as well as the individual migrants themselves, should be empowered to contribute their potential as actors and experts for integration work.

Social cohesion

The resurgent resentment and animosity toward refugees and even persons with a migrant background who have lived in Germany for a long time, through to open and violent racism, clearly indicate that the strengthening of antiracism and antidiscrimination efforts must continue. Information about laws, civic rights and available protection, the long term securing of funding for counselling centres and the firm establishment of an unequivocal repudiation of discrimination and racism in the development of concepts and actions can help to counteract structural disadvantages.

The Oldenburg Integration Concept of 2010

Oldenburg adopted its first municipal integration concept entitled "At home. Building diversity together!" in 2010.

The mission statement of "TOLERANZ", whose individual letters defined the underlying areas of Teilhabe, Offenheit, Leichtigkeit, Engagement, Reflexion, Akzeptanz, Neugierde, Zielstrebigkeit (TOLERANCE – Participation, Openness, Ease, Engagement, Reflection, Acceptance, Curiosity, Ambition), provided basic orientation for viable integration policies in the city of Oldenburg.

The concept contains an overview that breaks down the general term of "integration" into its constituent parts and illuminates the demographic characteristics of the population with a migrant background.







Socio-economic statistics for non-German citizens are used as examples to demonstrate their access to social participation and equal opportunities. The aggregated data demonstrates that foreign nationals are at a clear disadvantage compared to German nationals in the areas of qualification, training and job market situation and levels of poverty.

This insight was then used to define four key activity fields to reduce these disadvantages: language acquisition, school, transition between school and profession and job market. A status quo analysis for all previously implemented actions was carried out in each of these activity fields and an outlook for future development opportunities provided.

2.3 The role of the ARRIVAL CITIES project in Oldenburg

The city of Oldenburg hopes that its participation in ARRIVAL CITIES will help to overcome upcoming challenges for its integration work. Here, not only does the project create an opportunity to meet and discuss with colleagues and experts at local and European level, it also provides a methodical "Toolkit" with which the city and its local cooperation partners can form a Local Support Group "Arrival City Oldenburg" to develop an Integrated Local Action Plan.

3. "Shaping. Oldenburg. Together" – Local implementation of the project

Preparations to update the city of Oldenburg's integration concept began in 2015. Besides the fundamental necessity for regular evaluation of concepts and actions, these preparations were prompted by the experience of dramatically transforming geopolitical circumstances and the refugee movements unleashed in their wake.

3.1 The three pillars of the Integrated Action Plan

The Integrated Action Plan is based on three pillars: the validity of the **Oldenburg Integration Concept of 2010**, as well as the objectives and calls for action it defines, will be reviewed as the project progresses, also to reflect the changes that have unfolded over the last eight years. The results of the participation workshops held within the framework of the **ARRIVAL CITIES** project form the second pillar. In addition, the knock-on effects of **founding the Office for Migration and Integration** as a strategic implementation entity will also be incorporated in drafting the plan.







3.2 "Arrival City Oldenburg" - The URBACT Local Support Group

The Local Support Group "Arrival City Oldenburg" was established as a core group in order to ensure that the vast diversity of actors and *stakeholders* involved in the thematic field of integration were represented, while still preserving a manageable size. In other words, the members of this Local Support Group have created an organisational core to represent various areas and interest groups and to contribute their expertise to the group's work.

The members of the URBACT Local Support Group in Oldenburg are:

- City of Oldenburg, Office for Migration and Integration (since August 2017) as managing entity of the Local Support Group
- o Integrated Comprehensive School Kreyenbrück, representing the education sector
- Yazidi Forum Oldenburg, representing the area of civic society and migrant community organisations
- o IBIS, representing the area of civic society and counselling facilities
- City of Oldenburg, Community Social Centre Kreyenbrück, representing the area of community social work and social participation
- Educational Institute of the Economy of Lower Saxony / IQ Network, representing the area of the job market and job market integration

3.3 From an open process to an Integrated Local Action Plan

The URBACT Local Support Group in Oldenburg met for its constitutive meeting in summer 2016. Its first public appearance as an ARRIVAL CITIES Local Support Group was in September, when it organised a discussion event entitled "How do we want to live together in future?" The occasion was used to raise awareness for the upcoming project and to collect a lot of input, different perspectives and creative ideas on the issue of integration in Oldenburg.

