



Virtual concept for intercultural opening

NIKO-Online series for municipalities examines overarching themes in municipal integration work in Bavaria



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Addressees for transfer:
Municipal administrations, in particular officers and specialists in the migration/integration area

NIKO-Online series for municipalities

The NIKO-Online series is a multi-part virtual concept that addresses an overarching topic from a professional and practical perspective in the area of municipal integration work. Speakers from academia, municipal administrations and special interest groups share their views and examine a topic from a range of different perspectives. An even balance is struck conceptually between contributions from an academic theoretical standpoint and those from practice. The online series enables a large number of municipal employees to be reached. The project can showcase itself to a broad audience and develop its role as a qualified network partner and local player. By addressing potential speakers, the project's professional network is also being expanded.

Project:

NIKO Netzwerk interkulturelle Öffnung Kommunen in Bayern (Network for the intercultural opening of municipalities in Bavaria)

Provider:

Association for Intercultural Work
VIA Bayern e. V.

Project contact partner:

Jakob Ruster | Landwehrstrasse 22
80336 München | +49 89 41902726
jakob.ruster@via-bayern.de

Provision:

More information is available at
www.migranet.org/niko
All previously published IQ Good Practice examples can be found at
www.netzwerk-iq.de

Starting point/challenge

The "Netzwerk interkulturelle Öffnung Kommunen, NIKO" (Network for the intercultural opening of municipalities), part of MigraNet — the Bavarian IQ Network, has been running an annual integration conference since 2015. The event, attended on each occasion by 150 participants from the area of municipal integration work, has now established itself as a notable information and networking offer. It was not possible to hold the conference in 2020 due to coronavirus safety precautions. A range of different online offers were created at short notice to support networking opportunities for the target groups. What was still lacking, however, was a way to virtually communicate specialist information from the integration conference.

Implementation of the NIKO-Online series for municipalities

Stakeholders at the project provider VIA Bayern e.V. needed to develop a new concept for communicating information about future-oriented topics to stakeholders engaged in integration at the municipal level. They faced a number of challenges. As a target group, municipal administrations are extremely heterogeneous in terms of size, regional conditions and experience with integration work. This needed to be taken into account both when selecting topics and also in terms of case studies. The technology available to administration employees also greatly varies. It was likewise important that participants in video conferences did not miss out on opportunities for exchange and to ask questions. The result was a multi-part virtual concept that addresses an overarching topic in municipal integration work. Previous topics have been "Diversity, inclusion and participation as interdisciplinary themes at the municipal level" (2020) and "Public space as places supporting a culture of openness and recognition at municipal level" (2021). Over two to three months, those sharing their views in the eight to ten online



events included speakers from academia, municipal administrations and special interest groups who examined the theme from different perspectives. Individual aspects were addressed in depth, and conceptually an even balance was struck between contributions from an academic theoretical standpoint and those from practice. It was possible to register for all or individual events. Each event lasted for around two-and-a-half hours, beginning with specialist information and then the opportunity for questions and discussions between colleagues.

Conclusion

It became clear that while municipal integration specialists are very interested in future-oriented themes, they often have too little time for professional discussion due to circumstances beyond their control. The online series is a successful and effective offer, especially in combination with regional networking and exchange concepts. In 2020 up to 50 people have participated in the individual virtual events.

“Important source of ideas for my own work”

Online series “Diversity, inclusion and participation as interdisciplinary themes at the municipal level”

Municipalities face the challenge of ever-increasing social diversity. Recent years have seen them transition from municipal integration work to strategies for intercultural opening and networked diversity approaches. “In Bavaria our annual integration conference has been an important municipal information and networking offer since 2015. In 2020 we were not able to hold an in-person event,” explains Jakob Ruster, head of the IQ subproject “NIKO”. “We needed to find a new concept because, with the coronavirus pandemic, challenges at a local level were not going to get any easier.” The first series was carried out from October to December 2020 with nine two-and-a-half hour meetings. Par-



ticipants had the opportunity to learn about different diversity approaches, to find out about requirements for intercultural training in municipalities, and to discuss strategies for acquiring third-party funding. “For me, the

virtual online series was an important source of ideas for my work in the area of diversity, inclusion and participation and it also allowed me to gain lots of important networking contacts. The digital format is easy to fit into my daily schedule,” sums up Emek Sarigül from Nuremberg. “The topics were relevant to my work, up to date and grouped together and prepared in a clear way.” Laura Erben, Integration Officer at the Garmisch-Partenkirchen district office adds: “In 2020, we were in the process of structurally joining up our diversity strategies. The expertise of the speakers and practical experiences of other participants helped us with the implementation.”

Three questions for Jakob Ruster, Head of the project “NIKO Netzwerk interkulturelle Öffnung Kommunen in Bayern” in MigraNet — the Bavarian IQ Network.

“Good networking is also achievable online”



What is innovative about the online format?

Reaching municipal administrations with an online concept in such large numbers is new. Our event series combines academic presentations, municipal reports from practice and conceptual approaches into an overall picture

from which participants can select the areas of interest to them. The online series also allows us to effectively reach the rural regions. The interactive design meant that representatives from rural communities could enter into discussion with their city-based colleagues on an equal footing; expertise and suggestions were sought from all participants equally.

Is the online series transferable?

The concept can be transferred to other regions or even to other

target groups without any real effort. The content from the topic series “Diversity and municipalities” and “Public space as places supporting a culture of openness and recognition at municipal level” can be used, for example, throughout Germany with just a few regional adaptations. The topic series can also be run with more or fewer events without missing out in terms of different perspectives or relevant stakeholders.

For how long can the concept be used?

Specialists in the areas of migration/integration generally operate alone at a local level. There is a huge need for regular engagement and input. NIKO online reaches a large number of municipal integration stakeholders in Bavaria. Engagement with colleagues creates networking; good practice from other regions is checked for transferability. The event series also means that IQ speakers develop long-term networking opportunities for themselves. Short online formats also lend themselves to passing on information in the future as these take up less time.

Publication details

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Authors: Christiane Tieben-Westkamp (ebb GmbH), Jakob Ruster (VIA Bayern e.V.)

Editors: Christian Zingel (ebb GmbH)

Photos/Illustration: VIA Bayern e.V.,

Julia Schlax (RockABYTE GmbH)

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Network IQ

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