Sozialreferat

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Creating Community

Begrüßung

Dear friends from other countries,

dear friends from Munich,

I will talk to you in English. This might be strange to people from Munich, but it is as well strange for our foreign friends to be just a few under such an overwhelming majority.

I welcome you on behalf of the Municipal Youth office. Unfortunately we don't have the opportunity very often to be the host of an international conference. I hope we get the chance to change that soon, since there is still a lot to be learned if you look beyond of your horizon as Ulli Gläss put it.

I am glad to have guests from InterCity Youth- so I welcome you as well in the name of the board of InterCity Youth.

For those who don't know: ICY is the European network of municipalities for Youth work.

In the last year Munich was in the focus of public attention when a large number of refugees arrived here and were welcomed warmly by a lot of citizens. We were proud of it and we still are.

Over the last months we were busy organizing housing, necessary support, school, German lessons and vocational training.

But I think they need more than that: they need more than practical assistance and they need more than sympathy for being one of several thousands.

People who arrive here have lost their home, their home country, a lot of them have lost their families, they have lost any sort of community.

So what especially young people are wishing for is to belong to any kind of group, they want to feel that they are part of this country, of this society.

And they want to be seen as a person, as an individual, with their specific characteristics not just as the „poor refugee“!

That is were cultural youth work comes into play - it can be the ideal method to give young people the feeling to belong to a group and to be seen as a person:

Acting together in dancing, playing theater, making music is a way that is open to anybody without any concern of language, education or cultural background.

And I think if they just experience this feeling to belong to a community to belong to this society they will eventually accept our rules.

A last remark to this panel:

our social support system, our youth welfare system has to adapt to our new citizens.

We have to discuss what has to be changed so that our offers fit their needs and their wishes.

So this panel might be the beginning of a discussion that – I hope - will affect the rest of our youth welfare system.

I am deeply impressed by the variety of topics that you have prepared for the next two days and by the level you want to discuss it.

Finally I want to express my thanks to the organizers of this conference, to Münchner Trichter and to our friends who did the work:

Renate Grasse, Ulrike Steinforth and Ulli Gläss

It was a lot of effort in addition to their normal job!

I think they deserve a large applause from us!

I wish this event all the success, and I am sure that the participants will take back a great deal of news and information!