A series of consecutive, interrelated workshops then followed this opening event from January 2017 on. They were designed for all citizens of Oldenburg in order to cultivate an open process of participation. Members of the URBACT Local Support Group were involved in the organisation and as experts as well. They also moderated the four thematic support groups that emerged from the activity fields defined in the 2010 Integration Concept.

The Local Support Group received additional methodical assistance from the Bertelsmann Foundation, which had launched a pilot project entitled "Arrival in Germany" to help a variety of municipalities throughout Germany develop new strategies to overcome the challenges of integration. The Bertelsmann Foundation







assigned a competent process assistant to the city of Oldenburg, who contributed her expertise in the planning and implementation of the participation process.

The defined tasks of the individual workshops were as follows:

Kick-off Event	September 12 th , 2016: "Visions for an open-minded and	
	diverse Oldenburg"; Discussion and world-café-method.	
1st Workshop	January 20 th , 2017: Identify the status quo in the individual	
	thematic fields: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and	
	risks (SWOT analysis); define acute needs for action in the	
	individual thematic fields.	
2 nd Workshop	March 6 th , 2017: Define the objectives for integration work	
	in Oldenburg within the individual thematic fields; define	
	suitable indicators to assess target achievement.	
3 rd Workshop	April 24 th , 2017: Develop clear ideas for actions and define	
	the necessary responsibilities in the individual thematic	
	fields.	
Closing Event	August 17 th , 2017: Presentation of the cumulated results of	
	the workshops and presentation of the further course of	
	action.	

The event was intended for all interested members of the public, as well as for experts. The latter group included professional employees of associations, charitable or public sector institutions, as well as volunteers who had acquired a broad spectrum of practical expertise through their involvement in this area.

In addition to these three events, an individual appointment was organised for each thematic work group in order to review the prepared results and add any input. Altogether, over 300 people took part in the three workshops. They represented more than 50 different institutions and organisations. Attended by 60 young people, an additional workshop for students of the Kreyenbrück Integrated Comprehensive School provided an opportunity to include the specific perspectives of adolescents in the process.

The cumulated results of the participation process are at the core of the Integrated Local Action Plan for the ARRIVAL CITIES project.

The Integrated Local Action Plan will be incorporated into the updated Oldenburg Integration Concept, likely to be completed and adopted by the City Council in 2018/2019.







4. Establishment of the Office for Migration and Integration

The Office for Migration and Integration was founded on 1 August 2017. The Office is divided into the *Department of Integration* and the *Department of Central Refugee Management*.

Establishment of the Office in the city of Oldenburg pooled competencies and responsibilities from eight different departments, with the aim of positioning migration and integration as a cross-sectoral task and hence as one with relevance to society as a whole.

The Department of Central Refugee Management brings together all tasks related to care and housing for refugees: the approval of benefits according to the Asylum Seekers' Benefits Act (AsylbLG), management of the city's shared accommodation facilities and decentralised accommodation, as well as ultimately the acquisition of individual housing for refugees.

The Department of Integration focuses on the standard tasks associated with municipal integration work: coordination of education and language acquisition services, supporting and empowering migrant organisations, development of concepts for municipal integration work and raising of awareness within the city administration for the issues of migration and integration. Secondly, the Department of Integration in Oldenburg also organises the provision of interpreters, coordinates their use and attempts to introduce more professional structures among the volunteers involved in integration work.

Compared to other municipalities in Germany, a particular feature of the Office for Migration and Integration is its direct responsibility for integration social work. This ensures that a direct and strong contact is immediately established with newly arrived migrants; it also enables a direct and critical appraisal of current actions in the interests of the target group or the needs-based implementation of new actions.

The city's integration work in the field takes place largely in the areas of education and training, language acquisition, professional orientation and job market integration, social participation and voluntary work. The city depends on networks and connections between these areas of work in order to structure its integration work in the community effectively and successfully.

This restructuring has a significant impact on the objective of ARRIVAL CITIES in Oldenburg. The former Mayor's Integration Unit with its just two employees has evolved into an entire Office with over forty staff members that cater to an entire range of integration tasks. Hence, integration work is no longer a peripheral issue and has instead become an established and embedded part of the city administration.

The Integrated Action Plan needs to incorporate these altered circumstances in its development: the results of the SWOT analysis describe and assess a structure that partially no longer exists. Nevertheless, the defined objectives and actions can still be appraised from the perspective of the newly created structures.







The repercussions of the restructuring actions become clear upon consideration of the objectives for the participation process that have already been achieved as a consequence of establishing the new Office (refer to Section 5.4).

5. The Integrated Local Action Plan

At its core, the Local Action Plan is built on the results accumulated in the public participation events within ARRIVAL CITIES in Oldenburg. Section 5.1 and 5.2 describe the main findings of the public participation process.

The future objectives and actions, described in section 5.3 are based on the results from the previous sections: the analysis of the status quo and the objectives and actions proposed in the participation process, but also on a reflection on the current structures and resources and a systematic definition of clear objectives within the individual thematic fields.

5.1 Analysis of the status quo

The SWOT methodology (Strengths – Weaknesses – Opportunities – Threats) was applied to analyse the current situation regarding Oldenburg integration work in the first workshop. Appraisal of opportunities and risks, strengths and weaknesses was undertaken in all four of the predefined thematic fields work.

According to the SWOT methodology those four categories have then been evaluated against each other: which strength can lead to what potential opportunity, which strength can add to minimizing what risk. And which weaknesses have to be eliminated to seize what opportunities?

The following part describes the results of the above mentioned evaluation

Language and Social Communication

The pronounced commitment shared by residents of Oldenburg and its city administration reduces the potential for conflicts due to a common goal.

The deployment of voluntary assistance can mitigate weaknesses, for instance in childcare and administrative formalities.

Improvements in the quality of available language courses and the creation of transparency help to put benefits and competencies to more profitable use.

Intercultural Learning

The Local Action Group initially agreed on the following definition of intercultural learning:

"Intercultural learning is an interactive and individual process that fosters knowledge, skills, competencies and attitudes about one's own and a (seemingly) foreign culture and language. Important factors in this regard include a sensitive awareness and







critical handling of prejudices and stereotypes, as well as reflection on their causes. The learning objective is tolerance. The mission is to achieve maximum participation in social and cultural processes."

A culture of appreciative encounter and a long-term process of change can be initiated through the utilization of strengths such as good networks, intercultural accessibility of existing services and purposeful assignment of financial resources. Self-reflection, a discussion on shared values and coordination of learning services can increase the chances of achieving the defined objective.

Labour Market and Employment

Appraisal of the opportunities for education and training in the city accounts for a significant portion of this activity field. It soon became apparent when mapping the strengths that Oldenburg already has efficient and strong structural approaches for the establishment of educational chains and concepts. The networks in this sector are operating at all levels, from volunteers to professionals. The local branch of the Federal Employment Agency and the municipal Jobcenter provide services to assist newly arrived migrants. Stand-alone initiatives like the pro:connect association bring together employers and job-seekers and take practical steps to implementing the political will to ensure rapid and smooth integration of migrants within the labour market. The opportunities to compensate for the shortage of skilled workers can be increased through strategic efforts to counteract prejudice against migrants on the labour market and their consequent disenfranchisement, as well as by establishing a comprehensive system of intercultural education. Making the city's administrative bodies and businesses more open to other cultures can help to minimise the risk of conflict and discrimination.

Housing and Meeting

Oldenburg has a particular strength in the areas of places to meet and commitment of volunteers. In responding to the growth in refugee allocations to the city, citizens offered assistance in all areas of life: from providing necessary clothing and household items to accompaniment on official errands or trips to the doctor et cetera. Civic associations and community centres opened their doors and offered space for people to meet and communicate. During the surveyed period (2017), the former Office for Central Refugee Management played a central role by coordinating supply, support and necessary social work.

A range of parallel services emerged due to this striking willingness to provide refugees with help and support. Among the future challenges will be to introduce greater transparency between these services, networking and coordinating their activities in order to identify missing structures.

The establishment of meeting places and the creation of opportunities for communication in the city quarters can help to foster mutual understanding and minimise any conflict potential.







5.2 Objectives as defined in the public participation process

Overarching objectives were defined for each of the activity areas in the second public participation workshop. They point in a certain direction, defining how the city's integration work could be structured in the coming years. The objectives have a clear practical slant and reflect the strengths and weaknesses of the current status of integration work in Oldenburg.

Objectives of the activity area "Language and Social Communication"

- Increase in the number of employees with migrant background within city administration
- o Promotion of multilingual skills
- o Provision of essential information in the most frequently encountered languages
- o Promotion of low-threshold language learning activities
- Promotion of options for newly arrived migrants and locals to meet in the city districts and engage in social and cultural exchange and communication
- o Promotion of services for pre-school and extracurricular language acquisition
- Promotion of services to provide accompaniment and support for newly arrived migrants in everyday situations.
- Expansion of childcare capacities during language courses
- o Access to language courses for persons unlikely to be granted residence
- Provide counselling services with reliable access to trustworthy, professional interpreters
- o (Multilingual) transparency about social and cultural facilities and offers

Objectives of the activity area "Intercultural Learning"

- Fostering of professionalisation of persons with a migrant background in the field of integration work
- o Promotion of intercultural openness within city administration
- Assurance of interconnected chains in a person's educational biography (formal, non-formal and informal education)
- Fostering of intercultural meeting places
- o Fostering of migrant associations
- Particular promotion of education and the liberty of women and girls, with a focus on equal opportunities

Objectives of the activity area "Labour Market and Employment"

- Provision of information regarding employment of immigrants and refugees (for both possible employers and migrant employees)
- o Increase in the percentage of migrants among the total workforce (e.g. the percentage of migrants working for each company is equivalent to the percentage of migrants in the total population of the city of Oldenburg)







- Each company with more than 30 employees has someone acting as Integration
 Guide that belongs to a network and supports both employer and employees
- Each adolescent willing and able to embark on an apprenticeship has found a suitable opportunity
- Each language learning courses provider provides flexibly scheduled language courses for working participants
- Improvement in services for vocational part-qualifications, re-qualifications and skills assessments
- o Promotion of entrepreneurship among newly arrived migrants

Objectives of the activity area "Housing and Meeting Places"

- All economically disadvantaged persons are living in affordable, acceptable housing
- In 5 years, "Halls of Residence Projects" (for mixed target groups, e.g. refugees, college students and elderly people) exist as places for meeting and communication
- In 5 years, each city district will have a place for people to meet and communicate, where diversity can be celebrated in a communal and crossgenerational setting.
- o Resources will be shared in urban neighborhoods
- Information on housing and meeting places is transparent, universally accessible and pooled within professional networks
- o Open access, multilingual counselling opportunities are available for everyone
- The residents feel a keen sense of responsibility for their neighborhood as a liveable and safe space.
- o Robust networks and strong collaboration exist between all levels of actors.
- On request, all refugees living in decentral accommodation facilities or individual housing will receive support from volunteers
- Professional staff assist the volunteers in their work with refugees and newly arrived migrants.

5.3 Reflection on the objectives and actions

Fair opportunities for everyone – from vision to actual practice

The guiding vision for integration work is to create ideal frame conditions for social participation and equity of opportunities for all migrants living in Oldenburg. In the following part, the cumulated objectives and actions (see section 5.2) are evaluated regarding how and in which area they directly or indirectly work towards this vision.

Reflecting on the results from the public participation process

The public participation process "Shaping. Oldenburg. Together" generated a large number of results. These results reflect the diversity and experience of the







participants, but also the complexity of the topic and the multitude of ties and mutual influences of the different thematic fields and levels.

During evaluation, the results have been partially transformed into "strategic" and "operational" objectives. This improves the structuring of the IAP. These objectives in some cases merge results from different fields of action from the public participation process.

"Strategic objectives" are long-term goals that require intermediate steps and objectives. "Operational objectives" are action-oriented step stones towards the strategic objectives. Overall, 5 strategic objectives have been formulated from the results of the participation process, with at least two associated operational objectives each. Each operational objective in turn is assigned proposed actions to achieve that objective.

Please Note: objectives from the participation process which are aiming beyond the reach or responsibility of local integration policy or those that were formulated in a manner too abstract, could not be included into the following part as of yet. All of the cumulated objectives, actions and results from the public participation process are documented in the annex of this action plan.

Strategic Objective A: Intercultural opening of city administration

Intercultural opening is a process of organisational development, which aims at adapting municipal administrations to the requirements of a modern "migration society". This mainly shows in human resources development and policy, in applying cross-cultural skills and in ensuring barrier-free access to information and services.

On the organisational level, intercultural opening aims at fostering migrants' participation all areas of society as well as promoting cross-cultural understanding and respect.

The central question to ask is: "are the existing structures and offers adequate for the plurality of a modern migration society?". To answer this, a continuous reflection of our own actions and a nuanced handling of diversity is needed.

Operational Objective A1: Increasing the number of city administration employees with a migrant background

The proportion of employees of the city administration of Oldenburg with a migrant background is still lower than the proportion of Oldenburg inhabitants with a migrant background. It is an operative objective to raise this proportion and make more use of the transcultural skills and perspectives of heterogeneous teams in providing the service possible to the Oldenburg inhabitants.

Proposed actions:

 The city of Oldenburg presents itself as an employer attractive for persons with a migrant background.







 Advertising for vocational training at the city administration should take place at and with the cooperation of migrant associations and other socio-cultural institutions with a large proportion of young audience with a migrant background.

Operational Objective A2: Strengthening cross-cultural competencies within city administration

To comply with the societal requisition of equity and respect for all groups within society, existing structures (of power) and the individuals own position within society have to be reflected on. Modern institutions and organisations need to develop a self-conception as cross-cultural actors. Developing cross-cultural competencies is a learning process and not achieved by administrative instruction.

Proposed actions:

- Expanding the already existing range of cross-cultural training for city administration employees
- Cross-cultural and diversity training modules as part of the vocational training curriculum of city administration trainees.

Operational Objective A3: Ensuring accessibility of information and services

As a part of equity of opportunities, each Oldenburg inhabitant has to have easy access to public information and services. In the context of integration of migrants this implies a focus on language aspects.

Proposed actions:

- Expanding the city administration's relevant information services to a range of the most important languages of immigrants.
- Immigrants are provided with important information as soon, adequate and individual as possible
- Multilingual organisation and moderation of events held by municipal bodies, if required
- Language mediators support new immigrants when dealing with administrative formalities
- Professional interpreters support new immigrants in specific, complex and longterm matters with administrative bodies
- o Administrative bodies re-align their structures and services towards multilinguality.

Strategic Objective B: All immigrants are learning German

To live a self-determined life and seize opportunities, acquisition of the German language is a decisive factor to immigrants. Providing adequate and accessible language learning services is a central element of facilitating equity of opportunities for immigrants in our society.







Operational objective B1: Promoting adequate language learning services for immigrants

Even though a wide range of language learning offers already exists in Oldenburg, certain target groups for several reasons can't easily participate. To reduce barriers and delays regarding German language aquistion, the existing offer should be adjusted to adequately fit the actualities of life of those groups.

Proposed Actions:

- Expanding daycare capacities for participants of language courses to make participation easier for mothers of (especially) young children.
- Creating access to language learning courses for immigrants with a low probability of gaining a residence permit.
- Promotion of pre-school and extracurricular language learning offers for different age groups
- o Promoting language course offers that allow participation of working immigrants

Operational Objective B2: Promotion of Multilingualism

Scientific studies have proven that proficiency in the native language strongly promotes learning other languages.

Proposed Actions:

- Evaluating an expansion of the native language class offer in cooperation with schools and the state school authority of Lower Saxony
- Promotion of multilingual cultural and learning offers, e.g. mutual language learning, multilingual swap sites for books, cross-cultural and multilingual fairy tale events
- Promotion of multilingual and cross-cultural media

Strategic Objective C: Strengthening social cohesion

Basic prerequisite of a functioning commonwealth is strong social cohesion. Reservations against immigration or even outright racism, socio-economic segregation, alienation of particular groups from the rest of society or conflicts over values and ethics can weaken social cohesion. In the course of the public participation process two fields of action have been proposed to strengthen social cohesion against such influences.

Operational Objective C1: Promotion of cross-cultural encounter and communication

Municipal community social centres, youth centres and many local institutions and organisations provide chances of meeting persons of many different backgrounds and cultures. This empowers cross-cultural understanding and counters prejudices and reservations. Cross-cultural associations and migrant organisations offer joint cultural and recreational activities. Fostering networks and cooperation between all actors involved and purposeful support by municipal agencies would promote those opportunities and strengthen the local community.







Proposed actions:

- Intensifying networking ties between the Department of Integration, municipal community social centres, youth centres and other local actors to promote crosscultural offers, e.g. discussion circles, recreational offers, cultural events in the neighbourhoods
- Advice and support for cross-cultural associations and migrant organisations in usage of available municipal and other venues for regular offers or events.

Operational Objective C2: Promotion of gender equality and democratic core values

Democratic core values like gender equality and independence of women are central normative pillars of our society. To communicate this and other core principles to new immigrants and also to explain their own basic rights to them is a task of high importance.

Proposed actions:

 Promotion of low-threshold offers for new immigrants to communicate equal rights role models and democratic values and rights of the German Basic Law.

Strategic Objective D: Fostering labour market integration of new immigrants and persons with migrant background

Surveys of the public statistics agencies show that the rate of employment of immigrants and persons with a migrant background is still lower than that of the population without migrant background. Factors probably influencing this are, among others, language and information deficits within parts of the immigrant population but also prejudices and reservations against them.

Operational Objective D1: Promoting vocational counselling services

To remedy information deficits and lower possible thresholds in accepting existing services, it could prove helpful to offer those services of advice and counsel at institutions near the centre points of the target groups' social environment.

Proposed actions:

 Promoting multilingual and low-threshold counselling services regarding vocational training, labour market entry and further vocational qualification at local level, in cooperation with providers of counselling services, schools and local institutions e.g. community social centres and youth centres.

Operational Objective D2: Fostering entrepreneurship of new immigrants

New immigrants often both have experiences of running (small) businesses as well as an above average motivation for establishing an enterprise. This phenomenon also did not go unnoticed by the European Union, which already established programmes for fostering entrepreneurship of new immigrants and refugees.







Proposed actions:

Developing a programme for advice, schooling and mentoring/support for new immigrants and refugees willing to become entrepreneurs. Taking up pre-existing experiences and motivation and communicating legal and entrepreneurial basics within German economy. In cooperation with EU programmes, if feasible, and service providers and institutions from economy and labour administration.

Strategic Objective E: Strengthening of civic actors within integration work

Civic actors as associations, initiatives, migrant organisations and a large of number independent voluntary helpers are an invaluable asset within integration work and are greatly contributing in in making Oldenburg a welcoming city to refugees. To further support the work of those actors, the results of the public participation process stress the importance of creating more synergies and more structures for cooperation and information.

Operational Objective E1: Establishing coordination structures for different kinds of actors

Intensifying interaction and communication between voluntary helpers and professional actors is a practical approach to create more efficiently working chains of support for refugees, ensure faster reaction times in critical situations and in general to provide a better support service for all target groups.

The cooperation and coordination structures established in the wake of founding the Office for Immigration and Integration, that cross-link the municipal integration social workers and volunteers, as well as the "Work Group for Migrant Counselling Services" have already provided positive experience on this approach.

Proposed actions:

Establishing of thematic networks allowing different kinds of actors, e.g. municipal bodies, civic associations, welfare organisations and voluntary helpers to exchange experiences about current challenges, problems and upcoming tasks and to talk about approaches of mutual information and support. (During the public participation process at least two possible networks were proposed: a "network for cross-cultural learning", connecting service providers and actors from educational and cultural work, and a "network for housing and meeting", connecting professional and voluntary actors from the fields of social work, cross-cultural support for everyday life and community work)

Operational Objective E2: Providing information to support voluntary integration work

For many voluntary integration helpers it poses an additional effort to gain an overview about existing offers, contact persons, administrative procedures and other possibilities of support.







Proposed actions:

- Creating information portals on counselling services and cultural offers (see the already existing cultural database and the multilingual interactive map for new immigrants)
- Increasing transparency on contact persons at municipal bodies and other institutions
- Increasing information on and ensuring easy access to project support for associations and volunteers.

Operational Objective E3: Empowering migrant organisations

Migrant organisations and cross-cultural associations are important actors within the field of integration work. They often have a more direct access to the target group and thus can observe needs and trends very quickly and provide accurate offers and actions. Yet, the work of many migrant organisations and cross-cultural associations is characterised by low available budgets and relies heavily on voluntary work.

Proposed actions:

- Extending the already existing workshop offer on how to increase professionalization in different aspects of migrant organisations' and crosscultural associations' work.
- Intensifying counsel and advice on project funding and project managing, lowering thresholds (e.g. bureaucracy) for project support and funding.
- Establishing a meeting of migrant organisations, cross-cultural associations and municipal bodies on a regular basis.

5.4 How founding the Office of Migration and Integration has impacted the objectives and actions

Some of the objectives and actions defined in the participation processes were already achieved both structurally and practically by founding the Office for Migration and Integration on 1 August 2017.

This new structure created a better flow of information between the municipal actors. Pooling of personnel and financial resources provides a strong foundation to overcome the integration tasks at hand, enabling the planning and implementation of short, medium and long-term objectives.

This new structure enables the combination of several already existing concepts that initially had been designed and applied independently. Now they can be harmonised to create a holistic concept in the interests of a modern migration society.

The call for promotion pf multilingualism, language activities and services for preschool and extracurricular language education was implemented by creating the







Coordination for Education and Language Acquisition Services as part of the Office. The Education Coordinator cooperates closely with the Language Coordinator to connect providers of language acquisition services within the Forum for Learning German in Oldenburg. Proceeding in this way facilitates the identification and compensation of gaps in education and other needs, while making certain that interconnected chains run through a person's educational biography.

The Language Mediators Pool at the Office ensures that newly arrived migrants receive trustworthy and professional assistance, not just for interaction with government agencies and authorities, but also within integration social work, for counselling centres and other cooperation partners. Another effect is that it helps to break down language barriers.

Within the Office, the Coordination Unit for Migration and Participation seeks to establish networking structures among migrant organisations and to promote professional competencies. It does so by offering training, counselling on funding programmes, and by encouraging and coordinating interaction between the different stakeholders.

The full-time *Coordinator for Volunteers in Integration Work* supports volunteers in their efforts to assist refugees and recently arrived migrants. Active volunteers can also attend a course for "Integration Guides" as a means of acquiring a qualification. With regular discussion group meetings a welcome opportunity to share important experience and provide information on new activities has been established. Altogether, these actions introduce greater transparency about the available services. Regular counselling supervision creates an opportunity for volunteers to reflect on their experiences and to empower them in their work.

Besides offering home visits to families, the *Integration Social Workers* based at the Office hold scheduled consultation hours in the neighbourhood community centers. They are tasked with support for all refugees that have been allocated to Oldenburg since 2010 They provide refugees with useful information about social and cultural services in their immediate residential vicinity and offer mediation in possible conflict situations. Coordinated by the Office, the newly established *Network of Migrant Counselling Services in Oldenburg* creates a platform for all the actors working in migration counselling and integration social work to share their various experiences.

6. Indicators, monitoring and evaluation

Integration is a continuous process in a society shaped by migration. To evaluate achievements and identify requirements, it is essential to collect and analyse data on a regular basis.

During the public participation process, a number of indicators were defined and assigned to the previously developed proposed actions (see annex nr. 1).







Monitoring based on these indicators will be applied to evaluate the individual stages and achievements.

A large portion of the proposed actions refer to new or extended structures for networking and communication. The internal quality of such structures is hard to define using numbers alone, making evaluation based on numeric indicators not very effective. For other actions, e.g. promotion and support for different kinds of service offers and events, a scale for quantitative indicators as prevalence or participant numbers will have to develop over time to allow for proper evaluation.

Additionally, concept evaluation takes place in each area of the Office's work, hence enabling continuous review of the strengths and weaknesses. Proceeding in this way makes integration measurable, at least on a meta-level.

7. Outlook

This integrated action plan is the first step in producing a comprehensive concept for integration in Oldenburg. It contains the preliminary ideas and most important points of orientation.

The re-structuring of the accumulated objectives and actions from the public participation process into strategic and operational objectives as well as the process of reflecting on the experiences from both local and European exchange are the main points of orientation for the further development of the Oldenburg Concept for Integration and thus the further development of integration work and policy at local level.

Participation in **ARRIVAL CITIES** enabled the creation of networks between actors at local and European level and brought new impetus to the practice of integration. This invaluable exchange has been an enrichment for all of the stakeholders in Oldenburg.